



INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

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**ANALYSIS OF THE BICENTENNIAL COLLECTION  
"OUR REPUBLICAN HISTORY"**

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**ABSTRACT**

Education is the cornerstone for the formation of citizens and the development of their nations, which is why the texts that are used for their understanding need to be precise, clear and avoid subjectivity. This paper analyzes the book of the Bicentennial Collection for sophomores in secondary education, *Our Republican History*. The main purpose is to study whether this textbook has the necessary elements to develop fair, open and objective education in Venezuela. In other words, it seeks to evaluate whether by using this textbook as the main tool for the learning process, it allows students to be fuelled by the Venezuelan historical process from a neutral, critical and rational viewpoint.

**KEY WORDS:** Textbook - History - Republican history – Education - social sciences - politics.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

School textbooks represent a continuing source of information, so there are several factors that influence them. Within these factors there are variables such as their content, their structure, their shape, their values, they factors they omit and those they highlight. All these elements are variable and unique within each school textbook.

That is why they must be written in a subjective way to develop critical analysis in those who study them. Similarly, an influential factor is the ability and training of those people (teachers) who guide their students to the lesson of a variety of topics within it. The following study analyzes the content of the textbook *Our Republican History* of the Bicentennial Collection regarding little objectivity and intention to "indoctrinate" those who study it. To do this, we will use specialized authors on the subject as Georges Duby and Emilio Castillejo Cambra, Jacques LeGoff, and other authors which should help to understand this phenomenon in the textbook *Our Republican History*.

Likewise, we will carry out the analysis of some images presented in the text to be analyzed since, according to Rodríguez (1977), "the dialectic between verbal and iconic language is the basic core of the semi-didactic act. Therefore, it seems necessary that the iconic codes intervene in nature in teaching in close connection with verbal codes." (P.32).

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The text *Our Republican History* presents Venezuelan historical facts from the agrarian republic to the presidency of former president Hugo Chavez in 2012. However, this paper does not contain the analysis of all chapters of said school textbook or all the images in it, but only those that express more clearly the intentions of the Bolivarian government to impose socialism at the expense of liberal policies.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The analysis of this piece of research will be conducted through qualitative research that is defined by Martínez (2006) as "that which attempts to identify the profound nature of realities, their dynamic structure, one that gives full account of their behavior and manifestations"(p.1).

At the same time, we will carry out a content analysis because it is the analysis of the ideas expressed in the text, as explained by Holsti (1969), it is a technique which "allows inferences based on specific characteristics that are identified in messages"(p. 12).

#### **4. RESULTS**

When analyzing the school textbook *Our Republican History*, it is evident that it does not comply with the fundamental principle based on the fact that the historian has the duty of "verifying, criticizing himself, controlling, demonstrating that what he says corresponds fully to this objective truth that keep the tracks with which one works"(Duby, 1994, p.5).

By applying elements such as manipulation of truth or fact of omitting important elements of history, plus the use of images and subliminal messages on students, it was proved that the text was carried out under socialist ideals inclined toward the regime of Hugo Chavez that remains today under the figure of Nicolas Maduro. This text lacks objectivity and accuracy so it is impossible for young people to develop their own analyzes and conclusions; which results in their not being able to choose the political model that will bring them more benefits according to their needs.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

By nature, humans are the product of a series of elements such as our culture, our thoughts and beliefs. They are built around a historical and social context that will inevitably influence our behavior. A consequence of this is the inability to remain neutral and objective about our view of history. However, the historian performs the function of studying the "task" of individuals along a given historical process, so he should stay away from his visions and beliefs and act as a judge when faced with these processes.

In contrast to the above, LeGoff (1997), affirms that *"the historian cannot abandon his humanity so that it is impossible for him to be objective and leave the cultural and social context to which he belongs"* (p.32) Moreover, school textbooks represent an essential means for the development of education. They remain, despite the effects of globalization and technology, being the primordial material in most educational institutions around the world. Therefore, they represent an important factor in the formation of thoughts of those who study them, Roda (sf) states that "the way to learn and how or through what you learn influences knowledge of the subject on his own activity" (p.1).

Thus, from the first pages of the text, *Our Republican History*, the affirmation of LeGoff regarding the inability to break away from subjectivity is evident. In the first section of the school textbook, *For high school students of the XXI century*, there are manipulations by the government to support the current Bolivarian regime. In its own words, it says that "You have in your hands a book that you have received for free," adding that this was the only government that has managed to perform this task successfully. However the fallacy of this statement is common knowledge because previous governments such as those of Raul Leoni and Carlos Andres Perez offered more free books than those offered by the current political regime.

On the same page, specifically in the last paragraph, there is another factor that tries to establish a relationship between the student and the Bolivarian revolution where high school students are urged to study for their own good, for the good of their family and for the country as youth represents "the future of this country that the Liberator gave us". To understand the latter, we must emphasize that Chavez government was the one that rescued the figure of Bolivar to establish a national identity in Venezuela and an intimate connection between him and the people, so Chávez and Bolívar are linked under the common denominator of saviors of the country.

Moreover LeGoff (1997) states that the historian Has no right to pursue a demonstration in spite of the evidence, to defend a cause, whatever it may be, he should establish the truth and make it manifest. But it is impossible for him to be objective, to disregard his conceptions of man, especially when it comes to measure the importance of facts and their causal relationships (p. 32).

