

---

## *Alternativa metodológica para el análisis de documentos históricos en la asignatura Historia de Cuba*

### *Methodological alternative for the analysis of historical documents in the subject History of Cuba*

**Graciela Velázquez-Ramos**

**Marbelis Cuesta-Martínez**

**Neyda Machuca-Abreu**

CUM Niceto Pérez García, Universidad de Guantánamo, Cuba

**Correo electrónico(s):**

gracielavr@cug.co.cu

marbeliscm@cug.co.cu

---

Recibido: 12 de marzo de 2017

Aceptado: 22 de octubre de 2017

---

**Resumen:** Conociendo la estrecha relación del trabajo metodológico con las exigencias sociales que se concretan en los objetivos que se establecen en los programas de estudio y que es además la actividad que contribuye a elevar la preparación del docente, se plantea como objetivo diseñar una alternativa metodológica para el fortalecimiento del análisis de documentos históricos en la asignatura Historia de Cuba. Se asume como alternativa metodológica una opción con que cuenta el docente para trabajar con los estudiantes, partiendo de su estructura y de las indicaciones que deben cumplirse para proceder en las clases de Historia de Cuba.

**Palabras clave:** Documentos históricos; Pasos metodológicos; Trabajo metodológico; Historia de Cuba

---

**Abstract:** Knowing the close relationship of methodological work with the social demands specified in the objectives of the study programs, and the activity that contributes to enhancing the teacher's preparation, the objective of this paper is to design a methodological alternative for strengthening the analysis of historical documents in the subject History of Cuba. It is assumed as a methodological alternative an option that the teacher has to work with students, because of its structure and the indications to be accomplished in the History of Cuba lessons.

**Keywords:** Historical documents; Methodological steps; Methodological work; History of Cuba

---

## **Introduction**

The methodological work has an important place in the preparation of teachers of History of Cuba to face the education of historical knowledge, habits, skills and values in students. The historical background that has prevailed in the methodological work of the subject History of Cuba can be divided in three stages related to different historical moments:

- First stage: from 1959 to 1976, this coincides with the creation of the National Adult Education System.

The triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 caused a transcendental change in the socio-economic structure and in the superstructure of society. In the teaching of history, important transformations in their historiographical conceptions occurred with the application of Historical Materialism in the approaches, and with the urgent search and dissemination of historical truth, so distorted by the texts used for the subject throughout the neocolonial stage. The transformations made in the History programs are more than a simple modernization, since the methodology is rehabilitated as a pedagogical science, with a Marxist approach.

The National System of Adult Education was created as a subsystem of general education, where teachers entered the program as literacy teachers without pedagogical training and adequate preparation to work on the content of History of Cuba. The Institute for Educational Improvement was created, which organized seminars for this purpose, history guides were prepared by the national technical consultancy, however, there is no bibliographical reference to the need to use and analyze historical documents in the lessons. In the Congress of Education and Culture the concerns stated took the form of resolutions and recommendations, and a revision work initiated revealed the improvement of the system that was put into practice and within this the Adult Education.

The methodological work category was introduced in pedagogical practice in 1975 though there are no references to the use of a methodology with a logical sequence of methodological steps to perform the analysis of historical documents. The obligation to its use in Cuban History classes and that the teacher must teach the students to interpret them, was fundamentally referred to in the theses and resolutions of the Congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba and the classics of Marxism.

In the decade of the 70's important texts were published on methodology and didactics; they were of great utility for the teachers. Some of them are: *Methodology of the education of the History* (1974), of Silvia Nereida Pérez; *History, didactic subjects* (1974), and *Selection of readings of methodical of the education of the History* (1974), of T. Constantino; they made

reference to the analysis of historical documents, but only taking into account the selection of paragraphs, their interpretation, and the historical importance thereof.

- Second stage: from 1976 to 1990, implementation of the educational improvement plan.

The analysis of the historical documents, reflected in normative or methodological documents of the subject as *Methodology of the teaching of History* (1985), by Rita Marina Álvarez and Horacio Díaz, is a document through which it has been possible to systematize the historical character and the behavior of the indicators in the development of the methodological work related to the History of Cuba, as well as the process of analyzing the historical documents. In the above mentioned work, reference was made to the possibilities offered by the historical document, that is to say: what they can be used for? But the "how" was not addressed, a situation that is repeatedly found in the studied normative documents.

