

## Introduction

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32870/dse.v0i24.1184>

The school is a center for the production de subjectivities, both a line of the school device and part of its operation. Its imprint is to offer society civically and technically trained subjects. To do so, it seeks to restrict within it the diversity of experience, submitting subjects to the exclusiveness of the school experience and mutilating their subjective wealth to control forms of resistance. The school is a place for disciplined training, rife with regulations and prohibitions that aim at the positive construction of a normal subject. Thus, we must make the distinction between school and school device.

The reference to a *device* is related to its operation; that is, as a device for control, regulation of flows, bodies and their spatial-temporal disposition. Michel Foucault (1985) first described the device in four moments: 1) it is a set, a network of heterogeneous elements, 2) it is a space of Knowledge-Power, 3) it produces subjectivity, and 4) it responds to an urgency.

Thus, we must first visualize the school device as *a network in which the heterogeneity of its elements is transacted*: “discourse, institutions, architectural facilities, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, and philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions” (Foucault, 1985: 128), each element circulating with differentiated intensities, restrained or accelerated depending on relevant circumstances: “the elements of the device belong both to what is said and to what is not said” (*ibid.*: 128). The device is in a constant process of “functional overdetermination”, because its elements are in continuous readjustment. As a network it is not stable but mobile and dynamic, always seeking a “sensation” of stability; “each effect, positive or negative, desired or not, comes into resonance or contradiction with the others, and requires a revision, a readjustment of the heterogeneous elements that emerge here and there” (*ibid.*:129). Moreover, another process called “strategic filling” is inscribed in the device, which has to do with a constant modification of the strategic objectives.

As a relationship of knowledge-power “the device is thus always part of a power game, but also always linked to one of the edges of knowledge, which are born from it but also condition it” (*ibid.*: 130). Discursive and non-discursive practices produce subjects who are subjected to certain effects of knowledge/power, as Gilles Deleuze explains: “The first two dimensions of a device, or the first ones that Foucault distinguishes, are curves of visibility and curves of enunciation. The fact is that devices are like Raymond Roussel’s machines, as analyzed by Foucault: they are machines to make people see and make people talk” (1990: 156). From architectural forms to the grammatical formulations of the school, a subjectivity becomes visible or invisible which – following Deleuze – is not in itself a device because “visible objects, formulable enun-

ciations, forces being exercised, subjects in position are like vectors or tensors. Thus, the three great instances that Foucault distinguishes successively (Knowledge, Power, and Subjectivity) do not possess any definitive contours at all but are chains of variables related to each other" (*ibid*: 156), and are therefore a production or pre-productions of the devices with which they are confronted, and if "the 'dimension of power' [is the] dimension of the inner space of the device, a variable spaces with the devices, this dimension, like power, is composed of knowledge". Thus, subjectivity is closely linked to the processes of knowledge-power, and therefore – the third approach is inscribed here – "it produces subjectivity".

[...] a line of subjectivation is a process, it is the production of subjectivity in a device: a line of subjectivation must be made insofar as the device allows or makes it possible. It is even a line of escape. It escapes from the previous lines. The one-self is neither knowledge nor power. It is a process of individuation that has to do with groups or people and that is removed from the force relations established as constituted knowledge: it is a sort of added value. It is not a given that every device will imply it (Deleuze, 1990: 157).

This production of the device implies the power relation, the imposition of knowledge, making some visible and others invisible, muting some and making others speak, but it is not only about being heard or seen, but rather about how visibility and audible voice are defined. In the case we are dealing with, the *school device*, constituted by the complex of laws, regulations, professionals, educational models, territories and subjects, from its evocation defines a necessary subjectivity: subjects civically and technically trained, avoiding the interference of previous experience and the simultaneous experience that takes place in sociality. That is, there are subjects validated by the device and subjects scorned by it. In this respect, it is worthwhile to quote Deleuze more extensively:

