

# Developmental Learning Theory (DLT): an interview with José Zilberstein Toruncha

## Teoría del Aprendizaje Desarrollador (TAD): diálogo con José Zilberstein Toruncha

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### ABSTRACT

José Zilberstein Toruncha is one of the most important Cuban teachers of the nineties' generation. Graduated in Biology, with a master's degree in Educational Research and a PhD in Pedagogical Sciences, he played an important role in establishing the foundations of a Developmental Didactics in Cuba, based on the conscious, concise and coherent integration of the theoretical assumptions of the national pedagogical tradition (José de la Luz y Caballero, Félix Varela and José Martí), the historical-cultural approach to psychology (L. S. Vigostky, A. N. Leontiev, S. L. Rubinstein) and didactics (N. F. Talizina, L. Zankov, V. V. Davidov, P. Ya. Galperin). He is the

### RESUMEN

José Zilberstein Toruncha es uno de los más importantes profesores e investigadores cubanos de la generación de los noventa. Licenciado en Biología, magíster en Investigación Educativa y Doctor en Ciencias Pedagógicas, desempeñó un papel importante al ayudar a establecer las bases de una Didáctica Desarrolladora en Cuba, apoyada en la integración consciente, concisa y coherente de los presupuestos teóricos de la tradición pedagógica nacional (José de la Luz y Caballero, Félix Varela y José Martí), el enfoque histórico-cultural de la psicología (L. S. Vigostky, A. N. Leontiev, S. L. Rubinstein) y la didáctica (N. F. Talizina, L. Zankov, V. V. Davidov, P. Ya. Galperín). Es autor de

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author of a substantial amount of written work, much of it widely circulated in Latin America.

**Keywords:** José Zilberstein Toruncha. Developmental Learning Theory. Developmental Didactics. Cuba.

numerosas de obras escritas, muchas de ellas de amplia circulación en América Latina.

**Palabras clave:** José Zilberstein Toruncha. Teoría del Aprendizaje Desarrollador. Didáctica desarrolladora. Cuba.

## 1 Introduction

This interview continues the **1st International Cycle of Interviews with Important Representatives of the Theory of Developmental Learning**. As already mentioned, the cycle aims to bring together Brazilian researchers with foreign intellectuals and scientists who are directly linked to the development of theories of developmental learning and study activity in the period from 1960 to 2019, and who, on different fronts and from different countries and cities, have contributed to the consolidation of various alternative developmental psychological and didactic systems, in particular the Elkonin-Davidov-Repkin system.

Contacts will be made through interviews that will explore the specificities of the work of these theorists, the impact of their ideas and works on the consolidation of systems and theories, the context in which this production took place, the concrete specificities of each theoretical position, the reflections generated on this work after many years, etc.

To cover the long period of development of the systems and the conception of developmental learning they have produced, the cycle of interviews plans to consider representatives of the most diverse proposals that respect the following criteria: (a) be linked to different moments, stages, or phases in the history of some alternative systems of developmental psychology and didactics (PUENTES; LONGAREZI, 2020); (b) be linked to different groups and variants within the different systems; (c) be linked to different objects and fields within the theory (developmental psychology, educational psychology, didactics, learning methodologies, etc.); (d) be linked to the different systems of developmental psychology and didactics (PUENTES; LONGAREZI, 2020); (d) be linked to important representatives of one of the different systems; (e) be linked to different geographical regions (city, republics, countries); (f) be linked to current movements

of renewal and continuity of the theory within the groups, institutions, cities, republics and/or countries where they live and/or work); (h) be intellectuals and researchers of high recognition in the Brazilian and foreign academic sphere, as manifested by their broad and extensive scientific production, as well as their solid integration in groups, networks, associations, centers, etc., of recognized national and international prestige.

Whenever possible, bilingual publications of the interviews will be produced (in the original language and in Portuguese). It is hoped that this initiative will contribute to the deepening and consolidation of knowledge about developmental learning theory in Brazil and Latin America, a process in which the Research Group on Developmental Didactics and Teacher Professionalization (*Didáctica Desarrolladora y Profesionalización Docente* - Gepedi) has played an important role, while also strengthening collaborative ties with internationally renowned groups and researchers.

This interview, the third in the series, was conducted with José Zilberstein Toruncha, a Cuban professor and researcher based in Mexico. José Zilberstein is currently the Rector of the Tequis Campus of the University of Tangamanga (UTAN) and holds a Ph.D. in Pedagogical Sciences from the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences of Cuba. He has been teaching since 1978 at the primary, secondary, and higher education levels (undergraduate and postgraduate). He is well known for his research consulting work with graduate students from Cuba, Mexico, and Colombia, and he has served as a member of the Permanent Tribunal for the Conception of Scientific Degrees in the Republic of Cuba.

Zilberstein has had an extensive career as a researcher. He is the author of numerous scientific articles and academic books, including *¿Cómo hacer más eficiente el aprendizaje?* (Mexico, Ediciones CEIDE, 2000); *Enseñanza y desarrollo del aprendizaje* (Mexico, Ediciones CEIDE, 2000); *La formación de generalizaciones en las clases de ciencias naturales. Temas de Superación de Biología* (Cuba, Ministry of Education, 1992); *Enseñanza y Aprendizaje en una Educación por Ciclos* (2010); *Hacia una didáctica desarrolladora* (Cuba, Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 2002); etc. Most of these titles have been co-authored.

Photo: José Zilberstein Toruncha



Source: <https://mx.linkedin.com/in/jos%C3%A9-zilberstein-toruncha-84025933>

The content of this interview is rich in details about the intellectual and scientific work of our interviewee, so we avoid mentioning these aspects in the introduction. We will simply note the author's association with Gepedi. Although Zilberstein reports that his first working relationship with Gepedi began a decade ago in fact, it has existed for much longer, even before the group's founding in September 2008. Our first working relationship with the researcher will be twenty years old in 2024. It involves the publication of his chapter "Educational quality and diagnosis of school learning" as part of the book *As múltiplas faces da avaliação: teoria e prática em educação* (PUENTES; URRÚ, 2004, pp. 149-176).

## 2 Interview with José Zilberstein Toruncha

**Roberto V. Puentes (RVP) and Andréa M. Longarezi (AML):** Dear José Zilberstein Toruncha, so that the Brazilian reader can get to know you a little better before we get to the central questions of this interview, and also to be able to link your activity in the field of developmental didactics with your training and professional career, could you first tell us a little about your training, professional, and academic career, from your university studies to your most recent positions in Cuba?

**José Zilberstein Toruncha (JZT):** Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Roberto Valdés Puentes and Dr. Andréa Maturano Longarezi for inviting me to this interview, and I am very grateful to them for what they are doing to build a truly Latin American didactics without ignoring the roots of other educational contexts.

As for my educational background, I am a secondary school teacher with a specialization in Biology, from the Instituto Superior Enrique José Varona (ISPEJV), in 1978, and I hold a degree in Education with a specialization in Biology from the ISPEJV, in 1980, from Cuba. In 1978, I graduated in English Language in Havana, Cuba. In 1996, I obtained a Master's Degree in Educational Research from the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP) in Cuba, and in 1997, I obtained a Doctorate in Pedagogical Sciences from the Permanent Tribunal for the Granting of Scientific Degrees of the Republic of Cuba.

Photo – José Zilberstein Toruncha standing among colleagues during General Secondary Education Teacher, Specialty Biology, Cuba (1977)



Source: Author's archive.

My work and academic career in Cuba can be summarized as follows:

1978: Biology Teacher, Camilo Cienfuegos Military Professional School, Havana, Cuba.

1979: National Methodologist Inspector, Department of Directed Studies and Correspondence, Ministry of Education (MINED), Havana, Cuba.

1979-1989: Biology Teacher, National Institute for the Improvement of Education (IPEN), Havana, Cuba.

