

FROM ACCUMULATION TO HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: COGNITIVE TENSIONS IN THE CURRICULAR UPDATE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN COLOMBIA (2002-2026)

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Abstract

This reflection article analyzes the cognitive tensions running through Colombian social sciences curricular policy, from the 2002 Curricular Guidelines to their 2026 update, through the Basic Standards of Competencies (2006), Basic Learning Rights (2016), Law 1874 of 2017, and the recommendations of the Advisory Commission for the Teaching of Colombian History (CAEHC, 2022). It argues that the Colombian educational system operated under a reductionist cognitive paradigm that favored information accumulation and the measurement of observable standards, while relegating higher-order thinking processes such as historical causality, multiperspectivity, and historical consciousness. The 2026 Curricular Guidelines represent a significant epistemological turn positioning "thinking historically" as a structural axis and moving from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for* learning yet this transformation will remain insufficient without a sustained policy of teacher professional development. Without continuous training in the epistemology of history, specific didactics, and situated pedagogical accompaniment, the new guidelines risk reproducing the gap between discursive aspirations and classroom practices that has characterized the system for over two decades. Conclusions are propositional: new guidelines must operationalize cognition not as a technical *know-how* but as an ethical and social *know-how-to-reflect*, for which teacher education constitutes the irreplaceable mediating variable.

Keywords: historical thinking, historical consciousness, cognitive skills, Law 1874 of 2017, CAEHC, 2026 curricular guidelines, teacher professional development, active citizenship.

1. Introduction: Twenty-Four Years of Aspirations and a Persistent Gap

The teaching of social sciences in Colombia has, during the first decades of the 21st century, followed a path marked by paradox: while official documents from the Ministry of National Education (MEN) have proclaimed the development of critical thinking as a central objective, the curricular framework that supports them has, in practice, perpetuated a model of memorization-based reproduction and disciplinary fragmentation that inhibits the development of the higher-order

cognitive processes it claims to promote (Montoya, 2017; Palacios Mena, 2018; Sánchez, 2021). This paradox is not merely rhetorical; it has measurable consequences in the inability of generations of students to establish causal relationships between historical processes, construct evidence-based arguments, or develop historical perspectives on the conflicts shaping the country's present.

In March 2026, the MEN published the Updated Social Sciences Curriculum Guidelines for Early, Primary, and Secondary Education, developed through a partnership with the University of

Antioquia and based on an extensive process of collective construction that included regional workshops, teacher consultations, and the incorporation of recommendations from the CAEHC (MEN, 2026). This document represents the first comprehensive update of the curricular framework in this field since 2002 and is presented as “a profound reconfiguration of the formative purpose of social sciences, aimed at integrating knowledge, ethics, territory, memory, identity, participation, research, and social action” (MEN, 2026, p. 26).

The central question guiding this article is twofold: To what extent does the 2026 update overcome the accumulated cognitive tensions between the curricular frameworks of 2002 and 2016? And, more importantly, can a curricular update—no matter how well grounded—transform classroom practices without a sustained policy of teacher professional development?

This article argues that the answer to the first question is moderately positive: the 2026 guidelines represent a genuine epistemological advancement by positioning historical thinking as a structural axis, shifting toward assessment for learning, and integrating nine dimensions of being into comprehensive education. However, the answer to the second question is decidedly negative: without continuous training, context-sensitive pedagogical support, and teacher education programs that translate these aspirations into concrete professional competencies, the new guidelines risk becoming yet another well-intentioned document that ends up archived on the shelves of education departments.

2. Theoretical–Normative Framework

2.1. Cognition from Neuroeducation and Cognitive Psychology: Terminological Clarifications

A persistent weakness in official Colombian documents has been the interchangeable use of the terms *skill*, *ability*, and *competence*, which creates conceptual ambiguity and makes it difficult to guide pedagogical practice (Vasco, 2003; Acosta & Vasco, 2013). This imprecision is not harmless: it determines what is taught, how it is assessed, and the type of cognitive subject that is ultimately formed.