One wonders if the lines of subjectivation are not the extreme edge of a device and whether they do not outline the passage from one device to the other; thus they would prepare the "fracture lines". And just like the other lines, subjectivation lines have no general formula. Brutally interrupted, Foucault's inquiry should have shown that subjectivation processes assumed eventually other different modes of the Greek mode, for instance, in Christian devices, in modern societies, and so on. Can we not invoke devices in which subjectivation does not go through aristocratic life or the aesthetized existence of the free man but through the marginal existence of the "excluded " one? Thus, Sinologist Tokei explains how the freed slave somehow lost his social condition and was driven to a lonely, querulous subjectivity, an elegiac existence from which he would later extract new forms of power and knowledge. The study of the variations of subjectivation processes seems to be one of those fundamental tasks that Foucault left for those who were to follow him. We believe in the extreme fecundity of this research that current intellectual endeavors about a history of private life only partially understand. What is subjectivized are

both the noble, those who say, according to Nietzsche, “we the good ones” and those who (although in other conditions) are excluded, the evil ones, the sinners, or the hermits or the monk communities or the heretics: a whole typology of subjective formations in mobile devices. And everywhere there are cobwebs that must be unraveled: productions of subjectivity that escape the powers and knowledge of a device to place themselves in the powers and knowledge of another one, in other forms yet to be born (*ibid.*).

That unwelcome subject has been produced as an unfinished subjectivity, always vulnerable and with the ability to become visible in another form and speak with another sense and according to other codes: this would be the young people.

The fourth approach is also inscribed in the explanation of the functionality of the device. Here, Michel Foucault points out that it is “a sort of formation that in a given historic moment had as its major function responding to an urgency”. He goes on to say that, “The device has thus a predominant strategic position” (Foucault, 1985: 129). This means that, by being inscribed within a game of power relationships, its function is to respond to a concrete urgency or historic contingency. Its nature is essentially strategic, which implies a certain manipulation of force relations to develop them in a concrete direction, to block or stabilize them, to use them with the effects of knowledge to respond to specific time and space urgencies. In this sense the school, as another line of the school device, is always under questioning and the demands of reform, whether in its pedagogical aspect, in its real and imagined social function, in its function of educating young people, and so on, but remains almost unchanged in its foundations, because its strategic nature functions according to its objective of producing subjectivity. The school device orients, organizes, strengthens and produces, at the same time as it surveils and sanctions or excludes, marginalizes or eliminates the incorrigible ones, controls and generates bodies with an effect on the production of subjectivities (citizens, sick people, criminals). Giorgio Agamben (2011) highlights three points of the notion of device: 1) its concept, 2) its functionality, and 3) its contribution.

From the first point, his interest centers in investigating the concrete ways in which the devices act in relationships, in mechanisms and in power games, the set of practices and mechanisms (linguistic and non-linguistic set, juridical set, technical set and military set) whose aim is to deal with an urgency and achieve a more or less immediate effect (Agamben, 2011: 17). The term *device* names that in which and through which a pure government activity is conducted. For this reason, devices involve subjectivation processes, they must produce their subjects. In our case, on one side are the students in their unidimensional format, as well as the number of officials defined by their relation with the students. For Agamben, the device conceived by Foucault entails the control mandates that dispose some modes of action in men, from which practices, knowledge, and institutional measures are articulated whose aim is to manage, go-

vern, control, and orient in a sense intended to be useful the subjects' behavior, gestures, and thoughts. Agamben (2011) defines *device* as "anything that can somehow capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, and ensure the gestures, behavior, opinions and discourse of living beings" (*ibid.*: 22). The device is a machine that produces subjectivations and is also a machine for government. Agamben underscores that "we would probably not be mistaken if we defined the extreme phase of capitalist development that we are undergoing as a huge proliferation of devices". There is not an instant in the life of subjects" – Agamben continues – "when they are not shaped, contaminated, or controlled by some device" (*ibid.*: 25). From this position we may argue that the device is everything at the same time: it may be a place, an institution or even, as the author remarks, we ourselves may end up being devices. Besides locating two large classes, living beings (or substances) and devices, Agamben believes that between them, in a third place, are subjects: "By subject I refer to what results of relations and, so to speak, of the direct contact between living beings and devices" (*ibid.*: 24). The government of the living to produce subjectivities *ad hoc* is the function of devices. The school device is made up of other devices, and is itself part of the greater device of governmentality. However, despite this sensation of proliferation *ad nauseum* of devices, their delimitation is defined thanks to the participation of subjects as agents, as well as another device, as a line of resistance and transformation. Therefore, "to the huge growth of devices in our times corresponds a huge proliferation of subjectivation processes" (*ibid.*: 24). Thus, the subject produced, whether active or passive, negative or positive, is yet another line of the device. The school device's most conflictive lines are students as subjects in a process of subjectivation (formation); that is, insofar as they are the matter of its function and what they operate on. Therefore, although the subject in a process of subjectivation is himself/herself a device, for the same reason he/she is also the thinnest line, because he/she is and is not: he/she is a subject and is in a process of subjectivation, and through that disposition manages to endanger the processes (as a disruptor) by living an experience simultaneously with the process of subjectivation (sociality) and being both within and outside the device. The most conflictive subject of the school device is the unidimensional student – who is never just a student – who, unlike other subjects produced by the device for itself and for the outside (the criminal for the prison device and its later rehabilitated subject, the mentally ill, and so on), enters and exits the device being exposed to specific social environments.

