

# Compilations Of Oral History For The Historical And Comparative Observance Of Culture And Policies For The Teaching Function In The Second Half Of The Twentieth Century (From The Testimonies Of Retired Teachers From Rincón De Romos, Aguascalientes)

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The purpose of this article is to present various testimonies and judgments (recovered from interviews with retired teachers at the regional level) on experiences of educational work, politics and social culture around the role of teachers in the second half of the twentieth century. The testimonies are presented in comparison to current realities in which educational paradigms contrast with those of the past. The article presents the methodology used to collect and observe the testimonies for oral history purposes. The answers given by the retirees, the paraphrase as a historical context (also made up of bibliographic and documentary resources) and the resulting conclusions, such as the experience obtained by this exercise (as an alternative for the teaching of history), are concentrated in this article that appears as the final product of a research that required numerous actors to carry out at the end of 2021.

Although the investigations are limited to case studies of testimonies from the demarcation of Rincón de Romos, Aguascalientes, the geographical site where the Rincón de Romos Normal School is located (the institution from which the research experience shared here emanates), the results and notions that we present here could well expose (keeping the proportions) the educational reality in broader scenarios.

**Keywords:** History of education in Aguascalientes - Political and cultural change around teaching - Testimonies of teaching work from oral history interviews.

## 1. Introduction

Based on the curricular and academic flexibility offered by the curricula of Mexican teacher training schools (to enrich the training trajectory of future Basic Education professionals), an oral history exercise was undertaken in September and October 2021 (shortly after the start of the 2021 – 2022 school year), for the complementary workshop "History of Education in Aguascalientes. A historical review for the reflection of the teaching role", an optional course directed by the undersigned and which, despite being carried out in a hybrid way (both distance students and others in the classroom), managed to have a relatively high response and interest on the part of the enrolled students.

In addition to the contents covered in the workshop, an oral history exercise carried out by the enrolled teachers in training was superimposed, from which numerous testimonies of teaching life experiences and opinions of the interviewed retired teachers were obtained, who presented us with various windows to the educational past of Rincón de Romos and other localities. so that the collection of fragments of life stories could derive in evidence that reflects the social, political and cultural edges around the teaching profession of the past of the region and in other latitudes.

Without delving into the objectives and contents of the workshop (with which the student obtains various notions that help him to understand the educational context of the present through past processes), various activities were carried out that involved the approach of the students of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education to instruments for qualitative research. One of the activities was included in a questionnaire that served as an instrument for the interview of a retired teacher by each of the students enrolled in the course.

The interview, which was based on a fixed questionnaire (but each life story would have unique answers), was applied to dozens of retired teachers with the aim of recovering memories and experiences (emphasizing the daily practices and appreciations they observed towards their professional work) and then comparing them with the reality perceived by the same subjects of study with the exercise of the profession (in the same tenors) on a daily basis. today. The conduct of the interviews becomes relevant with the need to professionalize and bring students closer to qualitative research methodologies, which may be more akin to the training of future teachers.

It is from this instrument made and executed during the time assigned for the complementary workshop on the History of Education..., from which the interviews were produced and the answers obtained that we concentrate in this article which concentrates a collection of testimonies of teaching work that could well be useful as has already been said, as a sample of inferential statistics that could represent, with the constants found in the testimonies, part of the daily work of teachers in the second half of the last century.

Having presented the general aspects of how this research exercise was produced as a whole, the scope that could be offered in the present product of that exercise, the methodological segments and the results that introduce us to observe the notorious historical changes in terms of politics, ideas, culture and the perception of society towards the teaching role prior to the arrival of the twenty-first century will be presented here.

### **1.1 Problem statement**

At present, Mexican teachers often express a certain disenchantment with the current attitudes of society in general with respect to the work of teachers, of the apathy shown to the authority

figure they may represent, and also of the demerit given to the formative function of schools. However, to this notion that provokes disagreement in the union, rarely are more conscientious speculations made about the causes of the apathy and defensive posture that the teachers interpret, the bulk of society holds today.

Faced with this situation that worries and also manifests that the normalista students manifest themselves to perceive, the present essay, based on an exercise of recovery of testimonies, is mainly proposed to expose the contrasts and realities in the cultural practices and attitudes of the school communities towards the figure and the teaching work, to try to know the possible causalities that have brought with them these cultural changes in the historical evolution that comprises the second The middle of the twentieth century with respect to the current scenarios in the second half of this twenty-first century.

## **2. Objective**

The objective of this research is to carry out an expository analysis of the cultural transformations in the field of teaching in Rincón de Romos, Aguascalientes, through testimonies, documents and historical notes. The study focuses on comparing the experiences of retired teachers in the last four decades of the twentieth century with the current situation in the twenty-first century, without proposing an explanatory thesis of cultural changes or solutions to attitudes towards the teaching profession. It seeks to highlight the qualities of the teachers of the past and the pedagogy they employed, using a historical and documentary approach.

## **3. Methodology**

The research methodology used corresponds to a qualitative approach based on oral history. Testimonies of retired teachers from Rincón de Romos, Aguascalientes, are collected through structured interviews. These interviews were carried out as part of a complementary workshop aimed at normal school students, who applied a fixed questionnaire to collect the life experiences of the interviewed teachers.

### **3.1 Methodological process**

- Interviews with retired teachers: Through a fixed questionnaire, the students conducted interviews that focused on recovering the experiences, opinions and memories of teachers about their work and social context in the second half of the twentieth century.
- Oral history: The collection of these testimonies is framed in the oral history technique, which allows recovering and analyzing personal narratives to understand historical and cultural changes, comparing past experiences with the current perceptions of the interviewees.
- Qualitative analysis: The answers of the interviewees were analyzed to identify patterns and contrasts between the past and the present, as well as to contextualize the changes in the educational, political, and cultural spheres.

### **3.2 Tools for data collection**

The tool used for the collection of information was a structured questionnaire designed to conduct interviews with retired teachers. This questionnaire served as a guide for the normal school students, who participated in the complementary workshop on the history of education, to systematically recover the testimonies and life experiences of the interviewed teachers.

The questionnaire contained a series of fixed questions, some of them aimed at obtaining categorical information (such as vocational training data), while others focused on qualitative aspects, such as work experiences, perception of changes in the figure of the teacher, and comparison of past and present educational conditions. The answers obtained from these interviews were the basis for the qualitative analysis of the study.

### **3.3 Implementation of the instrument for oral history interviews**

Once the group of normalistas that made up the workshop had the questionnaire as an instrument for the investigation of the experiences of teaching life, appointments were made to carry out the interviews and the aforementioned technical care was pointed out, taking as a maxim the premise that "the success of a research based on oral sources depends on the quality of the interviews that are carried out", so the order to the students was to exploit their insight so that they would obtain elaborate answers.

Thus, by the end of October 2021, thirty-four interviews were carried out. With such a fixed collective questionnaire, apart from obtaining some data that could be statistical, we obtained subjective experiences of the reality lived by the retired teachers, experiences many of them similar. As had already been said, although not all the students complied with the order, most did so by obtaining valuable testimonies. The product of the interview was not only useful for the students to accredit the optional workshop course and accumulate credits as a requirement to graduate as teachers, but it was certainly a vocational and training exercise as higher-level students capable of conducting qualitative research.

For the undersigned teacher who presents this article, the hybrid attendance modality that was applied at that time was beneficial for this essay to concentrate those testimonies obtained by the students, since the context in which the classes were studied and taught at the end of 2021, forced us to adapt to the use of educational virtual platforms, not only to teach classes, but also to concentrate and evaluate course products such as the various oral history instruments delivered by the teachers in training, documents that were more practical to consult individually and also to analyze as a whole once they were reviewed through the Google Classroom platform.

With the testimonies obtained from the more than thirty retired teachers interviewed, we were able to obtain a vision of what it meant to exercise the teaching profession in past decades and to learn about part of the social, cultural and economic circumstances that were a constant apparently not only in the region of Rincón de Romos and its surrounding municipalities (where a handful of teachers in the sample are from). rather, we obtained a collection of fragments of life stories that surely represents the macro-regional general of the reality of basic level educational work (especially in rural areas) during the second half of the twentieth century.