As part of the process of improvement, seminars for leaders, methodologists and inspectors of the provincial and national directorates of education that began to be developed with the purpose of enhancing their preparation to direct the educational teaching process. However, a guide, a methodology was not proposed, instead, the "how" was left to the creativity of teachers. The methodological work was conceptually approached and the teacher had methodological orientations that helped him in his pedagogical development, to structure particularities of the methodology of the teaching of the subject, which guided his preparation, and in relation to the analysis of the historical documents, helped him maintain a uniform procedure, however, the same insufficiencies remained.

The program of study and the methodological guidelines, although posing the obligation of processing the analysis of historical documents, did not meet the needs of teachers in relation to the methodological steps that must be followed to work on the analysis of historical documents. In 1985 the text *Methodology of the teaching of History*, by Rita Marina Álvarez and others was published. The text contributed to the methodological preparation of teachers in their pedagogical practice.

- Third stage: from 1990 to the present, this coincides with the Third Educational Revolution.

Methodological work is regulated by Ministerial Resolution 150/10, which refers to the Regulation of Methodological Work; where the definition of methodological work is specified in article one, such as:

(The) system of activities that is permanently and systematically designed and executed by the management boards at the different levels and types of Education to upgrade the political-ideological, pedagogical-methodological and scientific preparation of the officials at the different levels, and the graduated teachers and those in training through the teaching-methodological and scientific-methodological directions, in order to put them in a position to efficiently direct the process (p.4).

In the bibliographic review it was possible to confirm that attention is paid to work with historical documents, which is reflected in the development of the preparation seminars for educators from 2000 to 2009. According to the bibliographical study carried out in 2010, PhD. Luisa de los Ángeles Rodríguez Domínguez wrote the article *Historical documents: its usefulness as a means of evaluating*, to deal with important elements related to the analysis of historical documents that serve as reference in this research.

Knowing the close relationship of methodological work with the social demands that are specified in the objectives established in the study programs, and that is also the activity that contributes to enhancing the teacher's preparation, the objective of our research is to design a methodological alternative for strengthening of the analysis of historical documents in the subject History of Cuba.

According to the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy, an *alternative* is the option to choose between several things, possibility, and proposal. In this research we assumed as a methodological alternative for the analysis of historical documents an option that the teacher has to work with students. Based on its structure, we provide indications to proceed in the lessons of the subject History of Cuba.

## **Development**

The social sciences are called to play a decisive role to ensure the quality of education, which will safeguard national identity, train the new man, and cultivate his intelligence. In this sense, the teaching of the history of Cuba occupies a significant place because it

contributes to the comprehensive preparation of the new generations under the principles of loving and defending the Revolution and its many achievements.

In this regard, Fidel Castro (1982) expressed:

The study of the history of our country will not only illustrate our consciences, it will not only illustrate our thinking... the study of the history of our country will help to find an inexhaustible source of spirit of sacrifice, fighting and combative spirit (p.65).

This calls the teacher to a greater preparation from the methodological work, having to contextualize the programs to the concrete conditions of the environment where he develops his pedagogical work.

The systematization carried out on the methodological work favored the creation of an alternative based on guiding ideas as a synthesis of the structural and functional foundations that serve as a guide in the solution of the different causes present in the problem investigated.

They are:

1. Integrating and derivative character between the social demands of the Education of Young People and Adults (EDJA in Spanish) and its adjustment to the particularities of the Laborers' Faculty (FOC in Spanish).
2. Link between the methodological work and the implementation of the alternative followed by the teachers. This idea has its genesis in the central character of the methodological work, the way to develop the methodological workshop.

The methodological workshop is chosen as it is a work choice where the participants join in small groups to make practical learning according to the objectives proposed, for the practical demonstration and the solution of tasks with a productive sense. It becomes a didactic creation space that generates knowledge in teachers in a continuous way.

The workshop is supported by the following methodological steps:

- Definition of the objectives: the objective of each particular workshop is taken into account, which contributes to train teachers based on the rigorous, careful and organized selection of the problem to be addressed and the subject to be addressed.

- Determination of the components and their function: each of the workshops is a component that makes up the alternative and has a specific role in fulfilling its objective.
- Determining the structure: the workshops are structured in stages that do not mean in any way rigidity in their execution, they constitute suggestions that must be adapted according to the nature of the methodological problem.