This issue of *Diálogos sobre Educación. Temas actuales en investigación educativa* focuses its interest on those experiences that exceed the school device according to its essential function; that is, each article provides a glimpse on how the diversity of experiences interferes with the device's sense of production of subjectivity and its search for readjustment in the face of the contemporary urgencies of society, with the current social violence, both within and outside it, as the vector that directs its main efforts.

The school is faced with multiple forms of violence, from social violence to the so-called 'bullying' or violence between peers, anti-school violence, identified as direct action against the

school, from the material to the symbolic, to the violence that the school itself exerts as a line of the school device. The sources of social violence (social inequality) and the cultural differences between the social experience and the school experience, that is, the disparity between the symbolic capitals acquired before the school experience and its clashes in the simultaneity of experiences are interwoven in these forms of violence. Many times bullying seems to be the perfect alibi to conceal more structural violence, both as a symptom and in its media mutation, to promote institutional choices that sideline more fundamental issues, such as the transformation of the school device.

With this violence, the school device as a process seeks to hold on to its disciplinary form in a social context where childhood and youth must be contained, in a socio-economic environment where they cannot be assured to find employment or higher education. And the vicious circle in which contemporary society finds itself asphyxiates the school, an institution that is ever more necessary to guide young people faced with a family increasingly preyed upon by social conditions. Because the school is a tool for the containment of dangerous environments: there, children and younger people find a safe place, where they can relate to their peers in another way, following rules of the game that will be revoked outside. That inside-outside dichotomy is the school's most consistent drama, especially if we understand the school through its relationships with the social violence that constitutes its background.

The current conditions of violence Mexico is going through have made this phenomenon more complex than just a symptom of social decomposition that, although it is evident, the forms of contemporary violence have made it a form that is autonomous from its sources; that is, it goes beyond the symptom to become a social form. Added to this, we must observe how the school and the social experience have been affected in their specificities in the context of the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has displaced the school territory to other territories such as cyberspace and the home.

The valuable contributions that make up this issue of *Diálogos sobre Educación. Temas actuales en investigación educativa* are grouped around more or less specific themes, which offer a broad panorama of the current conditions of everyday school life and let us glimpse ways for action.

A first group addresses violence in the Mexican context. Alberto Colín Huízar, in the article "Teachers under fire. Repercussions of criminal violence in public schools in the Valley of Apatzingán, Michoacán", looks at violence according to the social experience of the subjects immersed in the school device. He proposes to explore subjective aspects of the students "that manifest themselves through cultural practices and symbols that exalt and worship the manifestation of drug trafficking, modifying the students' aspirations of social mobility". Here, the relationship between schooling and violence is addressed within a broader spectrum that goes beyond the so-called "school violence"; that is, he observes the effects of violence external to the school. In terms of governmentality, the article aims to go beyond the view of the State as

a uniform entity and suggests arriving at a heterogeneous view of statehood at a local level. In the region where the study was conducted, violence against teachers, besides its historical structural aspects (poor school infrastructure, a high level of “educational lag” in rural regions and a high dropout rate), is complicated by the different illegal activities of the drug trafficking business, from growing illegal crops to transporting drugs or doing surveillance work for drug traffickers, which are not regarded as criminal by the local population. Teaching has become a high-risk activity, including living under the threat of being caught in a crossfire, which happens almost every day in a region where schools have suspended classes due to armed confrontations that cause interruptions in the school year and affect teachers, from doing their daily work to having their life as well as that of school staff and students under constant threat.