1983: Member of the National Association for Sex Education, Cuba.

1989-1991: President of the National Sub-Commission for the Revision of Science Teaching Materials in Cuba, Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP), Ministry of Education.

1988-1991: Member of the National Biology Sub-Commission for the Revision of Curricula, Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP), Ministry of Education, Cuba.

1989: I received the category of Aggregate Researcher from the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP), Cuba.

1994-2002: Secretary of the Natural Sciences Commission of the Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute (IPLAC), Cuba.

1999: Member of the Scientific Council of the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Cuba.

1999-2002: Representative of the Ministry of Education in the Scientific and Technological Innovation Program of the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI).

1999: Member of the Expert Group of the National Program "The Cuban Society. Challenges and Perspectives of the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment (CITMA), Cuba.

2000-2002: I obtained the category of Assistant Researcher at the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP), Cuba.

2000-2002: Member of the Scientific Council of the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, Cuba (ICCP).

2000-2002: Deputy Director of the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP), Cuba.

2000-2007: Member of the Permanent Tribunal for the conferral of the Doctor of Education degree.

2001: National Coordinator of the Ibero-American Network for School Effectiveness and Improvement (REIME), Cuba.

2002-2003: Member of the Scientific Council of the Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute (IPLAC).

2003: Professor and Coordinator of the Master's Degree in Higher Education Sciences at the Center of Reference for Advanced Education (CREA), Cuba.

2004: Coordinator of the Doctoral Program in Educational Sciences at the Center of Reference for Advanced Education (CREA), Cuba.

2004-2007: Member of the Scientific Council of the Association of Pedagogues of Cuba (APC).

**RVP and AML:** Could we define the early 1990s as the starting point of your research interests? After studying biology, how did you get into teaching? What were your first research interests?

**JZT:** Looking back, I can say that I became interested in research in the second year of my undergraduate degree (1974) because I was lucky enough to have research topics on the curriculum and there were student science events that I could participate in, which I did from that point on. In addition to this motivation, I started writing for a student newspaper that invited me: Juventud de Acero, which, although it was not a scientific publication, awakened in me the desire to collect information and synthesize it for others to read.

In addition to the above, I had the opportunity to study for my degree while also teaching at the "Lenin" Vocational School in Cuba, which was advised by Soviet academic experts who, in addition to supporting us with complementary classes for the degree, included us in their research, in my case in the area of biology, with more detail in ecology. I should point out that I was very fortunate to have this unique opportunity because of my youth at the time. These social determinants shaped my interest in research, scientific work, and publications.

Although I hold a degree in biology, another invaluable opportunity in my life was to work from 1979 to 1989 as a professor of biology at the Instituto de Perfeccionamiento Educacional Nacional (IPEN) in Cuba, where my main activity, together with colleagues in the field, was to provide didactic advice on the progress of the teaching and learning process of science and biology subjects from primary to secondary schools throughout the country, and once again we were advised by experts in pedagogy and didactics from the former Soviet Union.

Thanks to the above, based on the experience of these top scientists, I began to study the work of Russian psychologists, pedagogues, and didacticians, including L.S. Vigostky, N.F. Talizina, A.N. Leontiev, L. Zankov, V.V. Davidov, P.Ya. Galperin, and many others. From that stage, I decided that my research interests would be in finding alternatives for people to learn efficiently, in the early years through the didactics of biology, and later, up to the present day, through general didactics, as I took on other professional responsibilities.

**RVP and AML:** How would you define the Cuban research climate in the field of general and specific didactics in Cuba in the 1990s? How did the fall of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the socialist camp affect this climate and the production of scientific knowledge about didactics in the country?

**JZT:** I think that at that stage, in the 1990s, there was a great deal of scientific research activity around the problems of general and specific didactics, for four fundamental reasons, in my opinion:

- As part of the National Improvement of the Education System, the Cuban state prioritized the improvement of teaching and learning processes at all educational levels, which meant that research led by the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP), as the leading research institution for the country's provinces and the Higher Pedagogical Institutes from the Ministry of Education (MINED) will focus on this aspect considered essential for the future educational development of the country, developing highly trained people to support the economic independence that the Cuban

government's top leadership foresaw would be needed with the disintegration of the Eastern European Socialist Bloc.

- The important Biannual Congress: Pedagogy was strengthened, with more than 5,000 teachers and researchers from Cuba and Latin America participating in its different editions, which continues to this day. One of the lines promoted at these congresses was General Didactics and Particular Didactics. In the case of the Cubans, a whole strategy was generated in this sense, to promote papers that were selected, from schools, municipalities, provinces, and then at the national level with these priorities.

- The creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute in Cuba, which was joined by delegations from other countries that also promoted these research and publication topics.

Cuba's participation during that decade in the research of the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), which began to draw attention to the factors, associated with learning that influence this process: classroom climate, teacher evaluation, teachers' commitment to student learning, among others.

I believe that the fall of the Eastern European Socialist Bloc, although it reduced foreign consultancy to the Cuban education system and the conditions of material inputs for research to almost 100%, in general, did not affect the development of Cuban research, for the following reasons:

- Many Cuban researchers had already been trained in the previous two decades, which allowed them to continue promoting the country's scientific development. Those of us who were involved in research processes at that time created group support mechanisms to mitigate the negative effects of the economic situation in which the country found itself, especially between 1994 and 2000.

The Cuban state continued to prioritize educational research, and the Permanent Commission for the Granting of Scientific Degrees of the Republic of Cuba was strengthened. The number of provinces that had doctoral examination boards was even increased, which meant that the training of

master's and doctoral students did not stop during that decade. I would say that it increased without reducing the quality of the graduates.

- The strengthening of the science and technology plans of the provinces of the country was proposed to address the educational problems of that decade of political conflicts in the world, with the creation in the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP) of a Department of Science and Technology to attend to the research of all the departments of the Ministry of Education (MINED), which I attended as Deputy Director of the ICCP between 2000 and 2002.

Finally, from my perspective, hundreds of educational professionals and researchers in the country began to advise colleagues in other countries, such as Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, and Peru, among others. This helped to consolidate and disseminate the scientific results from Cuba, which were even replicated in these countries, resulting in several scientific publications.

A personal example of this is a book published in Mexico entitled "*En búsqueda de alternativas didácticas: Reflexiones sobre educación y experiencias áulicas*" (In Search of Didactic Alternatives: Reflections on Education and Experiences in the Classroom" (Ediciones CEIDE, 2004), for which I had the pleasure of writing the prologue, with research results related to the TEDI project by three Mexican educators: José Luis Murillo Amaro, Silva Olmedo Cruz, and Humberto David Fierro Hernández.

**RVP and AML:** How did you become involved in developmental education? Where, when, and under what influences? What role did the teacher and doctor, Margarita Silvestre Oramas play in this process? Which other Cuban theorists and researchers influenced your inclination towards developmental didactics?

**JZT:** I came to developmental teaching methods at the end of the first three-year period of the 1990s, when, as a researcher at the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP), a group was formed that I joined as part of a national research project: Techniques to Stimulate Intellectual Development (TEDI Project), directed by a great specialist in general didactics and didactics of biology, Dr.

Margarita Silvestre Oramas, who was decisive in my professional development and that of the team I formed. She was also my advisor for the Doctor of Education degree I obtained in 1997.

TEDI was a multidisciplinary project made up of Cuban teachers, educators, and psychologists, and we covered preschool, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. We worked together for almost 10 years, producing several scientific results and related publications that, in the case of Cuba, led to important changes in the concepts of the National Educational System, as we had the great honor of having them included in the National Educational Policy of those years.