4. Analysis of the results

Since some of the experiences shared by the interviewees arose in other states of the country (as well as their professional training), surely some readers of this article, if they taught in the last century, will feel identified with some of the stories that are presented below. In this sense, the concentration of the different interviews could be an input so that realities of the general educational past can be observed from the local level, that is, beyond Rincón de Romos and the state of Aguascalientes. The following is an illustration of some general data from the sample that emerge from the concentrate (in a data processor) of the responses of the various life histories.



Figure 1. State where the teacher studied the normal school

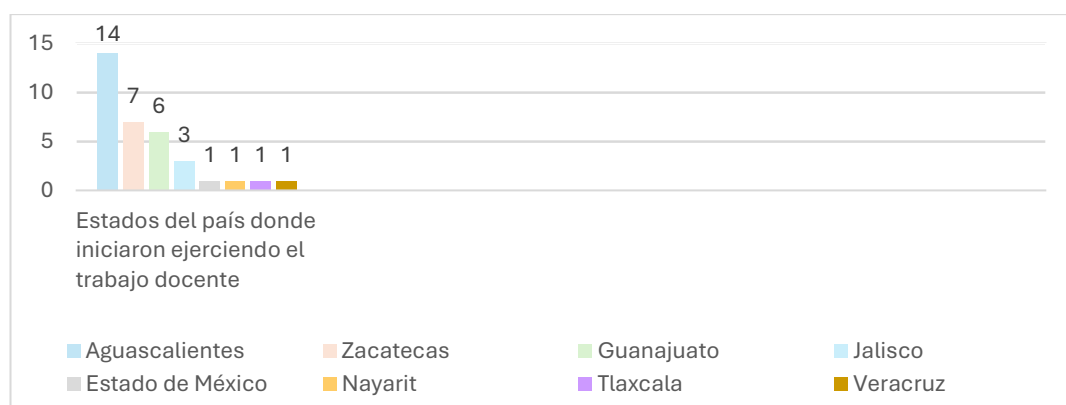
Source: Own elaboration. In original language Spanish

As we could see, the training of the interviewed teachers (all originally from Aguascalientes) extends beyond the state itself and the teacher training institutions it has, although of course the bulk of the sample graduated from a local normal school. Of the normal schools located in Aguascalientes, the Normal School of Rincón de Romos stands out, which after its beginning as an experimental institution was consolidated, ratifying itself with the name "Dr. Rafael Francisco Aguilar Lomelí", an institution from which this exercise of oral history compilations emerges.

Being the only normal school located in the municipality and for being the only institution of higher education throughout the twentieth century (before the municipal seat became a small city), the ENRR represented a great opportunity for the young people of the municipality and its surroundings due to the fact that it was perhaps the only option for those young people of limited resources in the rural areas of Rincon who considered continuing their careers. Studies. Obviously, the bulk of the cases of the teachers interviewed were trained at the ENRR (thirteen out of thirty-four), however, the sample is also made up of teachers trained in the other normal schools of the state with the exception of the historic Normal School of Aguascalientes (located in the state capital). Of course, the Justo Sierra Méndez rural normal school in Cañada Honda, the Regional Center for Normal Education in Aguascalientes, and even a case of the Federal Higher Normal School in Aguascalientes, are listed as the other institutions in the state that trained some of our interviewees in teaching.

Of the other states of the country in which some of the retirees who told us about their experiences of teaching work were trained, the normal schools (without specifying in the official nomenclature) of San Marcos, in Zacatecas, the normal school of Ciudad Guzmán, in Jalisco, the extinct normal school of the community of El Roque, in Guanajuato and a then experimental normal school in the Francisco Zarco community, stand out. in Durango.

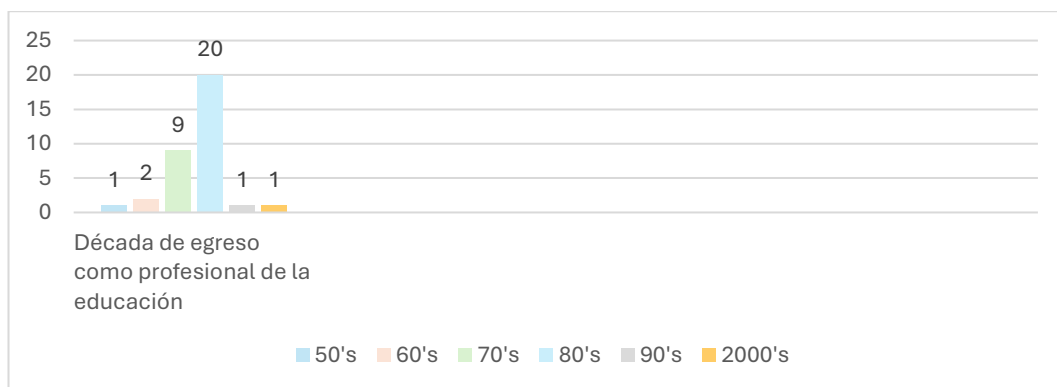
However, the states of the country where the teachers in the sample began their professional work were not always the same as where they were trained, although some have been fortunate enough to practice in Aguascalientes (their home state) after their graduation. That is why it is insisted that the qualitative impressions that will be mentioned below represent experiences and generalities of the teaching work beyond the regional or local, but homogeneous realities of the educational past beyond Aguascalientes and even its neighboring states.



**Figure 2.** State where the teacher began his work as an educator

**Source:** Own elaboration. In original language Spanish

The geographical site where the related teaching experiences shared by the interviewees arose are distributed beyond the demarcation that concerns us. The experiences, many of them similar (such as the lack of school resources and infrastructure, child labor, bureaucracy, etc.), transcend not only the geographical limits of our municipality, but also generations, since the life stories correspond to different decades. Our sample includes cases ranging from the fifties of the last century to the first decade of the twenty-first century (while the bulk of the experiences are between the seventies and eighties).



**Figure 3.** Decade of graduation as an education professional

**Source:** Own elaboration. In original language Spanish

Each interview provides a testimony that exposes an educational reality of the past, some of which are no longer repeated today. The oral histories of the teachers highlight the contrasts of the educational paradigms of the different periods, as well as the opinions formed in the retired teachers regarding the contemporary educational reality in comparison with the school scenarios they experienced.

The experiences cited could be limited to providing us only with a window for historical observance in the classrooms of the schools that were part of the lives of our interviewees, or they could offer us evidence of the paradigms and mentalities of the past not only in terms of didactic work, conditions that have changed over the generations, but also in terms of the teaching process. as have values, society and culture and that have been reflected in Mexican schools.

The testimonies are completed in a paraphrasing also integrated from other sources (bibliography and archives) that will allow us to observe the historical context in which the various experiences arose in the areas or areas in which we focus. Next, testimonies and impressions of the interviewed teachers will be cited, experiences and diverse notions that, despite the diversity of cases, show the prevailing shared realities of the educational past of the last century that undoubtedly contrast with contemporaneity.

### **Recognition and Role of Teachers in the Mexican State and Society (Historical Context)**

We will begin by exposing life stories about the idealism or "discourse" about the role of teachers in society and the country during the different periods that the different interviewees experienced in their beginnings as teachers, also the esteem or value that society gave to the sector and the notion that was held about its importance in national life. The testimonies about this area or reality of the educational past were proposed to be recovered, especially in two of the questions of the instrument after obtaining information about the teacher training headquarters and other data.

For the teacher from Rincon, Ma. Guadalupe, who graduated in the eighties, the educational discourse at that time (both for society and for the government) was that, "the school was secular, popular and free, where work, silence and order dominated [...] in a comprehensive



education". In the same vein, teacher Rocío Miroslava recalls a clear speech in which young people were instilled from their training in normal schools that the function of teachers "was to serve the community apart from teaching," and "they were part of the ideological instrument of the State." A regime that we often understand as paternalistic and that promoted common values in an effort to shape a collective identity. On this scenario, Miguel Basáñez states:

Mexican hegemony (the ideological leadership of society by the political-military bureaucracy that took charge of the state apparatus) was built on four ideological interpellations that, time has shown, were very powerful: land redistribution, labor unions, mass education and non-reelection.