This kind of studies helps us understand the school beyond its operation as a school device and its closure strategies. In such violent environments, concepts such as that of a “grey zone” allow us to perceive social in their quality of a collective endeavor, that is, the articulation of social actors as antagonists interacting beyond the conflict, in favor of shared objectives. Authorities, like violent subjects, build more or less willing clandestine relationships where the legal interacts with the illegal. In regions like the Tierra Caliente of Michoacán in Mexico, violent practices in grey zones define the imaginary about life and death, normalizing violence in daily life. These grey zones generate dynamics in school spaces where violence is fostered, inhibited, channeled or allowed, generating a sensation of impunity and permissiveness among school actors. The school device governs times and spaces as a function of the formation of subjects who obey an ideal of order and coexistence. In violent environments, this situation is constantly modified and promotes an exaltation of the opposition to authority figures, the adults in the institution.

However, we must understand that violence in the school does not concern only some of its subjects. The interactions among that diversity of subjectivities are the perfect breeding ground for conflict, and the strategic complexity of the device is contemplated according to its capacity to process conflict attending to relevant urgencies. In the article “Students’ violence against teachers: a case study in a secondary school in Jalisco”, Delia Patricia Pérez Márquez, Isaac Uribe Alvarado, Teresa Margarita Torres López and Roberto Oropeza Tena explore the exercise of bottom-up violence, perhaps from a view under the framework of the device but capable of extracting from the darkness a shadowed relationship. Student violence against teachers is ostensible, since half of the staff who participated in the study claimed to have been attacked in the last two years, mainly by students. The most frequent form of violence is verbal violence, followed by physical violence, harassment, challenge to the teacher’s authority and damage to the teacher’s property, actions that may be direct or indirect, as well as individual or as a group. In the study there was a perception of hopelessness in the teachers, who assume the violence is part of the school’s ecosystem, something they have to learn to live with. This violence is a silent problem, with teachers not even willing to admit its existence.

The article "School climate, coping styles of support personnel, and the students' perception of school violence" by José Ángel Vera Noriega, Gildardo Bautista Hernández, Jesús Tánori Quintana and Francisco Fernando Durazo Salas offers an approach to daily school life through the analysis of conflict resolution according to coping skills, seeking capacities that promote positive relationships that do not affect the school climate negatively. It is assumed that dealing with situations of violence directly fosters less aggressive interactions. By understanding discipline as a central component to define the school climate, as well as following norms, regulations, and routines, it is presumed that part of the school climate is conflict, and therefore the ways to deal with it and how violence is perceived are basic comprehension elements to recognize how conflict is managed. What called the authors' attention was the close relationship between avoidance behavior and the perception de violence: avoiding dealing with episodes of violence in school has as a consequence that supporting staff perceive more violence. This relationship might indicate that avoidance is more frequent and there is little that can be done about violence, which is an evidence of its naturalization in the educational environment.

Rodolfo Cruz Vadillo, Emma Verónica Santana Valencia and Paulina Iturbide Fernández, in their article "School violence or educational violence: a dilemma not confronted by teachers", focus their attention on the daily educational act, from which coexistence is exercised or violence is summoned. The authors seek to distinguish, for analytic purposes, school violence and educational violence, by understanding that much of the violence that takes place in the school may be seen as the reflection of the social issues that define the environment and materialize in daily relationships and interactions. This analytic distinction allows us to consider the violence exerted by the school device when socialization and sociality processes clash with each other, where the eagerness to uni-dimensionalize leads to the abuse of psychological diagnoses that pathologize students and even criminalize them, since the school's function responds to mechanisms of domination set up by the institution itself through which a form of symbolic and emotional violence is manifested. It is important to understand that young students' sociality has changed, mobilizing the ways in which they inhabit territories (body, school, cyberspace) in particular contexts: the emergence of other scenarios, other rationales, and their access to other sources of information which are the product of knowledge shared through sociality, whether by being together in the school or by the way in which they inhabit cyberspace, which nowadays they hegemonize for their representation. The notion of educational violence allows us to reflect on the absence of self-criticism about the role of the school device faced with students with new cultures, representations and values in generating conflict that, according to the strategies to deal with it, increase violence in the school; that is, considering educational violence involves thinking beyond the violence between young students and adult agent to observe the constant and dynamic relationship between what is symbolically imposed and the subjects' resistance. School violence would have to be regarded as that which is imposed by the school

device itself and the impositions, interactions and dispositions of the agents themselves who, by entering into contact, may generate different forms of exchanges.