As a first basic theoretical position, research that had dealt with the development of intelligence and creativity was reviewed, for example: the Project for the Development of Thinking Skills (M. De Sánchez, 1991, 1992); the Program for Instrumental Enrichment (PEI) by Reuven Feuerstein (1921-2014); Polya's proposal on how to pose and solve problems (1976); Operative Learning by J. Hidalgo (1992); the work of Flavell and Miller (1993); the work on creative thinking by De Bono (1994); the proposals of A. Villarini's proposals on the teaching of thinking skills (1994). Hidalgo (1992); Flavell and Miller's work (1993); De Bono's work on creative thinking (1994); A. Villarini's proposals for teaching thinking skills (1991); and Miguel de Zubiria and Julián de Zubiria's positions on the development of intelligence, talent, and creativity (1992, 1994, 1998).

Although the authors mentioned in the previous paragraph mostly had a markedly cognitivist approach, they served as a basis, and we came to the conclusion, among other things, that it was not only important to develop intelligent people, but that we should approach the teaching-learning process in a more solid way, with a more integrative character in the formation of the student's personality.

For this reason, we studied the work of Russians who had focused on intellectual development and integral development of the personality, including Vigotsky (1987), Venger (1978), Leontiev (1981), Zankov (1975, 1984), Davidov

(1979, 1986 and 1988), Talizina (1987 and 1988), Galperin (1982), Baranov (1987), Danilov, Skatkin, Petrovsky (1978), and many others.

The work of Cuban psychologists and educators who had worked on aspects of personality development up to that point was also consulted, including Fernando González Rey (1987, 1993); Rogelio Bermúdez and Maricela Rodríguez (1996); Albertina Mitjans (1985, 1987, 1995); Gloria Fariñas (1995); Héctor Brito (1984); and Josefina López (1997), among others.

With the revision indicated in the previous paragraphs, we TEDI researchers strengthened the theoretical bases and broadened the expectations we had to offer to the practice of Cuban education around the integral formation of the personality.

Personally, among the Cuban researchers who most influenced my inclination toward developmental didactics at that time, I can point to the following: Alberto Labarrere (1987, 1996), whose position on the self-regulation of students' cognitive activity interested me; Luis Campistrous and Celia Rizo (1996), whose positions on the problematization of teaching and learning (1996) I adopted. From Josefina López and Mercedes López, I took elements about working with the essentials in teaching content, as well as what they published about skills such as description, definition, and argumentation (1989, 1990, 1996). From Pilar Rico, I took her position on skills for control and evaluation by students (1989). From Margarita Silvestre (1985, 1991) and Edith Mirian Santos (1989) I took what they had contributed to the theoretical thinking of students from the first years of basic education (in the case of Cuba, reproducing the research of the Russians V. V. Davidov and L. Zankov). I also adopted the positions of Albertina Mitjans on creativity (1995). The work of Pedro Luis Castro (1996) on the family and its role in the development of children was important to me. I reviewed the positions of Orlando Varela on the formation of habits and skills in teaching (1990). I reviewed the positions of Esther Baxter (1989), among other Cuban researchers, on the formation of values.

**RVP and AML:** In 2002, you published with Editorial *Pueblo y Educación* a book entitled "*Hacia una didáctica desarrolladora*" (Towards a Developmental Didactics), co-authored with Margarita Silvestre Oramas. This book brings together several characteristics that we could consider relevant: (1) we believe it is one of the first and also one of the few books on didactics published in Cuba in which the term "developmental" is used; (2) before 1991, a developmental conception of education, learning and teaching prevailed in Cuba, but it was dominated by the work of authors of Soviet origin; (3) it was written at a time when the assumptions of this didactic conception had given way to new theories, both internationally (former Soviet Union) and in Cuba.

Could we place this book in the context of the research on the teaching-learning process carried out in the period 2000-2004 as part of the research project of the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences of Cuba? Alternatively, is it related to the TEDI project (1998) mentioned in the book itself? Is the book *Procedimientos metodológicos y tareas de aprendizaje: una propuesta desarrolladora desde las asignaturas de Lengua Española, Matemática, Historia de Cuba y Ciencias Naturales* (Pueblo y Educación, 2011) related to this project? If so, what do you consider the main contributions of this project in terms of theory and methodology and practical implementation in Cuban schools? What other publications from this period would you mention?

**JZT:** This is a very intriguing question, and I am grateful to the interviewers for asking it because it allows me to strengthen the scientific argument for the title of the book I co-authored with Dr. Margarita Silvestre, published in 2002: Towards a Developing Didactics).

I consider the book to be one of the final scientific products of the core research that we carried out in the 1990s in the TEDI project (Techniques to Stimulate Intellectual Development). As I said, the results were incorporated by the Cuban Ministry of Education into the national educational policy in the 2000s, so I would dare to say that the work was part of the country's efforts to improve the quality of education in the country, as shown by what was published in 2001

in a tabloid edition of the newspaper Juventud Rebelde, for the National Seminar for Educators, for the whole country, on developmental didactics, the authors being Dr. Margarita Silvestre and Dr. José Zilberstein.

As I said in previous questions, the project initially drew on sources with a cognitive focus, and so it was that the demands made of the project by the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP) to participate in the construction of the foundations of a Cuban pedagogy and didactics led us, along with the above, to revisit the rich history of Cuban education, enriched between 1960 and the 1990s by research from the now defunct socialist camp of Eastern Europe of that decade (some of whose authors I have already mentioned).

With what had been researched and approved by the scientific bodies of the ICCP, the group of researchers set out at the beginning of the 2000s to establish as such what we then called a Cuban didactic conception for the new times that were required in Cuban society and the country, inserted in Latin America, taking the positive aspects of the antecedents and making a dialectical negation of what we should improve, including, of course, what had been developed together with Soviet researchers, among others.

Photo - Presentation of the Distinction for a Lifetime of Achievement awarded in San Luis Potosí, Mexico (November 11, 2017).



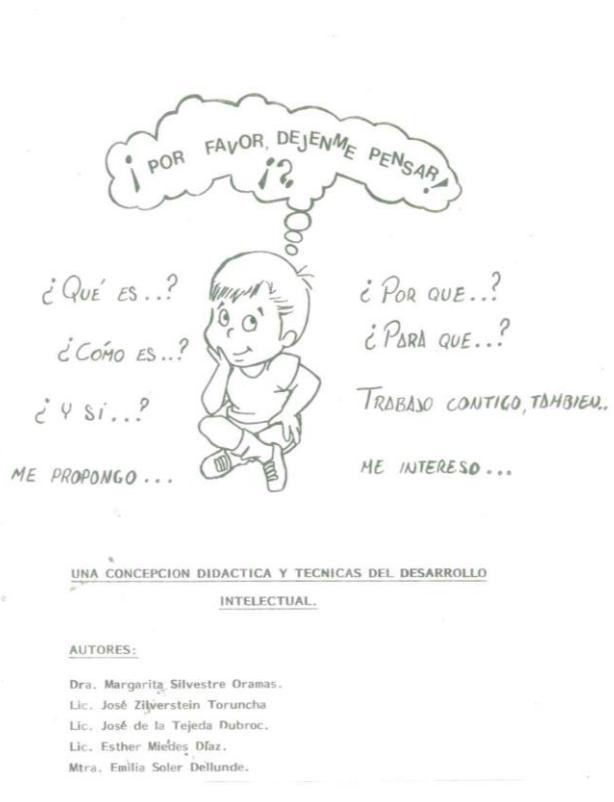
Source: Author's personal archive.

The TEDI project had accumulated experience over the years, and the fact that from the beginning of 1994 we were able to exchange much more with researchers and educators from various Latin American countries, including Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Argentina, allowed us to enrich the initial conceptions and to capture in various earlier works what was finally consolidated in the book 2022, I point out, as a complement to the question, some of which I participated as author or co-author:

-A methodology and techniques that stimulate intellectual development. Light printing booklet. Cuba. Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences. (1993). Co-author.