Stages of development of the workshops:

- Characterization of the methodological problem: it constitutes the guiding thread for the development of the workshops. The facilitator should explain to the audience the reasons that support the problem in question: inadequacies in the level of preparation of teachers to deal with the analysis of historical documents, which affects the teaching - learning process. In this stage the general objective of the workshops will be stated.
- Group organization: the workshops will be properly organized as a way to guarantee its correct execution; professional tasks will be assigned as well as the time available. This stage is decisive for teachers to understand the methodological objectives of each workshop, also relying on self-preparation for this activity.
- Execution, reflection and group debate: this stage is fundamental and depends on the previous two. The teams, previously formed, assume the leading role in the interventions based on the reflections made, the assigned tasks are executed, and the possible causes of the methodological problem object of analysis are discussed and deepened. The self-preparation level is put to the test; the criteria to be defended, in addition, the experiences are exchanged, analyzed and exposed to reach a consensus. This stage should be assigned as previously as possible in order to grant good preparation. The domain of the general facilitator of the workshops should be highlighted in order to conduct the debate and specify the registration of the main agreements.
- Final assessment stage: as the name indicates, the facilitator who has organized the workshops must make the final conclusions and assessments of the results. The criteria and opinions of the participants are heard on what has contributed to them in their pedagogical and professional preparation; the best contributions are to be recognized and the development of the workshop evaluated.

The proposed stages can be combined according to the criteria initially stated. There must be a document that summarizes the work of the workshops and the main agreements duly registered.

#### Time distribution

1. Stage of characterization of the methodological problem, 10 minutes.
2. Stage of group organization, 15 minutes.
3. Stage of execution, reflection and group discussion, 1 hour and 40 minutes.
4. Final evaluation stage, 25 minutes.
5. Total: 2 hours and 30 minutes, it will arrive at 3 hours when the moment requires it.

#### **Planning the workshops**

In the August preparatory week, at the beginning of the course when most methodological meetings take place, is the perfect time and place to present the theme and the workshop will be oriented. The other workshops will be held in the months of October, November, December, March, April and May, always on Monday in the first week, with the purpose of organizing the work of the month. The last one will be developed in the first week of June to evaluate the results achieved during the development of the methodological work and the educational process. Workshops one and eight are not organized in stages like the others but they still have introduction, development and conclusions.

#### **Features that characterize the methodological workshops:**

- Relatively stable result: the preparation of the teachers and those who direct the workshop must guarantee the permanent quality in the development of each of the workshops for a better understanding of the historical document analyzed.
- They must respond to an objective of educational theory and practice.
- The activities must be based on a totally practical objective.
- Each activity should have a logical process.
- Flexible nature: they are applied according to the specific conditions of each center and the needs of each teacher; it is also permissible to introduce or omit questions or paragraphs of

the selected documents that allow understanding and analyzing the historical document in a more efficient way.

- Control: the depth of self-preparation of teachers will be checked through written questions, debate, classroom controls, exhibitions in the workshops, and will be evaluated qualitatively (E, B, R, M) or quantitatively (e.g.: 5 points, 4, 3, 2).

### **Workshop schedule**

Workshop 1: Laboratory opening workshop. How to analyze a historical document?

Workshop 2: Against annexation: favoring a Cuban Cuba and not an Anglo-Saxon Cuba.

Workshop 3: Letter from Carlos Manuel de Céspedes to C. Sumner of August 10, 1871: on behalf of an entire town.

Workshop 4: Vindication of Cuba: a strong response.

Workshop 5: *Septembrismo*: reflection of a revolutionary attitude.

Workshop 6: History will absolve me: an exemplary attitude.

Workshop 7: Helms-Burton Law: continuity of an annexationist goal.

Workshop 8: Results balance.

Workshop 1: Laboratory opening workshop.

It is a collective and group activity with the aim of transforming the negative experiences of teachers detected in the control to the educational process. The main deficiencies are noted to project the new lines of methodological work of the subject.

It will be developed in the preparatory week of August, after the cloister or the methodological meeting, according to the planning of the center.

Day: Friday of the August preparatory week.

Time: 2 hours, 30 minutes.

Directing: department head and the researcher.

Participants: History teachers.

In the introductory part of the workshop, the author of this work together with the department head refer to the reasons that lead to the realization of the necessity of the workshops, emphasizing the problems detected in the different forms of control of the educational process during the previous course, among them the one related to the methodological steps to perform the analysis of historical documents.

Objective: to discuss the main problems presented in the control of the educational process during the previous course related to the methodological steps for the analysis of historical documents, and to project the work in the new school year to achieve the strengthening of methodological work in the subject History of Cuba

Methods: analysis, synthesis, cooperative construction.