Reflecting about violence in school cannot escape the violent reality that constitutes its environment, where the school even becomes a safe space for sociality. Gabriela Sánchez López observes this in her article "Friendship and adversity: the school as a meeting and companionship space in a context of chronic violence in the north of Monterrey, Mexico", since the scope of the phenomenon of violence surpasses the boundaries of the school, looking past an exaggerated notion fostered by conventional wisdom and mobilized by the media that sees in the school an exclusively dangerous space. Beyond the violence of the socialization process, sociality supported by friendship and companionship relationships helps students deal with daily violence. It is in the school where children construct themselves as such, in their own terms, in spite of their parents' and teachers' mandates. They develop practices of resistance to institutionalized forms of normalizing childhood. Thus, the article suggests *giving a voice* to children to capture their viewpoints, listen to and have a dialogue with them.

This article provides us with an access to sociality processes with significant effects on the horizontal relationship, understanding that the school is a space where narratives produced by the students circulate without adult mediation. This happens because, from an adult and socialization perspective, the school is believed to be a space where the conflict and problems of the surrounding environment are left outside. The silence becomes a form of protection for the adults, and supposedly also for the students. But in contexts of chronic violence students do not remain indifferent: through sociality processes, they put into practice tactics to comfort their peers' pain and ways to console them. Children are social actors, not passive beings. They experience violence and deal with their existence with theories to explain them, strategies to contain them, venting and accompaniment that do not involve adults, forms of resistance like friendship and listening, not without tensions but allowing them to go from day to day.

The multiple forms of violence that run through the school, whether through its disposition in the school device or through its immediate relationships with its environment, are deployed as easily as the subjects inhabit territories. Horizontal relationships are not terse and idyllic: they have conflict as a permanent form, and also tactics that lead to violent resolutions. However, the adult view has found in the notion of bullying a sort of continent to observe violence between peers. The second group of articles in this issue revolves around bullying and cyberbullying.

Bullying is defined as: *a)* the intention of one or several persons to hurt another; *b)* the reiteration of this behavior through time, and *c)* the existence of a power imbalance in the interpersonal relationship. This can also be observed in the territory of cyberspace, through the notion of cyberbullying. These situations have come to be regarded as the most present and persistent form of violence within the school, calling for a precise and multifocal analysis. The article "Risks of the semantic inflation of "bullying" in the media and the field of education" by Pablo Nahuel di



Napoli and Virginia Saez is a transcendental contribution to this analysis. Although it is located in, its contributions can be applied to observe the phenomenon in Mexico and Latin America. The authors found a semantic inflation of the term 'bullying' as a journalistic discourse operation and in the discourse circulating in schools, which reduces the complexity of relationships between peers within the school by abusing the term and identifying any conflict, discomfort or violent situation as bullying. I have discussed this issue abundantly elsewhere (Moreno, 2016; 2017).

This semantic inflation does not take into account the difficulty to distinguish clearly between victim and aggressor. This distinction is not always clear because subjects move constantly through scenarios and do not adopt absolute positions. A sort of pathologization/criminalization is imposed when victims are defined as insecure, anxious and submissive, while aggressors are aggressive, seek power and domination, and are pleased by causing harm. The authors observed the convergence of a discourse that reduces the issue of violence to individual actions, without taking into consideration institutional and sociocultural interweavings that legitimize the idea that the school is not a safe place for students, even with the support of scientific sources and presenting extreme cases that led to students' deaths. The students in turn also repeat the media discourse socially installed, associate the problem to individual behavior or personal characteristics that assign the responsibility to the student, without reflecting on the institutional dynamics of the school and the roles of teachers and authorities.