I believe that this publication, which was used for academic exchange in Mexico, was the starting point for others in other Latin American countries and in Cuba. **See the illustration on the cover:**

Figure 1: Cover of the brochure (A Didactic Approach and Techniques of Intellectual Development). 1994.



Source: Author's archive.

- Técnicas que estimulan el desarrollo intelectual. Folleto impresión Ligera. Cuba. Instituto Central de Ciencias Pedagógicas. (1993). Autor.
- Hacia una enseñanza que estimule el desarrollo intelectual. Folleto impresión Ligera. Cuba. Editado por el Instituto Pedagógico Latinoamericano y Caribeño, (1994). Coautor.
- Una Concepción Didáctica y Técnicas del Desarrollo Intelectual. Libro. Ediciones CEIDE. México. (1994). Coautor.
- Tendencias en el aprendizaje escolar y el Desarrollo intelectual. Folleto impresión Ligera. Lima. Perú. Editado por el Colegio Fermín Tanguis. (1997). Autor.
- Un aprendizaje escolar desarrollador de la inteligência. Folleto impresión Ligera. Lima. Perú. Editado por el Colegio Fermín Tanguis. (1997). Autor.
- Proyecto Cubano TEDI: El Desarrollo intelectual. Un reto para los educadores, Folleto impresión Ligera. Lima. Perú, Editado por el Colegio Fermín Tanguis, (1997). Autor.
- Reflexiones acerca de la necesidad de buscar una propuesta de Concepción Didáctica para estimular el desarrollo intelectual. Folleto impresión Ligera. Lima. Perú. Editado por el Colegio Fermín Tanguis. (1997). Autor.
- Aprendizaje y Calidad de la Educación. Libro. Ediciones CEIDE. México. (1999). Autor.
- Didáctica integradora vs Didáctica Tradicional. Libro. Editorial Academia. Cuba. (1999). Autor.
- Enseñanza desarrolladora de las Ciencias Naturales. Libro. Editorial Pueblo y Educación, Cuba. (2000). Autor.
- ¿Cómo hacer más eficiente el aprendizaje? Libro. Ediciones CEIDE. México. (2000). Autor.
- Enseñanza y aprendizaje desarrollador. Libro. Ediciones CEIDE. México, (2000). Autor.

Regarding the term Didáctica Desarrolladora (Developmental Didactics), which is used in the title of the book I am referring to in the question, although it was much debated in the scientific sessions of the ICCP before its publication, and was even questioned by other Cuban researchers, who pointed out that

development is implicit in any didactic process, The research team of the TEDI project took up the challenge and what we did was to justify the reason for this name, since in those years we abandoned the idea of referring only to intellectual development, and we proposed a didactic concept for the development of the integral personality of students, in terms of knowledge, skills, and values. This was based, as I will explain shortly, on the fact that all the research related to this problem was sufficiently mature and had even begun to be published and disseminated in Cuba and Latin America.

In addition, I would like to add, by way of anecdote, that we began the title of the book with "Towards a (...)," with the implicit aim of highlighting the need to continue researching how to achieve the full development of students and as a challenge to readers to work with their students to achieve this.

An example of the impact that the term in question began to have in Latin America was the note that Dr. José Luis Murillo Amaro wrote when he presented the aforementioned booklet in 1994: A Didactic Conception and Techniques of Intellectual Development, and I quote: "The central idea, the thread running through the text, is the stimulation of the intellectual development of students. To achieve this goal, the authors propose a series of techniques that the teacher can use in his or her group. These techniques are inscribed in a didactic concept based on psychopedagogical theories that give the student back the leading role in learning and conceive of the teacher as an enhancer or developer of human capacities" (Presentation page). See the original page of the brochure:

Figure 2: Presentation Page of the Brochure: A Didactic Conception and Techniques of Intellectual Development. ICCP. 1994.

#### PRESENTACION:

El presente trabajo es producto de la experiencia desarrollada por un destacado grupo de investigadores cubanos.

La idea central, hilo conductor del texto, es la estimulación - del desarrollo intelectual de los escolares. Para lograr este objetivo proponen los autores una serie de técnicas que el maestro puede aplicar en su grupo. Estas técnicas están inscritas en una concepción didáctica cuya fundamentación se encuentra en teorías psicopedagógicas que restituyen al alumno el papel protagónico en su aprendizaje y conciben al docente como potenciador o desarrollador de las capacidades humanas.

Es evidente que este producto es susceptible de ser aplicado en todos los países del mundo, ya que es un proyecto innovador. Tiene la virtud de establecer un puente entre teoría-práctica educativa, pues se ha ido construyendo en las aulas de educación elemental y en los centros de investigación de Cuba.

Maestro, ponemos en tus manos este material esperando te sea útil en el trabajo cotidiano y lo enriquezcas con tu experiencia.

José Luis Murillo Amaro.

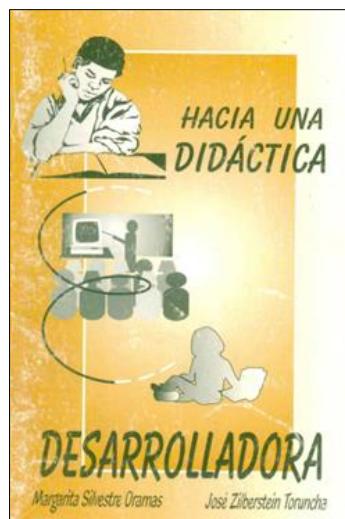
Source: Author's archive.

Returning to the book "Towards a Developing Didactics" and to its contents, published in 2002, what has already been said has been adopted, which is expressed in its prologue, and I quote "We assume that didactics should be developmental, that is, it should lead to the integral development of the student's personality and, in particular, his potential, which is the result of the process of appropriation (Leontiev, 1975) of the socio-historical experience accumulated by humanity, whose current technological development shows enormous potential for achieving a teaching-learning process that offers students and teachers new ways (...) to appropriate information and achieve interactive learning" (Silvestre and Zilberstein, 2002: Prologue).

I would also like to refer to the image on the cover of the book, which should mark the dialectical materialist conception that we adopt of the category of development, considered an upward spiral, in which each stage takes the best of

the previous one and produces a quantitative leap based on the accumulation of qualitative changes. At the center of the spiral, we place the educator, the support of technology, and the group vision we have of the teaching-learning process. Finally, I would like to add that at the base of the spiral we place an image representing a young student and at the end an image of an older student, conveying the message that the didactic proposal favors the integral growth of the student. See book cover photo.

Figure 3: Cover of the book. Towards a Developing Didactics.



Source: Author's archive.

About the main contributions of the TEDI project in terms of theory and methodology and its practical implementation in Cuban schools, I believe that, in summary, they were

-The proposal of didactic principles or requirements for a process of developmental teaching and learning, from the positions of pedagogy as the science of education and didactics as one of its nurturing elements (I will refer to this later).

- The proposal of a learning guide model, which focused attention in the educational field of that time on the active-reflective role of students in the teaching-learning process.

- A system of teaching procedures, based on stated teaching principles that would allow the educator to encourage different types of student activities with the content of school programs: cognitive activity, practical activity, communicative activity, and evaluative activity.

Didactic recommendations for a developmental teaching-learning process, considering the peculiarities of the content of some disciplines, including Science, Biology, History, Spanish, and Mathematics, as well as for the learning of preschool children. These were the results of the group of researchers who constituted the TEDI project, and later, including to this day, other researchers from Cuba and other countries have continued to contribute in different disciplines.