Development

Methodological suggestions to develop the activity

An analysis of the main difficulties detected in the classroom controls during the previous course will be made. There is a need to make workshops with the aim of strengthening the methodological work in the subject History of Cuba in relation to the analysis of historical documents. Teachers are made aware that these methodological steps for the analysis of historical documents and their application require quality development to ensure their assimilation and subsequent application with and by students. They are designed from the simplest to the most complex content because the teaching of the History of Cuba is a gradual and ascending process that must be developed from the easy to the difficult.

Learning to analyze historical documents will become a skill based activity whether or not the methodological steps are mastered for this purpose, these are merely actions used to perform the operation.

Historical documents are understood as the material testimony of a fact or act performed in the exercise of the functions by institutions or individuals, whether legal, public or private, or registered in an information unit in any type of support. It is the testimony of a human activity, that is, a written source for the knowledge of the history accumulated by humanity, which contains the essential knowledge for the understanding of the essential features of

each epoch and historical place, object of study, elements that serve to comprehend the historical content.

Historical documents are classified as graphic or symbolic media because they are printed, and their content represents or expresses a certain production relationship, the characteristics of an era, etc. They are evaluated for this purpose as means of teaching. The teacher has to teach the student to follow a path to discover the content of the historical document (Rodríguez, 2010).

### **Possibilities provided by the historical document and its analysis in History classes:**

- motivate the teacher's explanation through the reading of fragments
- to propose a problem
- as a source of documentation for the organization of a debate in and outside of class
- make conclusions by the students and teachers
- consolidation of ideas
- as study material
- answer questions
- prepare summaries

### **Brief explanation of the methodological steps:**

1- Familiarization reading: means to carry out a first reading to determine the historical context in which the document was elaborated, class position of the author, information about terms, facts or characters.

2- Selection of keywords and unknown words: means selecting in the text those words that determine the content of the same, and those which are new to the vocabulary of the reader.

3- Reading of the study and analysis of the historical document: it means to relate the results of the study with the previous knowledge, compare documents that refer to the same topic and arrive at conclusions.

To read historical documents and know the facts of the past, it is necessary to bear in mind that the documents do not reflect what happened but rather a point of view about the events, which depend to a large extent on who is the author of the document and in what circumstances he wrote it.

This reading and analysis of the document is necessary to carry out the debate, and determine the theme and objectives of the document, own opinions about the topic and their respective arguments, organize ideas with logic and in a scientific manner, expose the ideas developed, analyze the exhibitions of other participants (note positive, negative, correct or erroneous reasoning), mentally elaborate and expose new arguments that complete or refute the ideas presented.

4- Location in space and time: means to determine the place and date of writing and publication of the historical document.

5- Conditions in which the document was written, and who or who wrote it to determine the historical framework in which the author(s) wrote the document, and their names. Each source is evaluated according to the historical context of the time (what arguments the author uses according to his political interests or his social location).

6- Ideas contained: select paragraphs that are key, analyze them, contextualize them, and summarize the central ideas, this includes:

- Making a written report: determining the objectives of the report, preparing the information, carrying out a detailed study and analysis of the material to be reported, and establishing the essentials based on the analysis carried out.
- Presenting an oral report: defining the idea or subject to be presented; locating and studying the basic information; determining the secondary ideas that will serve as explanation, demonstrating and assessing the main issue; logically organizing the ideas to be presented; making a clear and coherent approach to the matter.

7- Determine the historical significance of the document: look for the arguments that determine the relevance and transcendence of the document in history.

The purpose of the analysis of historical documents is to guide students and teachers towards a critical understanding of historical problems. It should constitute a guide in the conduct of the teaching-learning process of the students, a very useful tool for the development of skills in the teachers that have to be encouraged also in the students.

After this necessary explanation, the theme of the first workshop and the tasks to be carried out as part of the preparation of the participants are assigned.

Topic.- Against annexation: for a Cuban Cuba and not an Anglo-Saxon Cuba.

Author.- José Antonio Saco.

Activities are to be carried out by the teachers in their self-preparation for the development of the first workshop and to give an outlet to the guide of methodological steps.

1- Select the key and unknown words that will be the main thread of the analysis and define them.

Keyword suggestion: annexation, identity, nationality

2- Make a brief characterization of the historical context in which José Antonio Saco wrote the document.

3- What is your opinion of Saco's attitude? Why?

4- Select some paragraphs that are key within the document, analyze them, contextualize them and summarize the central ideas.