From cognitive psychology, *skill* is defined as the aptitude developed through deliberate practice to perform specific mental operations—such as analyzing, classifying, inferring, and synthesizing—with increasing efficiency and precision (Gilar Corbi, 2003; Pulido, 2018). *Capacity*, in contrast, refers to the individual’s cognitive potential to deploy skills in complex and variable situations; it is a broader construct that integrates biological, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions (Céspedes, 2014; Carroll, 1993). Finally, *competence*,

as defined by Vasco (2003), is a “flexible know-how that can be applied in different contexts,” but it is not limited to knowing and knowing how to do; it also encompasses knowing how to be and how to live within contexts (Restrepo, 2005).

It is significant that the 2026 guidelines address this distinction with greater clarity by adopting the capabilities approach of Sen (2000) and Nussbaum (2011), defining capabilities as “the real freedoms people have to be and to do what they value, according to their social, political, cultural, and economic contexts” (MEN, 2026, p. 38). Furthermore, the 2026 document explicitly articulates capabilities, competencies, and learning with nine dimensions of being: environmental; civic and political; cognitive; communicative and creative; bodily; cultural; ethical; historical and historical memory; and socio-emotional (MEN, 2026, p. 62). This integration overcomes the fragmentation introduced by the 2006 Basic Standards of Competencies, in which cognition was reduced to observable performance indicators.

Contemporary neuroeducation offers a complementary perspective by distinguishing between basic cognitive processes—perception, attention, working memory—and higher-order cognitive processes—causal reasoning, critical thinking, metacognition, and argumentation. Basic processes constitute prerequisites for higher-order ones, but they are not sufficient; intentional pedagogical mediation is required to connect them with meaningful problems in the student’s sociocultural environment (Carretero & Montanero, 2008; Flórez Romero et al., 2016). The 2026 update acknowledges this principle by proposing that “feedback strengthens students’ cognitive mechanisms, helps them establish connections, transfer learning to other contexts, reduce uncertainty, and deploy increasingly relevant strategies” (Salinas, 2025, cited in MEN, 2026, p. 108).

2.2. The Epistemological Shift: From the 2002 Guidelines to the 2026 Update

The Colombian regulatory trajectory in social sciences outlines a path that reveals a cycle of aspiration, impoverishment, and reconceptualization.

The 2002 Curriculum Guidelines represented the moment of greatest initial epistemological ambition. They proposed an integrated, spiral curriculum based on generative themes and problem-posing questions, and explicitly recognized socio-cognitive conflict as a driver of learning (MEN, 2002). As acknowledged by the 2026 update itself, it was “an open, flexible, integrated, and spiral curriculum proposal that would facilitate the analysis of local, national, and global issues [...] taking into account

the cognitive level of students” (MEN, 2026, p. 12). However, as Vasco (2003) noted, “there are practically no studies on skills in history or geography,” which left an empirical gap that subsequent documents failed to fill.

The Basic Standards of Competencies (2004/2006) attempted to translate this integrative vision into level-based indicators. However, cognition became fragmented into measurable standards that prioritized procedural and conceptual dimensions over axiological and reflective ones. Cárdenas and Martínez (2017) document how the structure of these standards reduced the complexity of cognitive processes to observable behaviors, reinstating the behaviorist model they sought to overcome.

The Basic Learning Rights (DBA, 2016) deepened this regressive trend. According to Díaz Sánchez (2020), the DBA are framed in “procedural,

attitudinal, and conceptual contents specific to each grade, evoking the well-known Spanish curriculum of the early part of this century,” marking a regression from the integrative vision of 2002.

Law 1874 of 2017 and the recommendations of the CAEHC (2022) marked the beginning of a recovery. The CAEHC proposed replacing the paradigm of accumulation with that of historical thinking, understood as “the development of those cognitive, procedural, and axiological capacities that provide students with opportunities to reflect critically and analytically on an awareness of temporality” (CAEHC, 2022, p. 76).