The article "Teenage victims of bullying and cyberbullying in the Metropolitan Area of Monterrey, Mexico" by Gloria Mancha Torres and Kumar Acharya analyzes the incidence of these phenomena in young students aged 12 to 16 and identifies that these situations take place in almost all their manifestations, except the sexual ones, in the school, and that classmates are pointed to as the main aggressor. They point out that social aggression happens more frequently in intimate environments, with women being more victimized more often than men, while these are more often victims of cyberbullying. However, the article does not intend to criticize the notions of bullying and cyberbullying. Neither does the paper by Josefina Sandoval Martínez, Alejandra De Gante Casas, María Ángela Gómez Pérez and Rosa Margarita López Aguilar, "Strategies to cope with cyberbullying among public and private middle school students", whose main objective is to observe how young students manage confrontations in cyberspace. The authors argue that the damage done by cyberbullying might be moderate depending on how it is coped with. By 'coping' they mean the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to deal with cyber-harassment. They analyze young students' resources and strategies to solve these situations by comparing responses of students from a public secondary school and a private one. In the public school the strategies were more aggressive, while in the private school the students sought support, collecting proof and avoiding confrontation with the aggressor.

A third group of articles focuses on phenomena produced by the effects of the health emergency of Covid-19. Without a doubt, cyberspace has become a research problem as the reality of school has become more complex. After the health emergency of 2020, the territory of cyberspace has expanded its presence, exposing students and their families to the irruption of the school device into the intimacy of their homes, exposing realities of inequality.

Rocío Jazmín Ávila Sánchez, in the article "Distance education during the pandemic: a new manifestation of structural and symbolic violence in Mexico", shows how these inequalities are shaped and what their effects were, considering that despite the governmental strategy to deal with the closing of school spaces through the broadcasting of educational programs on television, sustained on the fact that 92.5% of Mexico's population own a television and television has an almost 100% coverage in urban areas, experience shows that contact has been made mainly through mobile telephones and with applications without an educational background, whose costs exceeded the purchasing power of many families and teachers.

This irruption of the school device into the intimacy of students and teachers is analyzed, for the case of university students, by Mayleth Alejandra Zamora Echegollen and José Javier Contreras Vizcaino in the article "The forced migration of the school device into the family space: experiences and problematizations of online classes during the health contingency". It was a migration forced by the emergency circumstances that consisted of an "invasion" of the family territory by the school device in which the problems of inequality in the access to internet and to technology were added to the complexity of studying at home, work, and family relationships. These challenges appeared under two assumptions: *a)* the existence of the material conditions to take classes, and *b)* the reproduction of the in-classroom school device in the family space familiar. The process did not take into consideration social class differences and the growing impoverishment of life, nor was it considered how the real possibilities of continuing public or private higher education were affected, since this forced migration demands owning technological devices, dedicated spaces, and enough time. The problem of structural violence in the access to education, worsened by the forced migration, also emerged. Thus, this forced migration found a number of resistances, both objective and subjective, which the article also addresses, at least in the context where the research was designed.

Although this forced migration had students as its central subjects, it also had complex effects among teachers, who were also forced to move into the screens and try out their knowledge on sometimes unfamiliar platforms. One of the most interesting phenomena in this situation was that of "viral teachers", which showed how teachers did not entirely understand how to inhabit cyberspace. The article "Between praise and contempt: viral narratives about teachers on social networks and the mass media" by Mirza Aguilar Pérez, Marisol Pérez Díaz and David Salazar Nieva presents two cases, perhaps not the most dramatic but exemplary ones, to analyze the position of teachers in this reality. The attitudes of higher education teachers with little

or no knowledge about online education disproved the belief that “by this time in history there would be a great technological deployment available to all”. Most teachers had to learn by trial and error, and this confronted them with what inhabiting cyberspace involves. The interaction between students and teachers is defined by the expertise on one side and ignorance on the other. Thus, the appearance of “viral teachers” refers to subjects submitted to the transmission of the intimacy of the classroom through multiple communication platforms and media with videos, photographs, memes, audio, and so on, a publicity of their image without their consent.

Thus, the thematic wealth presented in this issue of *Diálogos sobre Educación* opens windows wide enough to recognize the functioning of the school, linking the threads that constitute this device to reflect on the production of contemporary subjectivity. As the coordinator of this issue, I would like to thank the journal’s editorial team, always ready and willing to solve the usual and special circumstances that efforts like this entail. I am also grateful to the specialists who contributed part of their valuable time to review each article and enriched it with their contributions, and of course the authors who participated in it, the essential element to consolidate lines of research whose central concern is the school device in all its complexity.

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