Teacher Héctor "Cocoi" Lazarín agrees with the teachers we just quoted, recalling a speech that had "a real meaning", and the words about the function of the teacher went beyond the romantic "not just as an ornament" (the teacher from Pabellón de Arteaga tells us), recalling that in past decades teachers had to "be available to the community, not exclusively from the school or from the four walls of its classroom".

To understand the reason for this somewhat idealized discourse on the role of teachers in Mexico in the last century, it is necessary to observe the political events of the twentieth century in which we see how national states (especially those related to the Marxist bloc), after moments of political and conjunctural upheaval (as was the case with the Mexican Revolution in our case), they built hegemonic national values and identities that will commune with the ideological doctrines of the regimes in power.

Thus, nationalisms were promoted, which within their propaganda integrated proletarian heroes or martyrs of the homeland. In the case of Mexico, after the Revolution and the consecration of the 1917 Constitution, the need for a new identity and a common historical discourse was a priority to build for the new political system. José Vasconcelos created the Ministry of Public Education in 1921 and from then on "the fight against the illiteracy that dominated and devastated the country was undertaken", but the construction of Mexican nationalism, that new and romantic homeland, was also in his sights.

Within these ideological campaigns we can conceive of the figures of the teacher, the ejidatario (after the Agrarian Reform became effective) or the official politician, as core actors in this ideological engineering. In this political atmosphere that took place from the 1920s until almost the end of the 20th century, "schools in Mexico have always been under the discourse of integration, homogenization and the construction of national identity." Carlos Ornelas mentions well that:

The teaching tradition has a cultural sediment that cannot be transmuted by decree or in the short term. However, the State, not just a specific government, requires teachers to fulfill their tasks according to certain ideal positions that are modified in the course of history. In these pretensions, teachers have been described as missionaries, social organizers, apostles.



Let us remember that with him President Lázaro Cárdenas (late thirties) the symbiosis of the different sectors (intellectuals, workers, teachers, etc.) was engineered, so that ideological rhetoric had to be channeled under a system of free, socialist (leftist) education and common values or identities. For the Mexican State, those in charge of it would be the teachers. In Mexico, an orthodox leftist regime never materialized, nor was the regime categorical in recognizing itself as Marxist, however, many of the ideological principles were present in the official discourse and policy.

As we know, in reality, the country experienced an ironic syncretism of economic, ideological and political principles of both communist doctrine and socialism and capitalist liberal democracies. In this scenario, education and the role of teachers in Mexico also experienced a rhetorical swing, for example, the author Guillermo Clemente describes the following:

In the history of Mexican education, the period from 1940 to 1958 is known by the name of the project [...] "national unity". The State is trying to get rid of the socialist approach of the presidential term of Lázaro Cárdenas [...] to propose a project aimed at achieving social cohesion and economic development through the incorporation of labor into the industrialization process [...] Education was one of the essential engines to achieve this.

As we can see, the ideological discourse that accompanied the metamorphic process of the post-revolutionary regime went through variations, which were reflected in the educational doctrines that they disseminated through the teachers. Discourses such as socialist education were forgotten, while others became valid; and others were maintained, such as that of "miscegenation [...] as a present and permanent feature of Mexico" which was repeated ad nauseam as the foundation for national identity, while the enormous task of making literacy in prominently rural Mexico seemed a titanic odyssey. On this educational task, David Moctezuma and José Narro explain:

It was not until the 70s that efforts were made to try to reduce the number of illiterates, both in relative and absolute terms; In 1970, we reached the peak figure of 6.7 million, representing 14% of the total population and more than a quarter of people aged 15 and over.

As we have seen, Mexican schools were the space where teachers were determined to put an end to illiteracy, but they were also the cells for the expansion of the discourse of the ruling party. It is not surprising, then, that the idea that the school is an extension or channel of the political-ideological system of the Mexican State has been forged, an idea that even to date causes controversy.

The partnership between school and government was notable until the last decade of the twentieth century (so the training of teachers was crucial for the hegemony of the ruling party or at least its discourse), even with the sporadic frictions between the State and the teachers. For this reason, the recruitment of students at the secondary level (at that time the upper secondary level was omitted) to train as teachers was a strategy of the Mexican State in the

last century to give continuity to nationalist rhetoric as long as it was convenient for the economic and social system.

At the local level, for example, we observe the communication between the municipality of Rincón de Romos (related to the official party, like almost the entire national geography at the end of the seventies) with the local secondary school to promote the continuation of the studies of young people in an early teacher training that carried with it a political background. In the document consulted, the then municipal president, J. Encarnación Esparza Quezada, addresses the teacher Bertha Alicia Gutiérrez Romo (director of the Adolfo López Mateos Secondary School), so that the teacher "promote among her students the entrance to the Rural Normal Schools and fill out the bases of an attached call".

This epistle suggests that the training of teachers was in order to also create allies to the ruling party that prevailed from the spheres of federal centralism, to the local levels of government in the provinces (as we could see). Below are some of the requirements set out in the 1976 call found in the archives, published at the time by the General Directorate of Normal Education of the SEP. In one of the bases it required that students come "from the Zone that corresponded to the Normal School to which they intended to enter", a condition surely more of a right than of fact, since, as we have seen, many teachers studied their teaching careers in normal schools outside the state.

Another requirement was "to be of peasant origin [...] and from a family of scarce economic resources", a circumstance that most exposes the government's purpose to professionally train young people from subordinate classes with the desire to create allies who with job stability would keep the discourse in turn as a clientelistic policy.

The idea of the preponderant importance of teachers as key figures for national cultural development was promoted by the Mexican State itself and its teacher training schools (the normal schools) during practically the entire century. This imaginary (largely true) is still evident today, for example, in the murals in the normal schools of practically the entire country, as well as in the oath that is pronounced after the deliberation of the professional examination of the normalistas who pronounce that they "will ensure the guarantee of the interests of the youth and the homeland". leaving the new teacher subject to the romantic judgment of "that the nation rewards him/her, and if not, demands it".

The socialist ideology, which was part of the initial educational programs, was lost over time, [...] it was blurred until it disappeared from national educational discourses and policies; however, in the rural normal schools it remained in force, since it was reinforced and consolidated by the teaching staff [...] As a result, these types of educational institutions, which were conceived to strengthen post-revolutionary governments, gradually became opponents of the official political system.

While the Mexican State shifted its discourse and doctrine from nationalist officialism to economic liberalism (being more evident since the eighties), the partnership with the working classes, peasants and the teachers themselves was dissipating.

After the extensive context provided on this Discourse on the Role of Teachers, we return to cite the testimonies of our interviewed teachers, which is what we are responsible for doing in this article.

About that time of political effervescence for teachers, one of our oral histories states: "when the teachers had great prestige, the best thing there was was attention to the educational sector, we also had the empathy of the community and parents, society was a very great support in the education of their children and with us teachers" (says teacher Luis Antonio Corona Pérez). In such changing political and ideological scenarios, teachers maintained the self-perception of a cornerstone role in the construction of culture and identity, as well as of national importance, despite the fact that the cohesion of the State and teachers was frayed. A sign of discord between the Mexican State and the sectors it had formed in clientelistic politics (such as teachers and middle-class students), was undoubtedly 1968.

As we know, the Western world at the end of that decade was in a process of profound cultural transformation, there was certainly a revolution of ideas and ruptures of canons in a scenario of struggle between the two great global ideological blocs, so the repercussions on the were inevitable in most of the societies of the world.

The Mexican case was no exception, and the post-revolution regime during the so-called Stabilizing Development, demonstrated not only the contradiction of not listening to or safeguarding its youth, but also evidenced the authoritarianism of a State of ideological ambiguity in its eagerness to promote itself (through the Olympics) as a rich and modern nation. Although the focus of the events of 1968 was in the capital of the country, the effect caused in the student sector and later in the teaching sector, was general, not only in the capital's universities but in the normal schools throughout the country, tearing apart the symbiosis of the State with the teachers who would be trained from then on.