Paragraph suggestion:

- Contemplating what Cuba is under the Spanish government, and what would be incorporated into the United States, it seems that all Cubans should ardently desire annexation; but this change, so flattering, offers great difficulties and dangers once done.

- (...) the annexation, in the final result, would not be annexation, but the absorption of Cuba by the United States. Truth is that the Island, geographically considered, would not disappear from the Antilles group; but I would like Cuba to separate itself, by any event, from the trunk to which it belongs, always remaining for Cubans, and not for a foreign race. Let us never forget (as I wrote, a few months ago to one of my most expensive friends) that

the Anglo-Saxon race differs greatly from ours because of its origin, its language, its religion and its habits and customs; and that, since he feels he has the strength to balance the number of Cubans, he will aspire to the political direction of Cuba's businesses; and will get it as our protector or guardian and much more advanced than us in matters of government.

- (...) Cubans will be excluded, according to the same law, from all or almost all jobs: and it is a painful spectacle that the children, who are the real masters of the country, find themselves abandoned by an upstart race. I have seen this in other places, and I know that in my country I would also see it; and maybe I would also see that Cubans, given to pain and despair, go to arms and provoke a civil war (...) I wish that Cuba was not only rich, enlightened, moral and powerful, but it was Cuban Cuba and not an Anglo-Saxon Cuba: The idea of immortality is sublime, because it prolongs the existence in individuals beyond the grave; and nationality is the immortality of the people and the purest origin of patriotism.

5- What experience does Saco's message bring to the Cuban people?

6-What was the meaning of the annexation to the United States for Saco?

7- What are the reasons of a whole people to desire a Cuban Cuba and not Anglo-Saxon?

8- Based on the analysis of the document and following the thread of the keywords, summarize the historical significance of the same.

## Conclusions

The author of this work and the head of department will make the conclusions of the workshop evaluating qualitatively and quantitatively the participation of each teacher in it.

## Conclusions

The methodological alternative recommended in the paper has a structure that propitiates, based in the proposed methodological steps, the preparation of the teachers for making the students carry out an adequate analysis of the historical documents.

In the selection of the proposed workshops it is necessary to take into account not only the nature of the task, but also the preparation of the teachers for their solution, and to awaken

the interest of the students for the subject to strengthen the knowledge about the historical documents in particular and the history of Cuba in general.

### **Bibliographic references**

Addine Fernández, F. y otros. (2004). *Didáctica teoría y práctica*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.

Álvarez de Zayas, R. M. y Díaz Pendás, H. (1985). *Metodología de la Enseñanza de la Historia I y II*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.

Castellanos Simons, D. (2002). *Aprender y Enseñar en la escuela, una concepción desarrolladora*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.

Castro Ruz, F. (1982). *Selección de discursos sobre temas históricos. Discurso pronunciado en la velada conmemorativa de los Cien Años de lucha en historia de la Revolución Cubana*. La Habana: Editora Política.

Constantino, T. (1974). *Historia, temas didácticos*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.

Constantino, T. (1974a). *Selección de lecturas de metódica de la enseñanza de la Historia*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.

*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*. Diccionario Encarta.

Ministerio de Educación. (2010). *Reglamento del Trabajo Metodológico del Ministerio de Educación*. Resolución No. 150/10 Ministra de Educación de la República de Cuba. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.

Nereida Pérez, S. (1974). *Metodología de la Enseñanza de la Historia*. La Habana: Pueblo y Educación.

Prats, J. (2000). Histodidáctica, enseñanza de la Historia. Didáctica de las Ciencias Sociales. *Revista de teoría y didáctica de las Ciencias Sociales*, 5. Recuperado de <http://www.saber.ula.ve> Revistas

Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba (1978). *Sobre Política Educacional. Tesis y Resoluciones*. La Habana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del PCC.

Rodríguez Domínguez, L. de los Á. (2010, julio-diciembre). Los documentos históricos: su utilidad como medio de evaluación docente. *Revista del Instituto de Estudios en Educación*, 13. Recuperado de [rcientificas.uninorte.edu.co/index.php/zona/article/view/1175/786](http://rcientificas.uninorte.edu.co/index.php/zona/article/view/1175/786)

Rodríguez Fernández, M. (2010). ¿Cómo fortalecer la preparación metodológica? *Cuaderno de Educación*, 2 ( 20). Recuperado de [www.eumed.net/rev/ced/20/rtbb.htm](http://www.eumed.net/rev/ced/20/rtbb.htm)

Saco, J. A. (1974). *Contra la anexión*. La Habana: Ciencias Sociales.