To substantiate what I have just said about the contributions of the TEDI Project, I would like to mention the publications in which some of the scientific results I am referring to have appeared, along with other authors who have participated and/or applied the results in their research:

- Rico, P. (1995). *Las acciones del alumno en la actividad de aprendizaje, una reflexión necesaria para enseñar mejor. Temas de Psicología Pedagógica para maestros IV.* La Habana. Cuba.
- Campistrous, L. Rizo, C. (1996). *Aprende a resolver problemas aritméticos.* Ed. Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Silvestre, M. (1999). *Aprendizaje, educación y desarrollo.* Editorial Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Zilberstein, J. Portela, R. Mcpherson, M. (1999). *Didáctica integradora vs Didáctica tradicional.* Editorial Academia. La Habana. Cuba.
- Zilberstein, J. y Valdés, H. (1999). *Aprendizaje y calidad de la educación.* Ediciones CEIDE. México.
- Zilberstein, J. (2000). *Desarrollo intelectual en las Ciencias Naturales.* Editorial Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Leal, H. (2000). *Pensar, reflexionar y sentir en las clases de Historia.* Editorial Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.

- Zilberstein, J. y Portela, R. (2002). Uma concepción desarrolladora de la motivación y el aprendizaje de las Ciencias. Editorial Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Rico, P. (2002). Técnicas para potenciar un aprendizaje desarrollados en el escolar primario. Editorial Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Rico, P. (2003). La zona de desarrollo próximo. Procedimientos y tareas de aprendizaje. Editorial Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Martínez, M. D. Castellanos y J. Zilberstein (2004). Didáctica para un aprendizaje creativo. Editora Magisterial, Lima, Perú. Rico. P. Santos E. M. y Martín-Viaña. V. (2004). Algunas exigencias para el desarrollo y evaluación del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje en la escuela primaria. Save de Children. La Habana. Cuba.
- Olmedo, S. (2004). Hacia una mejora en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de las Ciencias Naturales en la escuela mexicana. En: En búsqueda de alternativas didácticas: Reflexiones sobre educación y experiencias áulicas. Ediciones CEIDE, México. PP. 43-75.
- Murillo. J. L. (2004). Inteligencia, Desarrollo e interacciones mediadoras en la acción educativa. En: En búsqueda de alternativas didácticas: Reflexiones sobre educación y experiencias áulicas. Ediciones CEIDE, México. PP. 8-42.
- Humberto David Fierro Hernández. (2004). Uso de técnicas para el Desarrollo de habilidades intelectuales generales en la Educación Primaria. En: En búsqueda de alternativas didácticas: Reflexiones sobre educación y experiencias áulicas. Ediciones CEIDE, México. PP. 108-132.
- Solis. Y. y Zilberstein. J. (2005). Las estrategias de aprendizaje comprendidas desde el Enfoque Histórico Cultural. Ediciones CEIDE. México.

In response to the question about the book: *Procedimientos metodológicos y tareas de aprendizaje: una propuesta desarrolladora desde las asignaturas de Lengua Española, Matemática, Historia de Cuba y Ciencias Naturales* (Pueblo y Educación, 2011), whose main author is Dr. Pilar Rico Montero, I would like to point out that what has been published deepens the essential elements of the TEDI

project in terms of the conception of the developmental teaching-learning process to be achieved in students and how the teacher can promote it. Its author, as I have already mentioned, was part of the TEDI project, and in the current work, she delves deeper into this subject that is so important for education in the 21st century. I had the great privilege of participating with Dr. Pilar in the research of those years as part of the ICCP.

**RVP and AML:** Returning to the book "*Hacia una didáctica desarrolladora*" (Towards a developmental didactics), it is possible to identify two quite relevant features. On the one hand, a significant effort in favor of a conception of developmental didactics that, unlike the previous period (1970-1991), seeks to integrate the theoretical and methodological assumptions of psychology and historical-cultural didactics, whose fundamental reference is L.S. Vygotsky, with the theses of relevant Cuban philosophers, educators, and pedagogues, such as José Martí, Félix Varela, José de la Luz y Caballero, Enrique José Varona, etc. On the other hand, there is also an unusual effort to integrate different variants of historical-cultural developmental didactics, as seen in the revisiting of the work of authors with theoretical and methodological positions that are similar in many aspects but also divergent in many others, such as V.V. Davidov, L.V. Zankov and N.F. Talizina.

Do you agree with two conclusions that we have drawn from the book? What else could you add to them so that the reader can better understand the issue we are discussing?

**JZT:** I agree with the two conclusions you have drawn.

In the work we tried to integrate the most valuable aspects of Cuban pedagogy, didactics, and psychology into a didactic proposal at the beginning of the 21st century, enriching it with the contributions of various Soviet authors, including those you mentioned: V.V. Davidov, L.V. Zankov and N.F. Talizina, and I would add A.N. Leontiev, Danilov and Skatkin, as well as others I have already mentioned in previous questions. Clear evidence of this are the didactic principles

presented in the book between pages 22-44, which I will mention below (I have underlined in bold what I consider essential in each principle expressed):

- Comprehensive diagnosis of the student's preparation for the requirements of the teaching-learning process, level of achievement and potential in the learning content, intellectual development, and affective evaluation.

- Structuring the teaching-learning process towards the active search for knowledge by the student, considering the actions to be carried out by the student in the moments of orientation, execution, and control of the activity and the use of teaching methods that favor independent activity and search for information.

- To design a system of activities for the search and exploration of knowledge by the student from reflective positions that stimulate and encourage the development of thinking and independence in the student.

- To direct motivation towards the object of study activity and maintain its consistency. Develop the need to learn and the training to do so.

- Stimulate the formation of concepts and the development of logical thought processes and the achievement of the theoretical level, to the extent that knowledge is appropriated and the ability to solve problems is increased.

- To develop forms of collective activity and communication that are conducive to intellectual development, to achieve an appropriate interaction of the individual with the collective in the learning process, and to acquire learning strategies by the pupil.

- To consider individual differences in the development of students, in the transition from the level achieved to the level sought.

- To link the content of learning to social practice and to stimulate students' appreciation of education and the processes of their cultural formation in general".

Photo - Conference intervention during the International Congress of Unit 203, of the National Pedagogical University, Oaxaca, Mexico, on May 6, 2017.



Source: Author's archive.

In the above principles, numerous positions are either explicit or implicit, and I will highlight some of them below to substantiate my comment:

- From Leontiev (1981), the recognition that human beings develop culture within a social group and not just as isolated entities, to which we add that the nature of teaching plays a determining role in this process, provided that it has a developmental and not an inhibitory effect on student learning.

We also draw on this author's ideas about activity and quote: "Activity is a non-additive unit (...) of the life of the bodily subject (...) it is the unit mediated by psychic reflection whose real function is to orient the subject in the object world". (Leontiev, 1989: 265)

- It is assumed that school education is the process that the educational institution, in correspondence with the family and the rest of society, organizes, develops, and systematizes to ensure that students acquire the content of teaching and, as such, the accumulated historical and social experience of humanity, as well as the modes of creative activity, which coincides with the ideas put forward by Danilov and Skatkin (1985).

- From Vigotski (1987) we take the position that intellectual development is the result of the process of development of the person in his interaction with the social environment, the product of the intrapsychic and intrapsychic relationship.

- From Zankov (1975) and Davidov (1988) their positions on teaching that develops and promotes a continuous increase in the quality of what the student does, linked to the development of their personality.

From Talizina we take and include in our didactic proposal what refers to how the activity of students with the teaching and learning content is manifested through actions and operations, as well as the relativity of these two concepts, as the author points out, and I quote, "What intervenes as action in one phase of teaching becomes operation in another. On the other hand, action can become operation and vice versa". (Talízina, 1988: 59)

**RVP and AML:** In the same vein, how do you see the reception of these three variants in studies of developmental didactics in Cuba? In your opinion, which of these variants has had the greatest influence on the Cuban developmental approach? Do you attribute this to a particular event (the visit of Soviet psychologists to the country, research links or joint studies between Cuban and Soviet specialists, the reception or translation of a particular work, etc.)?