On the above, one of our interviewees, teacher Antero Rodríguez Coronado, mentions: "the past generations of teachers, we were more political, both in training, and in the classroom already working, when I graduated in 1973 what happened in 1968 was still very recent, we were more political teachers". Although not entirely (as we have seen above) by the 1970s, the Mexican state had lost the unquestionable moral authority that ensured loyalty to the ruling party.

For this reason, paradoxically, the Mexican government (one-party in fact and democratic in law) in its transition to neoliberalism (culminating in the nineties with the sale of state enterprises during the six-year term of Carlos Salinas de Gortari), would find as opponents a large part of the sectors that in past decades it had conceived as allies through the policy it had devised in the middle of the century.

However, the sense of vocation and professional prestige was maintained in the Mexican teaching profession until the beginning of the twenty-first century, despite the oscillating erosion of the relationship between the State, the unions and the teachers' base. It would therefore be various factors, typical of the historical time of globalization, that would reduce social attention and prestige from education officials.

### **From recognition to discredit of the teaching function**

The value that society gave to teachers as fundamental pieces of culture and education in the country was a social reality that was compressed according to the renewal of values, cultural and commercial consumerism, the diversification of occupations and the emergence of diverse identities (which overlap the national identity). they were permeating Mexican society in the

twenty-first century at the same time that the old paradigms that teachers once safeguarded lost relevance in an increasingly chaotic environment in terms of unwritten social agreements. Society's recognition of Mexican teachers that identified the profession in the past was not completely lost, but it has evidently diminished greatly in the scenario of the 21st century where recognition and social prestige are proportional to economic capital and utilitarian success (which often overrides competitiveness over cooperation). a reality that differs greatly from the twentieth century (where the notion of collectivity and traditional values were personal capitals of social significance). Therefore, in societies of liquid or relative values, as is the case in the so-called postmodernity that prevails in most global societies, the canons of yesteryear are not a factor of reputation or social esteem.

Therefore, the past pedagogical and behavioral models of the traditional school (which safeguarded a hegemonic notion of culture and values), have lost validity in the current scenarios of so-called progressivism where there are no unique ideal models of culture, values and interpretations to live in social harmony. The changes in cultural paradigms and mentalities have not occurred categorically for better or in a negative way in society and education, they are simply changes that the political, economic and cultural model of globalism has brought with it in most societies and their sectors, impacting of course on daily education. On the other hand, since higher education in the country has increased over the decades along with economic development, tertiary activities and industry, the new generations of professionals in families that did not have a higher education pattern have diminished the role of the teachers who trained them in basic education because social recognition in postmodernity is measured according to capital acquisitive and utilitarian which in which the educational guild does not excel.

In such processes of change that have been described, it must be recognized that teachers have not been a sector alien to the onslaught of the liquidity of values and multiculturalism that progressivism and globalism have brought, but that from the individualities of each individual changes can be distinguished in the sector in general. Certainly, teachers have changed or suppressed the conception of themselves as agents of community example or as traditional professionals in closed cultural systems, a reality that is often not well seen in the eyes of past generations trained in the culture and solid values of yesteryear. A judgment that reflects what we have described could be the words of one of our retired interviewees, teacher Elizabeth Álvarez, believes that:

Nowadays there are many teachers who only think about their comfort, leave aside the vocation that is required and sometimes lend themselves to situations that do not go with their profession, fall into things or look in a way that is not very worthy of a teacher.

Cultural transformations, as we have insisted, are perhaps not negative, they are simply transformations of historical time, but the interpretation of these changes often does generate disenchantment. As far as we are concerned (which is culture or society's recognition of the role of the teacher), the changes have materialized in community apathy because society understands itself as an employer of the teaching sector, a reality that is far from the collective sense and gratitude that educational communities gave to teachers in the last century.

Returning to the presentation of testimonies, the same teacher we cited above makes a judgment that could well be the subject of debate or objective analysis that could deny it or in part give credence, since the retired woman interviewed has the impression that the decline in reputation for the teaching sector is due to a detriment in the quality of teacher training institutions. On this, teacher Álvarez commented her interviewer that: "the normal schools are already the ones they used to be, in the academic and formative aspects quality has been lost." Such a judgment is not attached in this article in an effort to expose the teacher who felt the confidence to expose such a perception in the interview, but to open that vein to the scrutiny of being able to objectively measure the quality of education in normal schools, because it is certainly a shared opinion that is often heard among those related to the educational sectors. It is not the purpose of this article to delve into it, although as we have already said, there are various opinions (such as the one set out below) that share this notion.

The drama that normal schools are experiencing is getting worse every day. Much is said about the relevance of education, the fair budget and the rights and obligations of institutions or students themselves. As a discourse, the curriculum for the different bachelor's degrees is excellent, however [...] the teaching and managerial function of these institutions is far from being [...] strong, capable and prepared.

Contrary to the opinions just cited, of course there will be cases of academic success, teacher training quality and argued opinions that observe the normal schools as institutions in constant improvement, however, as we have already said, it is not the task of this essay to delve into it. In any case, there are those who propose a balanced vision of this reality:

Teacher training appears as one of the permanent problematic educational aspects, but if it is placed as one of the many spheres in which it is expressed as such, the magnitude of the problem decreases, since in the end the human being is formed with and without institutional conditions: training is a daily task, and institutions are a form of mediation for this.

Returning to the subject of the change in the reputation of the teaching profession in other tenors, another very important factor that should not be left unmentioned (as a result of the process of female empowerment that has flourished in the current century), has been the raising of voices in the face of events that in the past rarely came to light. The complaints made by teachers (especially men) due to sexual harassment and the well-deserved attention of society in the face of these events, have legitimately diminished the neat notion of the teaching profession. The phenomenon, although of apparently minuscule magnitude, is fortunately no longer ignored, and of course it has had a negative impact on the image of teachers in general. A very important political factor that also significantly affected the influence and prestige of teachers at the national level was the so-called Educational Reform of the last PRI six-year term. The bulk of the teachers remember the wide dissemination in the mass media that was given to the Educational Reform initiative (at the end of 2012) during the six-year term of Enrique Peña Nieto, coverage that for many was more of a smear campaign by the State and television stations against Mexican teachers.

It cannot be denied that part of the premises that circulated among society to sympathize with the reform were aimed at remedying adverse or negative conditions for education in Mexico (such as union interference in educational policies, the absence of teacher evaluation instruments, the lack of professional training, etc.). However, this media bombardment went beyond seeing those as areas of opportunity and was rather insisted on the sensationalism of magnifying the problems of the Mexican education system by blaming its teachers in large part. In any case, since then the public image of the profession has been damaged without the Reform putting an end to those vices of teacher policy and education that were so televised.

Many of the educational reforms since the end of the twentieth century have focused on technological training, relegating philosophical and humanistic aspects that are central to the formation of values [...] reforms that are more effective in generating economic growth than in generating social cohesion.

In this scenario, neither of the two teachers' unions in the country acted assertively; neither the prompt resignation of the SNTE (National Union of Education Workers) after the replacement of the leadership of the one who sought the lifetime representation of the union, nor the more prolonged intentions, sit-ins and strikes of the CNTE (National Coordinator of Education Workers) prevented the educational reform, which as we have already said, it did not substantially improve the various circumstances that it raised as unfavorable for education in the country. In this unsuccessful process, the social reputation of the country's teachers was barely saved "by belly" (as one of the punitive elements was called).

The decline in the image of teachers has not been a situation that has been completely ignored today. After appearing for decades as the opposition in Mexico, the left (or rather the faction with the greatest sympathy), after its overwhelming victory in the 2018 elections, launched a national project that within its purposes intended to bring back to the surface the old Mexican nationalism and also promote the revaluation of the teachers. However, the recognition of the role of teachers in society cannot be the same as in past decades, not because the union does not deserve it, but because society's attention to a sector and to the school as a community center does not have the relevance that it had in the last century (as we have read before). and, in addition, because among the many problems and horizons facing Mexican society and the State, issues like this lack priority for the regime.