The remoteness from reality actually found in the studied text is overwhelming, the social, economic, scientific, technological and international advances of the government of Chavez Frías (p. 183). Then figures are presented on page 187 as regards illiteracy in Venezuela, the text says "Venezuela now has only 0.1% of illiteracy, which is well below the 4% target aimed at by UNESCO in the world" (p. 187), so the Venezuelan state was declared free of illiteracy. However, they "forget" to clarify the sad reality of Venezuelan society. While it is true that Venezuela was declared free of illiteracy, it is also true that the census in 2011 showed that the illiteracy rate was 5.23%, which means a step back from the achieved success. Moreover, according to Professors of economics and Latin American studies at Wesleyan University, they asserts that "there is no official statistics to record such an achievement and, if the government used the reports of its facilitators, the figures can be highly overrated"

Another aspect that derives from the statements of LeGoff is reflected on page 185, where the progress of the Bolivarian Revolution in the development of public safety and national defense is described. The text tells us that, in order to provide better comprehensive training to national security forces, the UNES (Experimental Security University) was created, from where, in 2012, 10,389 officers graduated. However, there is another hidden fact behind all this. According to the Metropolitan Observatory on Citizen Security of Caracas, built on the basis of official and unofficial figures, the year 2011 represents the most violent year on record in the history of our country. Moreover, the Global Study on Homicides, published by the UN "placed Venezuela as the South American country with the highest rate of kidnappings, unofficial figures showed that, in 2011, 1,150 cases were reported in the country, ie, three daily"(p.1).

The above mentioned aspect can also be evidenced in the theory of Villoro et al. (2005), In the text *History, Why ?*, these authors explain an essential feature of history, it is that history seeks to explain the why of our present, which is why the historian cannot withdraw from the present even if he writes about past events. However, this factor acts in various ways in terms of interests. In their words, they expressed that

The former is a general interest proper to the species, the latter is particular to our group, our class, our community. This is why it is so difficult to separate in history what has to do with science from what has to do with ideology (p. 41).

Images also represent a very important feature in school textbooks. The image has in itself an essential element, through it hundreds of ideas that are not contained in the speech text can be expressed, thus the function of the image is not only to provide beauty and order to the text, instead, the image has its own life, it has the ability to detonate the subjectivity and emotions of an individual. Espinosa (2002) states that images, in addition to their cognitive aspects, "carry associated subjective aspects that are difficult to unravel, thus being considered in the communication process mediated by it" (p.3).

This way, on page 131 you can see a terrifying image represented by "Uncle Sam" (the graphical representation of the US government), with red eyes and sharp claws, who wants to take possession of Cuba in a completely macabre way. This could have a subliminal message for young people who are just beginning to study the Republican History and the imperialism of the United States is intended to be idealized as the worst evil of the nation. At the same time, it is interesting to note that one of the "tasks" of this unit is to express what this specific image suggests,

which seems to be indoctrination against capitalism and especially against the United States, a rival country of the Bolivarian Revolution.

Additionally, a little above in the text, on page 127, there is another image, this time significantly larger, corresponding to the issue of the Governing Board. This image describes that, on the hand of Uncle Sam, were Romulo Betancourt, Rafael Caldera and Wolfgang Larrazabal. What this image demonstrates is how these three possible governments were absolutely controlled by the United States and the "imperialist regime" that is guilty of all the misfortunes of Venezuela before Chavez came to power. Similarly, students are asked to reflect on the image, to write about what it suggests and to have a class discussion about it. As they author stated previously, an image is worth a thousand words and goes hand in hand with the media discourse of the terrible American republic that seeks to take our national wealth away. Manipulation and lack of objectivity are contained in various similar images within the text content, once again indoctrination and imposition of socialism as a political model is highlighted in Our Republican History.

In contrast, there are images starting from the coming of Hugo Chavez to power in Venezuela. On page 181, there is an image of Chavez dressed all in red, a color representing the revolutions, communism and violence and, on the other hand, some red letters behind the president that read SOCIALISM. Images like this one and the ones shown on the following pages throughout this chapter and want to establish an intimate and paternalistic linkage with the government of the former President. This set of images seems to show a perfect government, based on peace and equality of all Venezuelans, where there is education, health, housing and public safety. It is common knowledge that no revolution is carried out peacefully, and that the last 16 years in Venezuela have been chaotic and unbalanced both as regards politics and the economy and social life. Once again, the above theories stated in this analysis of the text are demonstrated and evidenced.

Another aspect that draws attention in the school text is the different songs and photograph of Ali Primera appearing on different pages of the book (125, 139, 201). against the capitalist and neoliberal regimes. He was vetoed in the Venezuelan radio stations due to the intensity of his songs; however, he entered politics with the Communist Party of Venezuela. Similarly, both his fame as the fierceness of his lyrics were rescued by the late President Hugo Chavez, who used him as a support to his socialist movement and to establish emotional ties (of taste) with citizens. The fact that his lyrics are reflected in the text evidence the "indoctrination" intended to be carried out with these free books in all areas of the student's life. This would correspond to the affirmations of Duby (1994), when he says that the historian has three fundamental principles, of which the first one represents the magic of "restoring life to the dead, bringing him to the society of the living, the speech in this

case is close to the spell or to the political intention: to maintain a power, to legitimize it and justify its action"(p.1).

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