**JZT:** I would venture to say that the three variants converged in the construction of Cuban developmental didactics in the 1990s, since it was precisely at the time when I became more involved in didactic research that these realities emerged:

a) Visits by Soviet psychologists, teachers, and pedagogues.

b) In connection with the above, there were various exchanges of joint research plans between the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences of Cuba, representing the Cuban Ministry of Education.

c) Cuban scientists carried out doctoral studies in the USSR, which allowed them to participate in research with Soviet advisors and subsequently enriched Cuban educational practice.

d) Numerous works by Soviet researchers have been translated into Spanish, and especially in the case of the TEDI project, the works of the Soviet authors mentioned below have greatly influenced our positions:

- Vigostky, L. S. (1987) Historia del desarrollo de las funciones psíquicas superiores. Editorial Científico Técnica. La Habana. Cuba.
- Vigostky, L. S. (1966) Pensamiento y lenguaje. Ediciones Revolucionarias. La Habana. Cuba.
- Zankov, L. (1975). La enseñanza y el desarrollo. Editorial Progreso. Moscú.
- Talizina, N. F. La formación de la actividad cognoscitiva de los escolares. Ministerio de Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Danilov, M. A. (1981). Formación en los escolares de la independencia y la actividad creadora en el proceso de enseñanza. Pedagogía Soviética. Moscú.
- Davidov, V. V. (1979). Tipos de generalización en la enseñanza. Editorial Pueblo y Educación. La Habana. Cuba.
- Davidov, V. V. (1987). Análisis de los principios didácticos de la escuela tradicional y posibles cambios en la enseñanza en el futuro próximo. En: Psicología evolutiva y pedagógica. Editorial Progreso. Moscú.
- Davidov, V. V. (1988). La enseñanza escolar y el desarrollo psíquico. Editorial Progreso. Moscú.
- Skatkin, M. N. y Lerner, I. Ya. (1985). Métodos de enseñanza. En: Danilov, M. A. y Skatkin, M. N. Didáctica de la escuela media. Segunda Reimpresión. Editorial de Libros para la Educación. Ciudad de La Habana. Cuba.

**RVP and AML:** Our studies in the theoretical field of developmental didactics, carried out as part of Gepedi's research, have allowed us to distinguish different theoretical and methodological variants of historical-cultural didactics, which manifest themselves in the form of alternative developmental didactic systems. We have also been able to identify specific variants within the same system. For example, within the Elkonin-Davidov-Repkin system, we have at least two very different variants: the Muscovite and the Kharkivite.

Do you consider the developmental didactics developed in Cuba since the 1990s, especially after 2000, to be a specific variant of the developmental didactics of the Soviet period? What do you consider the most relevant characteristics of this Cuban variant? If so, do you think it could be considered a variant of the Elkonin-Davidov-Repkin system?

**JZT:** I think that, although I have already dealt with the content of this question to some extent in previous pages, I would like to point out that the Didáctica Desarrolladora (Developmental Didactics) born in Cuba, although it relied on the works of Soviet authors and, to a lesser extent, on those of the former GDR (German Democratic Republic), was based on the results of numerous studies carried out by Cuban researchers, including psychologists, pedagogues, sociologists, and didacticians.

And being attached to the historical truth of the period in which I lived in Cuba, although the results of the former socialist camp were applied, the practical experimentation in Cuban schools always went through prior research in the educational context of the country and not only at the desks of researchers.

I highly appreciate the studies in the theoretical field of developmental didactics, carried out within the framework of Gepedi's research, which, in my humble opinion, have made a profound and systematic synthesis of the work of Soviet authors, as well as reproducing it in an excellent way, going beyond what the group of researchers, of which I was a member, for the construction of Cuban developmental didactics did not manage to achieve, perhaps motivated, without trying to justify it, by the social demands of the rapid incorporation of our results into the national educational system.

I dare to affirm that our position, with what has been pointed out in previous paragraphs, is closer to what they use to identify as the Elkonin-Davidov-Repkin variant, from Moscow, although I confess that I must delve deeper into the profound studies that you have contributed to the world recently.

**RVP and AML:** In the book's prologue, you begin with what you consider developmental teaching that is, teaching that is capable of "guiding the integral development of the student's personality and psychic potentialities..." (p. 5). This brings it much closer to the concept of developmental learning developed by Soviet authors based on L.S. Vigotsky's thesis on the relationship between learning and development. This approach becomes even more explicit when we return to the principles of developmental teaching on page 22: comprehensive diagnosis, active participation of students, development of thinking, motivational orientation, formation of concepts and logical thought processes, collective activity and communication, and so on. In this concept of development, is there anything that you consider specific to the Cuban teaching model?

**JZT:** This is a very interesting question, and I'd like to point out some peculiarities of the Cuban didactic model developed by the TEDI project:

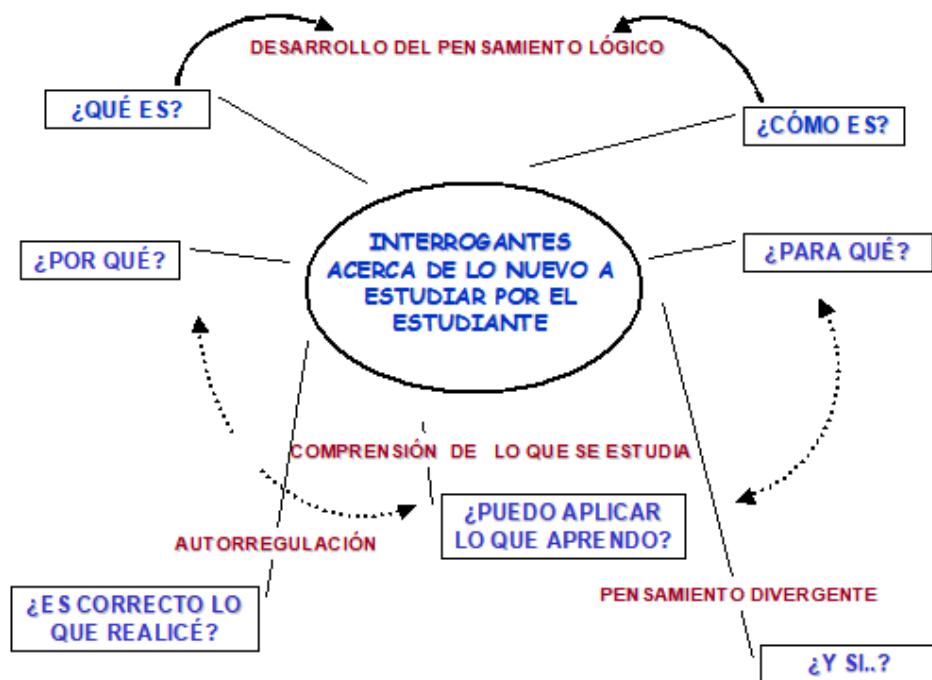
The first peculiarity, in my opinion, lies in the fact that the Cuban model introduced into the theoretical-practical academic world the concept of integral development of the personality and not only intellectual development, as it often appeared in the translation of Soviet works, with the aim, from my standpoint, of distancing itself from the cognitivism, who referred only to the development of intelligence, as I said before, which we shared in the first three years of research in the TEDI project.

In our case, especially in the work that began in 2000, we focused on the notion of integral personality development, and in those years, we entered into a philosophical contradiction with the positions that had emerged in other countries on competencies, from the business world, at least at the beginning of the 2000s.

In this position, which we later deepened in other works, we consider that integral development is the product of each person's appropriation of the most valuable aspects of social culture, thanks to which individual activity (of each member of society) is transformed into integral activity, into initiative, so that each citizen becomes a transforming, innovative, enterprising, and creative personality.