After the extensive paraphrase of the historical context on the cultural, economic and political transformations that affected the attention and reputation of the teaching work by society, we will continue to expose in the following segment various testimonies that will show the classroom and social scenarios in which the teachers of the oral history exhibition worked.

### **Vocational testimonies and historical overview of the socioeconomic scenario for teaching**

The fragments that make up this compilation address the personal commitment of teachers to their work, which often implied going beyond pedagogical knowledge and skills in school spaces. Between the lines we can also observe that, just as teachers had a greater social and professional commitment, they also found reciprocity in children and families who accepted the leadership of teachers. These important experiences were recovered by several of the



questions included in the interview carried out by the normalistas, which elicited answers in which the veteran teachers elaborated on their past.

On the above, one of the testimonies, that of teacher Amalia Luevano (graduated in 1966 from the "Justo Sierra Méndez" normal school in Cañada Honda), portrays a work beyond the pedagogical that implied "total dedication, excessive care of the students and a discipline of compliance not to fail at any time with the school". Also the teacher Ma. Rosa Robles Olivares (graduated in 1956, also from the normal school of Cañada Honda), remembers a reality in which for the work "it was always to be presentable, formal and also clean of the mind".

As we can see, these testimonies greatly reflect the high social expectations and professional esteem with which the teachers were conceived, which corresponded as they themselves say with their formality and total dedication. Another remembrance that they shared with us and by the way of the same alma mater as those mentioned above, is that of the teacher Rosa María Luevano, who shares with us that: "the work of teaching was not of a schedule, being a teacher implied a profession that became your person". Graduated in the seventies, teacher Rosa remembers her long days of work until seven at night in the Sauz de Armenta community in Guanajuato, "working with the little ones in the morning shift and the older ones from the age of thirteen and up in the afternoon."

The vocation of teachers in the last century did not separate the person from the professional as we see, and in those scenarios in which peasant families relied on their children, teachers found willingness (or at least that is what they tell us) in their schedules to attend to the lags of the infants after their absences due to work in the fields. Teacher Elizabeth Álvarez Medina recalls:

Children were often absent because they went to work at time to sow, plant, or harvest.

In the interview, teacher Elizabeth recalls that absenteeism in rural areas and the roles of village families in which the children, although of school age, also served as collaborators in the work and the family economy. These roles, which in current contexts would be subject to criticism, perhaps also figured as elements that gave value to school as a privilege and at the same time integrated values and empirical skills in childhood from family education. It should be noted that such circumstances were surely not exclusive to the rural areas of the country, but also in the cities during the twentieth century in Mexico, in which at that time as today they had large belts of urban underdevelopment where children also work days.

As we can see, the teachers of the past had a notion in which they were conceived as cornerstones of society, an idea that perhaps was assertive in large part due to the socioeconomic and cultural conditions with which they were confronted, and for which important elements were due to the versatility implied by the wisdom that provided an eclectic profession in knowledge in the midst of a Mexican society that was in a state of crisis. Literacy process.

It would be a mistake to completely generalize the socioeconomic realities of the country in urban and rural areas, since historically (although it is not often accepted or noticed) the regional and sectoral differences that exist in the country in areas as diverse as family roles, access to goods and services, etc. literacy and access to culture, customs and cultural identities, ethnic origin and religiosity, however, it is legitimate to accept that despite the various



regional-cultural differences in the country, the educational reality of the second half of the twentieth century was a process that obtained gradual developments due in large part to the sum of each of the personal efforts that often exceeded the professional responsibility of teachers.

For one of our retirees who gave testimony, teacher J. Jesús Reyes López, adapting to these cultural diversities between regions implied professional challenges that they rarely addressed during their training. As we have seen, many teachers were trained in normal schools outside their states of origin, and even as professionals they practiced in other states outside their alma mater. Originally from Cosío, Aguascalientes, graduated from a normal school in the state of Guanajuato and a first-time teacher in a community in Tultepec, State of Mexico, our interviewee recalls that "despite the cultural differences with respect to the municipalities and communities of Aguascalientes, the teachers had in common, wherever we went, the support of the parents."

That support of parents that is mentioned so much by the veterans of education, responds not only to a historical time prior to the great social changes due to the economic and cultural processes that were generated as we entered the new millennium and that we exposed previously, but also to the fact that the school appeared as a true community center beyond the student enrollment that it housed. since a large part of the cultural and social dynamics that arose in the communities emanated from the school.

If we go back to the last twentieth century, the further back we go in the decades, we will find a Mexico that is less communicated, both in telecommunications (as is to be assumed since the new technologies that take advantage of the internet did not exist), and in physical roads (such as roads and transport services). It is in these more hermetic scenarios regionally and culturally, in which the school became more important as a center for social dynamics, since school festivals often meant the only space for the interaction of an entire people, the only approach to high culture and perhaps the greatest spectacle for a community at a time when families rarely went out to the city or consumed media content beyond of a program on a radio station.

For the researcher Adriana Olvera, who presents us with some very illustrative statistical data on the importance of schools, the school turned out to be a physical and symbolic place that represented a privilege only for some and an admiration for all.

Overall, the population over 15 years of age (which was four times larger in 2010 than it was in 1960), has a higher [primary] schooling. In particular, it should be noted that those who did not have schooling were less than 10% in 2010, a figure far from the 40% of those who were in that situation in 1960.

The basic school was more important to a community in the past than it is now, because it was one of the few places in which a community could approach culture in an unwritten agreement where the school figured as an element of cohesion and collective identity. That is why, as the country communicated and culture became globalized and diversified in its sources, the school ceased to represent an important focus for social and cultural dynamics.

Surely it coincides in everyone's memory how Mexican primary schools, even throughout the second half of the twentieth century, were the spaces where various social dynamics were

enlivened, not only for students or parents but for the bulk of the population of rural and urban communities, detonating coexistence and recreation in civic ceremonies. festivals and programs that teachers undertook, both for official duty as well as to provide moments of joy and coexistence within the framework of a local tradition.

This is exactly how teacher Elizabeth Álvarez remembers it, who shared with the interviewing teacher a past in which "the school was a center of great importance, much more than now. The community always looked forward to cultural festivals such as Mother's Day, the celebrations of September 16, among others, they were waiting for them with great desire to enjoy them."

The stories presented by the different interviewees expose a social reality of the school that contrasts with that of today, certainly the school, especially the primary school, no longer means as much or has the same influence as in the past. Another important point about work and the differences between the last century and the current one, is undoubtedly the relationship between teachers and parents. For better and for worse, the teacher's role of "authority" has certainly diminished.

An example of the culture around the faculties of the teachers of the past (in terms of the relationship with parents and school discipline), can be found in an official letter written by the teachers of the "Presidente Ruíz Cortines" Elementary School in Rincón de Romos in 1968. in which they report to the municipal president, Jesús Castorena R., "the absence of students in their classes", hoping that the official "puts the methods he deems convenient with those irresponsible parents who do not listen to the attentions".

In this document, we not only observe how teachers magnify the importance of circumstances when sharing these issues with the city council, but, as we have already explained, it is clear that the culture of the teacher's faculty exceeds the students' school affairs. A claim such as the one we have just cited would be unthinkable today perhaps for any teacher.

### **Testimonials on the use of various resources for teaching work**

This area, which was addressed as a specific question in order to recover from the memories of retired teachers, the image of the various classrooms, materials and means with which they had to carry out their work, was a topic that was filled with memories and even opinions that focus on comparing the educational past and present in terms of the use of various resources for didactics.

"What resources and materials did you have for your teaching work?" was the question posed by the students to the retired teachers. As we can see, the question, although specific, lent itself to varied answers because the resources can be many and of different types. The answers were profuse, and however, this area or reality to be recovered was also complemented by answers to other questions, such as: "Do you think that there is more willingness and use in schools now than in those of the past?"