The second peculiarity contributed by the group of researchers was a guiding model for learning, which would allow educators to apply the aforementioned didactic principles in the classroom with their students in school subjects. In the following, I will present one of the variants of the model that I will discuss here:

Figure 4: Guide to learning model developed by the TEDI Project.



Source: Author's archive.

Notice in the model the presence of trigger questions to get to the essence of the learning content and be able to apply it creatively to practice for the student:

- What is it? To lead the student to understand the essential characteristics or properties of the content studied by extracting them from the general characteristics. This would put them in a better position for their thinking to "operate at a theoretical, generalized, or abstract level".

What is it like? It is about trying to get students to learn to distinguish in what they are studying the general characteristics, the particular ones that will lead them to distinguish the essential ones.

What does it do? It helps students to understand the importance of everything they study for others, for society in general, and above all, for themselves as human beings in formation; the latter is not always considered in most educational processes.

Why is this? Because they allow the student to reach the causes of the changes or transformations that, occur in the content they study, but based on the assumption of the essential features or characteristics of what they study.

Can I apply what I have learned? Looking for the student to apply what they have learned to new situations and to question it in a creative way.

- What if...? Enable students to make new conjectures, seek alternatives, imagine, hypothesize, and achieve deeper thinking.

In the figure below, a version of this guiding model for learning was included on the cover of the book published in Mexico. See figure.

Figure 5: Cover of the book: Enseñanza y Aprendizaje Desarrollador. Ediciones CEIDE. Mexico. 2000.



Source: Author's archive.

And the third peculiarity that I think we contributed was a system of developing didactic procedures so that, based on the didactic principles and the guiding model for learning, the educator could plan and achieve classes that develop the integral personalities of the students. These are summarized below; see figure:

Figure 6: Developing teaching procedures. TEDI 2000 and 2022.



Source: Author's archive.

Although the TEDI project developed general teaching procedures, as I mentioned earlier in this interview, other researchers have subsequently enriched these with variations in different areas of knowledge, with great creativity, such as the natural sciences, biology, social sciences, geography, mathematics, and others.

**RVP and AML:** One aspect of the didactic proposal that you develop draws our attention. In the first place, it is not limited to the potential that learning has for the psychic development of the students, especially in theoretical thinking, but also the potential that it has from an educational aspect, that is, for the development of the personality, especially the development of the motivational sphere and the child's desire to learn. However, in terms of theoretical and methodological elaboration, as well as didactic orientations, they make much more progress in the development of cognitive aspects than in aspects related to the personality of the student. Could you explain why there is such a lack? Why is it that subjective aspects

are mentioned, but there is little work on them from a didactic perspective? In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge for developmental didactics in this sense? The concepts of theoretical thinking and skills are defined, and the methodological procedures for their formation and verification are presented, but the same is not done in relation to personality, motives, desires to study, etc. They are not conceptualized, and their content is not specified. They are not conceptualized, their content and process of formation are not specified, and they are not verified. Do you think this is a limitation of the book, or a limitation of the Cuban variant of developmental didactics, or even of all developmental didactics? Has this question ever been overcome in the research on this subject? What remains for the new generations of researchers?

**JZT:** As you say in your question, the subjective aspects were mentioned but not sufficiently worked on from a didactic standpoint, which is true. From my perspective, perhaps we lacked the time to translate the aspect of the formation of attitudes and values into works and publications, probably because of the complexity of achieving it and, secondly, because of other research tasks that were set for the members of TEDI.

Undoubtedly, this is something that could be left to the new generations of researchers who follow Cuban developmental didactics, especially in light of the new social, political, and moral contexts of today's globalized world.

**RVP and AML:** We believe that one of the greatest contributions of Cuban specialists in the field of developmental didactics lies in its practical implementation in schools. Soviet researchers made rapid and significant progress in the experimental design of a didactic proposal, but they achieved very little in terms of its introduction into ordinary schools. Less than 10% of Soviet schools implemented the proposal. In Cuba, it was almost generalized throughout the basic education system. Do you agree with us or do you have another point of view? If you agree, what factors could you name as facilitating this process?

**JZT:** I consider it a privilege that in Cuba the positions of developmental didactics became generalized throughout the basic education system and this was motivated, from my point of view, by the following reasons:

- The existence of a national educational system that promoted its improvement because of previous experiments carried out by the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP) and the Pedagogical Universities associated with it.

- The national printing, initially in the form of tabloids, for all the basic education teachers in the country, of the various didactic contributions that I have already mentioned in this interview, which were later turned into books that were published and distributed free of charge in the libraries of schools and teacher training colleges.

-The creation of televised sessions broadcast throughout the country, attended by teachers and school administrators, in which many of the results of the TEDI project were demonstrated practically.

-The existence of a National Science and Technology Plan, which allowed research related to the TEDI Project to be replicated in the provinces of the country and its results to be applied promptly in schools.

**RVP:** and AML: How would you evaluate the approach that was consolidated in Cuba, with a combination of developmental learning based on Soviet authors and the concept of meaningful learning of the American psychologist David Paul Ausubel?

**JZT:** Although the work of D.P. Ausubel was studied and disseminated in Cuba, and even the TEDI project delved deeper into it, we took up again what referred to the elaboration of schemes and mental maps to construct knowledge as something important, but not the only thing that shapes the personality of the student. Some of us at certain moments considered it an approach that was too focused only on knowledge, but I insist that it is still interesting, and at certain moments, it is related to V.V. Davidov's proposals about the types of generalization that the student needs to acquire.

Our proposal of meaningful learning did not stop at talking about networks of concepts or logical schemes of thinking, which we do not discard, but we insist on assuming the essentials of learning content and applying it to personal and social life.

**RVP and AML:** We know that you have been living and working in Mexico for almost two decades. Can you still produce knowledge in the field of developmental didactics? Many other Cuban specialists like you have also left the country. Do you think that developmental didactics has survived on Cuban soil? How do you see the direction of developmental didactics in the current context of Cuban schools? Do you have any news that it has been able to advance despite the enormous difficulties that Cuba is facing? If you think this is positive, what recent experiences do you know of that support this statement?

**JZT:** Since 2007, I have been working as a campus dean in a Mexican university, which has allowed me to apply some results of the TEDI project to the university context, adapting them to the needs of the university, especially in master's and doctoral programs, as well as in research consultation at this postgraduate level.

As a result, for more than 10 years, students, and academics from the university where I work have participated in educational conferences at the University of Matanzas, Cuba, and several of them have incorporated postulates of developmental didactics in their research, as can be seen in this collage of images:

Figure 7: Participation of Mexican students in International Congresses in Matanzas, Cuba.



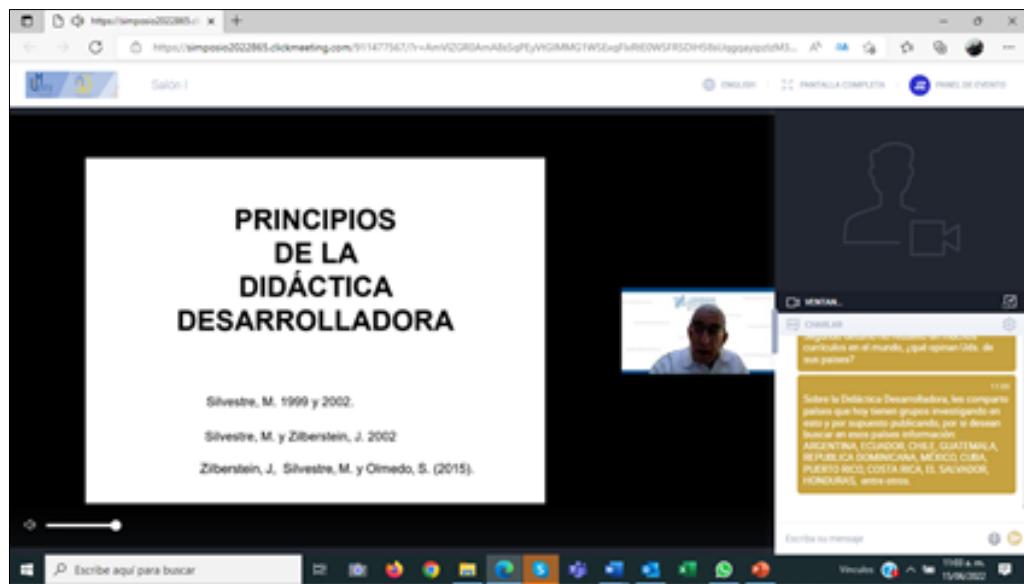
Source: Author's archive.

Over the years, I have continued to publish in journals and books in countries such as Mexico, Brazil (thanks to your invitation in your scientific journal), and Cuba.

In general, I believe that in Cuba there has been a continuous deepening of the positions of developmental didactics. Although I do not have a solid study on the subject, I maintain academic exchanges with researchers from different provinces of the country, including Havana, Pinar del Rio, Matanzas, Villa Clara, Santis Spíritus, Santiago de Cuba, and many of them tell me that they have produced new contributions in this regard.

In 2022, I participated in the 13th International Symposium on Education and Culture and the 4th International Workshop on Educational Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education in Matanzas, Cuba, with a keynote lecture entitled: Challenges to Latin American Education in the 21st Century. Projections from Developmental Didactics, and through exchanges and questions, I was able to perceive the continuing interest in this topic among the participating Cuban educators. See figure.

Figure 8: Participation in the Cuban Congress.



Source: Author's archive.

Regarding the direction of developmental education in the current context of Cuban schools, although I cannot speak about it in depth because I am not in the country, I believe that educators and researchers have always shown great creativity in their work and will continue to do so. Therefore, I dare to identify the challenges that, in my opinion, they should consider in the current global social context:

- Search for new alternatives from the perspective of teaching, in order to strengthen the channels that contribute to the development of attitudes and values related to creative work, constancy, and perseverance in everyday life.
- Deepen the support of the teaching-learning process with current technology, including the use of the Internet, mobile phone applications, and television, among others.
- Expand research on specific teaching methods that respond to the connection between students and everyday life in the current global and national context.

**RVP and AML:** What are your impressions of the current educational movement in Latin America? What trends do you see, and where do you see developmental education fit in? Which authors could you mention?

**JZT:** I think that since the end of the 20th century, and especially in the last decade, Latin American education has been faced with the challenge of adopting constructivist positions in addition to those related to the competency-based approach.

In my opinion, much of the literature that I at least reviewed at that time (between 1990 and 1999) had a distinctly cognitivist focus, with the learning of knowledge and skills prevailing and little discussion of the formation of attitudes and values. It was in this context, as I explained earlier, that the research of the TEDI project was incorporated and disseminated.

Later, at the beginning of 2000, several authors included references to group work and the importance of the social in their publications, and thus began to quote L.S. Vigotsky, especially in relation to the definition of ZDP, although from my point of view with still eclectic positions, which is a challenge for current Latin American educators.

During these years, in several countries, people began to talk about the cultural-historical approach, but with other names, such as sociocultural approach, socio-historical approach, among others. Moreover, I repeat, this is an example of the fact that the "classical" theoretical bases of CHA have not been sufficiently revised.

As for trends, I would not dare to speak about them in depth, since I have not carried out metacognitive studies in this regard, but I would like to highlight the valuable work you are doing in Uberlândia and that of many other colleagues in Brazil, as well as in Argentina, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Cuba.

**RVP and AML:** You and Gepedi have had a very productive working relationship for over a decade. What do you attribute this closeness to? What do you consider the main fruits of this collaboration? How would you evaluate the group's work in the areas of dissemination, research, and integration over

the years? What recommendations would you make to its members to help them improve their work?

**JZT:** I think that the very productive collaboration that I have had with Gedepi for more than a decade is due, first, to the high human quality of the people with whom I have been able to exchange ideas, foremost with Dr. Roberto Valdés Puentes and Dr. Andréa Maturano Longarezi, to which I add their scientific rigor in the research that they carry out and direct, as well as their concrete actions to achieve communication among all of us who approach developmental didactics.

Among the most important fruits of this collaboration, I would like to mention The participation in two scientific events with mutual participation, one in Brazil and the other in Mexico, in addition to mutual interventions in virtual events as a result of the pandemic; the possibility of publishing in Brazilian journals, both on my part and for other Mexican colleagues (four authors so far, in total); the collaboration in social networks to share news and publications between several countries, which has encouraged the emergence of other scientific exchange actions, such as a conference in which I participated in October 2022 at the Technical University of Manabi, Ecuador, entitled: Diagnosis and Assessment of Learning. A challenge for educational systems in the 21st century.

**RVP and AML:** Finally, we have one last question. What message would José Zilberstein Toruncha leave to Brazilian readers interested in the development of education from a historical-cultural and developmental perspective? What could be done from both perspectives in the context of a capitalist country with educational problems very different from those faced by the Soviet Union at the time these approaches were created? What kind of alliances and exchanges could be built between Brazil and Mexico in terms of collaborative relationships, in the sense of moving towards the constitution of a developmental educational system in both countries?

**JZT:** My message to Brazilian readers interested in the development of education from a historical-cultural and developmental perspective is to continue to delve into the origins of this approach, both in the former USSR and in Cuba, and to read carefully what is now being published in a very profound and intelligent way in many universities in Brazil, including the leadership of the University of Uberlândia.

In my opinion, there is no reason why the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky and many other researchers should not be applied in a different social regime, since their work was based on a profound understanding of human nature and personality development. Reading them allows us to reinterpret their proposals in the light of our Latin American context and the social changes that are taking place in the 21st century.

I believe that today, in capitalist countries such as Mexico and Brazil, which have already made great strides in reading and reinterpreting the publications of Soviet and Cuban authors, empirical research should be carried out that can be applied in the classroom, as many of us were able to do in Cuba in the 1990s so that they will be able to construct a truly developmental teaching method in each of the two countries mentioned, and perhaps give impetus to the entire continent to achieve this, from a developmental base.

The seed has been cultivated in the minds and hearts of many teachers in Latin America; the research with students in their classrooms and the publications that result will be what makes it germinate. We Latin Americans are a persevering people; despite all the obstacles we face politically, socially, culturally, and even geographically, we can, and I propose the challenge of helping to educate new generations in a comprehensive way so that they can contribute to building a better and more sustainable world.

Many thanks to the Doctors for allowing me to rescue many ideas in this interview, even to search for notes that I had not taken up for many years. My respect and admiration for both of you and for what you are doing for the good of didactics in our countries.

## *Teoria da Aprendizagem Desenvolvimental (TAD): diálogo com José Zilberstein Toruncha*

### **RESUMO:**

José Zilberstein Toruncha é um dos didatas cubanos mais importantes da geração dos anos noventa. Formado em Biologia, com mestrado em Pesquisa Educativa e Doutorado em Ciências Pedagógicas, desempenhou um papel importante no estabelecimento dos fundamentos de uma Didática Desenvolvimental em Cuba, com base na integração consciente, concisa e coerente dos pressupostos teóricos da tradição pedagógica nacional (José de la Luz y Caballero, Félix Varela e José Martí), do enfoque histórico-cultural da psicologia (L. S. Vigostky, A. N. Leontiev, S. L. Rubinstein) e da didática (N. F. Talizina, L. Zankov, V. V. Davidov, P. Ya. Galperin). É autor de uma vasta obra escrita, com títulos de ampla circulação na América Latina.

**Palavras-chave:** José Zilberstein Toruncha. Teoria da Aprendizagem Desenvolvimental. Didática Desenvolvimental. Cuba.

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