With this, the use of electronic media, the internet and in general information technologies as a topic to be discussed, came to an end, since many of the teachers interviewed could not avoid making a historical comparison and exercising an opinion on the use of these technologies today for teaching and teaching work. a matter that will be addressed later in a more specific manner.

Meanwhile, below are various quotes from the experiences reported by the interviewees in terms of the resources they had or were deprived of for the performance of their work, from infrastructure, transportation, teaching materials, etc. We begin with the fragment of oral history by Professor Enrique Romo Gaytán, who relates that "the quality of education fell on the teacher and not so much on the infrastructure or resources of the classroom." A graduate of the ENRR, he remembers his first work school in the state of Veracruz "teaching under the trees and with it very happy children, even if they did not have a classroom."

Another testimony is that of the teacher Raúl Martínez Macías, teaching for the first time in Laja, Jalisco in 1977, a time that he remembers dealing like many other teachers with the difficulty of transportation to reach the communities and to obtain bibliographic material (even in the official one). "At that time we lacked everything," recalls the professor, "we teachers had to improvise with the little we had," he summarizes.

That past (in terms of resources) is well remembered by the teacher Ma. del Refugio Araiza Cruz, and not precisely because of the conditions of the classrooms, the furniture, books, or the services that the school had, but because of the scarcity of the economic resource itself for the payment of the salary. The teacher told the student who interviewed her, that legal-administrative process that she had to go through to receive her paycheck once she started working, "it was a nightmare," she recalled. It is not that the government did not have money to pay its teachers, but because the bureaucracy of the time in some cases resulted in total disgust because the checks were simply late for months.

"I was very hungry at first because I wasn't getting paid [soon], but I was surprised by the support I was given in the community and my co-workers, [...] I continued to teach despite everything, even though they didn't pay me because of the bureaucracy."

The bureaucracy of which the teacher speaks is explained by the administrative and political centralism of the Ministry of Public Education and its dependencies in local governments, which often materialized in the mismanagement of accounting books, some incompetent or pedantic officials, insufficient means, lost papers and many other factors of small and large magnitude (justifiable perhaps only a few). which led to the administrative past for the payroll of human capital in Mexican education not being efficient in some of its processes.

Certainly, the administrative system of the administration of Mexican public education has improved, and since the 1980s more serious policies have been undertaken to improve the functioning of the state body. After trial, error and improvement, deconcentration policies, transitional programs, legal changes in powers and money (in terms of levels of government), incorporation of computer systems, among other efforts, have improved (but not eradicated) the cumbersome bureaucratic processes that were very common in the past.

Another testimony in relation to the support received by the community and colleagues when they were in a desperate situation due to lack of payments was shared with us by the teacher Ma. Elena Haro Rodríguez, who recalls that after graduating from the normal school in the mid-eighties, she was received with great hospitality in the rancherías of Tepechitlán. Zacatecas where he began to work.

At that time the villages provided a modest house for new teachers, we had that resource [...] Parents would notice when you hadn't received your fortnights, they would come over to share food, whether it was milk, beans, cheese or corn.

Testimonies such as those we have exposed surely evoke the portraits in the memory that many have of the teachers of twentieth-century Mexico (especially rural ones), teachers who until a few years ago could be recognized by waiting for public transportation on the side of dirt roads in the country's ranches. of course, wrapped in their shirts, with powdered dress shoes and with their briefcase in hand.

In the case of teachers (before the car was such a common resource for the majority of teachers), they could be identified by their large bag from which the books they carried protruded, often wearing a robe with printed flowers and in winter also carrying a pompous jacket sometimes waiting for the ride in the car of the few teachers more fortunate to own a car.

Decades before it was more common to see teachers arriving at their work communities in so-called "trompudos" trucks, carrying their bellicose ones on their way to settle in rooms and houses destined especially for them, sometimes cared for, other times damp and dusty reserved to house the one sent to instruct the children of the town in the times most marked by that one-party government where the ejidos assigned those spaces because the idea of cohesion between the different actors of social relevance formed by the State prevailed.

Returning to what was said in the interviews regarding the economic resource, teacher Elizabeth Rodríguez Rangel commented to the teacher in training who interviewed her, another important issue that we have not noticed and that was surely of interest to the normalista:

Before, when they left the normal school they were automatically given their place and it was very easy to enter the system, now it doesn't, it depends on how you come out in an exam and also on the spaces, you can have good results in the exams and simply not have a job

More than a resource for the teaching work, teacher Elizabeth exposed the contrast between the realities of the past that she lived and the present that she observes, a judgment that certainly corresponds to the facts, since certainly the economic law of supply and demand also applies to the hiring of professionals, having in recent years (in most of the states of Mexico) more supply than demand for teachers, leaving many education professionals "unemployed" (work-wise).

On this subject, at present, of course, the main reason why the process for entry into the professional teaching service is characterized by a growing competition among professionals for a place on a school campus to teach (either by contract or with a position), is the lower demand for teachers (due to the demographics of basic education students in the country). however, there are also other factors such as the inadequacy of the normal schools to reduce entrance fees and the legitimate right of many teachers who are candidates for retirement who do not begin the retirement process. These and other factors have complicated for the new

generations of teachers the certainty of exercising their profession when they graduate from the normal school.

### **Value judgements of retired teachers on the current use of information technologies for education**

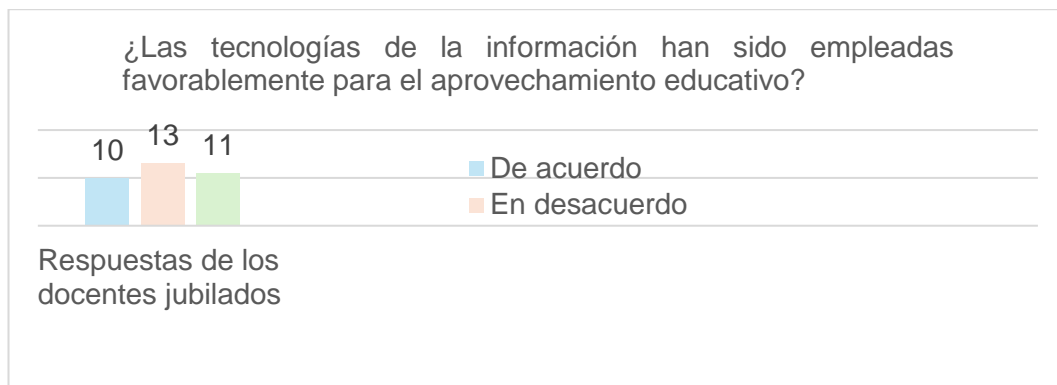
In this segment, giving a bit of continuity to the field of resources, we will address more than the memories of the educational past, the opinions that the interviewees had about the present reality regarding the pedagogical use of the technological tools available to education and teachers today. Without delving into definitions and typologies of technological resources, nor into the numerous investigations and currents that promote the use of these tools and propose methodologies for their didactic use, we will limit ourselves to exposing the judgments of the retired teachers interviewed regarding the educational power and usefulness that these resources can represent, which they did not have (internet, smartphones, tablets and computers that take advantage of Internet search engines and their sources, audiovisual and bibliographic platforms, etc.).

The various opinions on the role of information technologies as educational tools were obtained especially with the question: "Do you think that there is greater willingness and use in schools now than in those of the past?" Of course, the answers of the retired teachers interviewed recognized and ignored the benefits of information technologies as essential resources in contemporary classrooms, however, and partly unexpectedly, they pointed out that, if they are not used skillfully integrated into the didactic sequence and in the pedagogical rhetoric of teachers, even technological tools can be used. be counterproductive.

Education is going through a crisis that is the poor preparation of teachers at all levels, technology won us over, but on the negative side, in the comfort zone, students consult information, but do not reflect on it

Similar to the opinion just quoted by teacher Héctor Lazarín, Professor Samuel Rodríguez Prieto also expresses that, "despite economic and technological advances, the level of achievement of students is currently lower, students simply do not have reading comprehension, they believe they know how to read, but this is not the case."

After reading the transcripts of the interviews and reviewing the audios of the interviews, it was decided to count the opinions of the retired teachers in the spreadsheet of the program used for the analysis of the responses, and these were the results in terms of what was expressed by the teachers who made up the sample of retired teachers of Rincón de Romos. The accounting was based on their categorical opinion as to whether they consider that information technologies have been used favorably for educational achievement. Below is the representation of those categorical judgments that could be classified based on the reading of the interviews.



**Figure 4.** Response from retired teachers on the use of ICT in education

**Source:** Own elaboration. In original language Spanish

It is surprising that most of the interviewees were inclined to express that despite the versatility and usefulness of digital tools and information technologies for the educational field, they concluded that they weigh more the pernicious possibilities of their didactic use than the advantages that could be achieved with their use. For teacher María del Consuelo Trinidad (to mention an example), in the past, although "didactics insisted on memorization, children did understand because they memorized and the teacher gave the structural analysis and contextualization with what had an impact on the children, today it does not, there is an abundance of information but not comprehension.

Certainly there is already a serious debate in different academic circles, about how to apply technologies in education and how much they help to materialize learning, but it is not our purpose to take any side, but only to expose the judgment and vision of our subjects of study. However, it would not be superfluous to reconsider whether technologies are really that new cornerstone for education, or if they are a resource with a double-edged potential if they are not used within a didactic model in which the attention of teachers for the assimilation of content is superimposed on the simple consultation of information without relating it to the realities that the student lives.

On the above, as we are corroborating, certainly not all teachers maintain an uncritical position on the use of digital technologies and the internet for teaching in schools, but there are many revisionists about this new didactic paradigm that praises so much and proposes as essential the use of these resources. With what has been stated in these last paragraphs, this article may propose that as teachers we are critical of the discourses that promote the so-called educational innovation based on the interests of students and relying on new technologies, because perhaps they are overestimated or counterproductive models if the necessary pedagogical care is not taken.

Such speeches are curiously convenient for the computer market eager to sell equipment and software licenses to the government bodies in charge of education, resources that as we know need to be constantly renewed being a juicy business for the technology industry and the intermediary suppliers. Private higher education institutions also benefit from the idea of innovation and educational technology, since teachers appear as an important sector of the market (often the quality of customer is superimposed over that of master's students), to which



they can sell training, diplomas and postgraduate degrees, selling the idea of professionalizing courses when many times these "higher education" institutions do not even have a university library and in laughable cases (where they are offered exclusively online) not even with a campus.

In the case of Aguascalientes, there are few teachers who notice this reality, for example, the teacher and pedagogue Petra Llamas, calls for being careful with the use of technologies in education, considering that "students circumvent the regulations, being distracted and significantly reducing school performance." On the international scene, there are several authors (although with little media attention) who objectively put on the table the effects of the use of technologies on learning. Nicholas Carr, for example, beyond a frank feeling, argues with serious multidisciplinary scientific studies that, "we are becoming less intelligent, more closed-minded and intellectually limited by technology". In this sense, Michel Desmurget states that "there is no convincing evidence to sustain" that the school system would be strengthened by adapting to the revolution of digital tools, and that such a discourse constitutes "an urban legend".

It is not our purpose to delve into the debate or propose how much or how to use digital tools in the classroom. It was only considered pertinent to state that there are certainly serious approaches that share the diverse impressions of the teachers we were able to interview and who shared categorical opinions that are far from the tendency to blindly accept the new didactic-technological paradigm. This segment of the article could well close with the words of one of the educators who make up the sample of regional histories of teaching life. Maestro Arturo Ramos Navarro states (subject to the credit given to him by each reader), that:

There have been substantial changes in education, both for good and for bad, and although it is possible to generalize about the performance and conditions in which teachers are at different times, the vocation and aptitudes of each professional is a case in itself that may or may not be beneficial [...] Despite the improvements in resources, we have lost our compass within the educational process and we seek with technologies, although not all of us, not to give ourselves totally to work'

### **Testimonials on specific pedagogies and differentiated attention**

Although this segment could also be conceived as a resource (the pedagogical one), it was decided to expose it in only one segment in order to be more practical in the integration of the testimonies with their respective historical context in this article. Thus, we will concentrate below the accounts of the different histories of teaching life so that, from the collection of particular experiences, we can observe the reality of the educational past in aspects in which the similarities of the experiences allow us to make some generalizations.

Thus, in this area, we will cite the methods, manuals, books and other pedagogical inputs and strategies that the retired teachers interviewed by the normalistas remember having used. The appointments will be consecutive, trying to avoid extensively developing the historical fabric in the political, legal or statistical spheres, etc., of the aforementioned elements.

As for the pedagogical models of the past and the present, it is necessary to understand them as methodologies or theoretical approaches that in different periods have a greater or lesser popularity precisely due to the historical time in which they emerge and that for this reason



new pedagogical propositions constantly emerge as mentalities and social realities are transformed and also require changes in education. Although for many it is obvious, it is necessary to specify that there are no purist pedagogical models in their approaches, and that educational policies are not officially ascribed to certain models, but as with ideas, mentalities and culture, the prevailing pedagogy in the classroom is often eclectic.

It is important to consider that, in practice, the models overlap and remain in force in the constitution of the new ones; they intermingle and complement each other, although sometimes, they are usually contradictory. While it is true that some of them were conceived centuries or decades ago, their implementation or implementation always goes hand in hand with the political, ideological and economic interest of each society and context.

For this item, we begin with the testimony of the aforementioned teacher Ma. Rosa Robles (graduated in the fifties) and who recalls: "we worked on some things with a little book for the teacher, the Peniche book, it was simple and practical". The teacher does not say whether such a resource was listed as a methodological guide, syllabus or exercise manual, and although we will not go into it in depth, it is curious that even today there are retired teachers who have engraved in their memories those books with which they worked in their first professional years, in this case a resource that dates back to the mid-twentieth century. because the so-called "Peniche book" was one of the several works of the controversial and political Yucatecan rural professor of the early twentieth century, Prudencio Patrón Peniche.

In another tenor of pedagogical memories in the histories of our sample of testimonies, the Global Method of Structural Analysis stands out, a method of primary education very popular at the end of the seventies and in the eighties due to its integration into the books for teachers published and disseminated by the SEP for the level of basic education at a time when the educational priority in the country was still literacy.

This method, made up of various approaches to psychology and pedagogy since the end of the nineteenth century with Ovide Decroly, and others during the first half of the twentieth century in Europe, was consolidated into a paradigm for elementary or primary schools in the Western world by the middle of the century, so that national education systems (such as the Mexican one in our case) often formed their own manuals. About this methodology, teacher Silvia Díaz recalls:

A manual was used for the global method, they were books where we were marking what we were giving: teacher planning, stages and evaluation. We filled the 'sheets' with a feather being careful not to make a mistake since the few formats we had could be wasted.

Teacher María Trinidad, for her part, remembers having "been successful with the global method from the time she met it in the normal school and in the integrated books until the day she retired. It went from the general to the specific," he says. On the other hand, another story of teaching life maintains a different judgment on the aforementioned method, teacher Elizabeth Álvarez, relates:

When I started I couldn't find where to start or what method to use since the global method had been a failure, so we were invited to a course on the 'Minjarez' method which I attended and applied successfully.

As we can read and verify with these quotes, the teachers in our sample both agree on opinions on certain topics, as well as differ, a fact that we nevertheless expose (integrating all the memories or opinions) with the purpose of impartially concentrating the experience of each teacher in a historical time and in shared scenarios. On the other hand, teacher Ma. Elena Haro mentions other manuals and pedagogical campaigns with which she worked throughout her teaching career. The teacher relates:

Each six-year term brought its educational projects and new models (as is the case to date), I remember for example the courses they gave to the Teachers of Cultural Activities that were commissioned during the six-year term of De la Madrid; also in those years with the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education there were many changes for the teachers, not only in the administrative but also in the didactic.

What teacher Ma. Elena shares with us turns out to be an apt testimony of one of the greatest reforms of the Mexican educational system: the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education in Mexico (ANMEB) in May 1992. It was precisely during the six-year term of reforms of Carlos Salinas de Gortari that the Mexican teachers underwent a reform beyond the legal and political, since the SEP's domain was also decentralized over the curricular and pedagogical plans, transferring a certain autonomy to the state governments.

For teacher Elizabeth Rodríguez (who graduated from the normal school in the early eighties), after witnessing the ANMEB, she relates that "the plan of ninety-three was much better than those with which I had worked since my beginning, especially the Spanish, that was very good," and in her opinion, "the plans passed on ninety-three were very brief."

In another order of ideas, a very important issue in terms of specific pedagogies is that of the methodological strategies or resources used by teachers in the second half of the Mexican twentieth century to attend to students with different abilities. Our historical observance sample only recovered a testimony that addresses this issue since the instrument for oral history purposes did not integrate a specific approach to delve into that reality.

However, we will not limit ourselves to presenting only the testimony we have without briefly developing a historical account of the subject. It will not be necessary to clarify the meanings and changes in the terminology of special education, since especially this topic can hardly be exhausted in a paraphrase of historical balance, but we will try to offer an overview of the educational reality in this tenor which the members of our sample of teachers surely experienced.

Although the idea that educational school systems required special programs for the population with intellectual and physiological disabilities dates back to the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, it is during the first half of the twentieth century that institutions or programs aimed at caring for people with disabilities emerge (although with a more medical

than pedagogical approach). In the case of Mexico, of course, educational policies such as these would be considered after the establishment and institutionalization of the new regime (once it had a functioning educational system).

After the creation of the SEP in 1921, it took more than a decade for special education in Mexico to be one of the aims of the national education system, of course it was a purpose of little priority due to the urgency to train teachers, develop elementary programs, teach the population to read and write and build schools throughout the country. "It was in 1938 when the need arose for the care of the population with disabilities [...] and at the same time the training of specialized teachers", however, the scope was limited to the political center of the country, and despite other significant efforts in the sixties, the scope was insufficient both in terms of coverage and budget.

Certainly, the Mexican educational system had priorities that the educational authorities overcame the issue of differentiated attention, on the other hand, the socioeconomic conditions of the country and the little or no knowledge (even in medical, academic, pedagogical, political and society circles in general) about physical, psychological or cognitive conditions that affect school performance, resulted in an adverse reality for special education (not only in Mexico) to be relegated from educational priorities.

An example of this (as far as our testimonies are concerned) is that of the teacher Ma. del Refugio Araiza Cruz (graduated from CRENA at the end of the seventies), and to whom we thank for her sincerity in sharing one of the pedagogical challenges that most marked her from her first years as a teacher. The then young teacher who worked in the community of Santa María de la Paz, Zacatecas, on one occasion cried of helplessness because despite her efforts as a teacher she felt insufficient. The interviewee relates:

I had a deaf and mute girl, but the mother never told me about her daughter's condition for fear that she might reject her and I lasted several days without realizing it until I took roll call and saw that she did not respond [...] I brought some people to support her even though I fought to get them to listen to me in Zacatecas, but perhaps they went twice and they were not specialists, they improvised. I got a device, but it didn't work [...] This case affected me a lot as a teacher because I felt that I did not know how to deal with it.

As we can see, the teacher's testimony shows the general reality of special education in Mexico even in the seventies, from the family, institutional and of course pedagogical levels. A story that is applauded both for its professional honesty and for its role as a historical source of realities of the past for which the institutions that fortunately we have today were created.

Perhaps the efforts of the Multiple Attention Centers (CAM) and the Regular Education Support Services Units (USAER) are still insufficient, but at least they already exist as consolidated institutions in the Mexican educational system that represent support for regular teachers in educational situations that in the past were left unprotected.

For nearly a century, the growth of special education was very slow. It was not until 1970 that, with the creation of the General Directorate of Special Education (DGEE), the formation of special schools throughout the country was triggered. [...] Regardless

of its organization, special education was very much at the bottom of the organizational charts of the state Secretariats of Education. The signing of the ANMEB [...] produced great changes [...] in the orientation of the services, as they began to work from a medical model to a social-educational model

### **General conclusions**

The purpose of complementing the History of Education workshop in Aguascalientes with an exercise of approach to the regional educational reality of the past (through testimonies of retired teachers), turned out to be a productive and pertinent didactics of oral history for the normalista students in the sense that, not only did they notice the changes in the work of the education professional in areas such as culture, but also social, pedagogical and political, but also had a vocational approach due to the generational empathic connection with the interviewed teachers.

As for the methodological principles that guided us to break down the experiences of our regional educational historical study, the experience of the syncretism of theoretical approaches to be considered for our exercise of historical observance was productive, because although we may have been novices in qualitative research, we consider that it is better to dare empirical research without neglecting technical approaches. than not daring to be social researchers for fear of failing by following purist methodological manuals.

It is evident that the object of study, the historical context given to the sources, the contrasts and value judgments regarding the observed past realities that we cite and the current educational reality that we live, were elements that could be integrated not without much effort into a digestible product that is this article. A document that, although it took time to consolidate, turns out to be a collection of interesting and valuable testimonies of the regional educational history of Rincón de Romos, which nevertheless from these fragments of life stories we can conceive as an input to recognize certain realities of education in Mexico in the second half of the last century. In this sense, this article is understood as the final result of the normalista compilations of the testimonies of the teaching work of dozens of teachers at the local level, to whom we were able to give a historical framework to their stories.

On the other hand, the article could represent a resource that to a certain extent recognizes the bonanzas of the past pedagogical models that are often demerited and that would rather be perceptive in superimposing on the teaching profession the advantages that the different currents of the traditional models and the new school offer. Nor is it a question, as Abílio Amiguiño points out, of nostalgically defending a culture around the school that no longer exists, but "yes, valuing the school of the communities, which [...] it became a factor of identity and that it was toned as a sign of its existence".

One of the conclusions that we were able to reach with the sharing of the testimonies, the contrasts of the classroom reality of the past with that of the present and with the conformation of the present is that many of the skills of the teaching work are developed empirically, just as professional introspection arises with years of experience and the objective comparison of the educational realities that teachers live and of which they witness their changes.

In another order of ideas, it is important to highlight the great challenge that undertook this activity of historical observance for the group that made up the complementary workshop History of Education in Aguascalientes..., since the difficulty was magnified by undertaking a

hybrid model of assistance that was new for the academy of the normal school at a time of uncertainty despite the decrease of the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of this, this circumstance was an area of opportunity that was overcome with relative success, since a culture of online school work was generated in most of the students of the optional course, even when the habit of autonomous study had not been fully consolidated in the students.

In general terms, the implementation and outcome of the historical observance exercise enriched the knowledge of the normalistas of the educational past in the region, which was the purpose of the workshop History of Education in Aguascalientes. A historical review for the reflection of the teaching role, so that history was learned in an unconventional way (as it is with the bibliographic review or the attention to the teaching exposition), but the students assumed an active rather than passive role in the learning of historical processes, giving credence to recommendations such as that of David Mariezkurrena, author who states that, "involving students in an interview, whose purpose is to know a historical aspect, [...] allows us to understand that we are all witnesses to history, as well as that there are different meanings of an event according to the different people who value them."

With the variety of the testimonies we were able to obtain a panorama that, as we have insisted, beyond our region of study (Rincón de Romos), we can reflect historical realities that were constant in the macro-region or even in the country, so that "an investigation can be based on the life history of a person, or resort to the stories of several to build a topic from plural voices", because as Fernando Durán rightly points out, "the history of the self is always a collective history".

The enterprise of recovering testimonies about the educational past and contrasting them with the realities of education today also shaped in students a historical awareness that conceives mentalities and paradigms as ideas in constant change that, although in certain times are dominant, are subject to a process of transformation that integrates various areas of knowledge and culture. a fact that is more evident today due to the precipitous cultural changes as an effect of globalization. Thus, the normalistas learned history in their training in a discovering way, observing general historical realities from the facts and particular testimonies, because as José M. Borrás rightly states, "the history class in the normal schools, although it is formally separated from the history didactics class, cannot be done apart from the latter"

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