The 2026 Curriculum Guidelines incorporate these recommendations and deepen this shift. A comparative analysis between both versions reveals structural continuity but also a significant conceptual evolution (MEN, 2002; MEN, 2026).

Table 1 summarizes the main differences:

Dimension	2002 Guidelines	2026 Guidelines
Cognitive approach	Expected result of curricular integration; implicit	Defined and visible pedagogical component; Explicit complex cognitive skills
Historical thinking	Integrated without specific formulation as a differentiated competence	Autonomous generating axis ("Thinking historically"); Central dimension of training
Critical thinking	General purpose of the area	Ethical, political and pedagogical condition; ability to interrogate reality and take a reasoned position
Evaluation	Learning assessment (measurement, grading)	Evaluation for learning (feedback, formative accompaniment)
Dimensions of Being	No formulated	Nine dimensions: environmental, civic and political, cognitive, communicative and creative, bodily, cultural, ethical, historical and historical memory, socio-emotional
Territory	General contextualization	Structuring principle: "the territory is the place of production of knowledge, of memory, of identity and of citizen construction"
Diversity	General recognition	Explicit gender, intercultural, anti-racist perspective; inclusion of historically silenced voices
Contemporary challenges	Not specifically addressed	Post-truth, climate crisis, hyperconnectivity, migration, symbolic violence

Table 1. Comparison between the Curricular Guidelines of 2002 and 2026. Prepared by the authors based on MEN (2002) and MEN (2026).

As the comparative document points out, "while in 2002 cognitive development was conceived as an expected result of curricular integration, in 2026 it becomes a more defined and visible pedagogical component" (MEN, 2002; MEN, 2026). However, and this is the central thesis of this article, the transition from document to practice requires a mediation that no guideline can provide by itself: **teacher training**.

3. Axes of Analytical Reflection

3.1. Axis 1: Cognition in Dispute – From Integral Processes to Measurable Standards and Back

The diachronic analysis of Colombian official documents reveals what can be called a **pendulum cognitive cycle**: integrative aspiration (2002), operational fragmentation (2004-2016), critical reconceptualization (2017-2026). The 2026 update closes this cycle by returning to the spirit of the original guidelines, but with significant complexity.

First, the 2026 version makes more explicit "the need to develop complex cognitive capacities, such as analyzing, contrasting sources, arguing, deliberating, and making informed decisions in real contexts" (MEN, 2026). Where the 2002

document left these skills as an implicit result of curricular integration, updating turns them into defined pedagogical objectives.

Second, the 2026 guidelines explicitly assume that the desired transformation includes "moving away from the teaching of synthesis, from a fragmented teaching—centered on the accumulation of data, that is, from the inventory of phenomena, places, dates, formulas—from irrelevant data without meaning or usefulness in everyday life to a complex and integrated view of social phenomena" (MEN, 2026, p. 99). This formulation constitutes an official recognition that the gap between discourse and practice has persisted for more than two decades.

However, the uncomfortable question remains: **why did the 2002 aspiration for integration not translate into classroom practices?** The answer lies not in the quality of the document, but in the structural conditions of its implementation. The pressure of the Saber 11 standardized tests generated a *cognitive backwashing effect*: teaching was adjusted to what the evaluation measured (Palacios Mena, 2018). The disciplinary fragmentation derived from the integration of history in the generic area produced *cognitive interference*: competition between multiple attentional demands prevented deep processing (CAEHC, 2022). And the disconnect between teacher training and curricular references perpetuated a cycle of reproduction: teachers trained under the rote paradigm unconsciously reproduced teaching models without clear cognitive intentionality (Montoya, 2017; Pantoja, 2017).

The 2026 guidelines partially recognize this problem by stating that "the dimension of teacher training is decisive: curricular changes require sustained support, relevant teaching resources, and updating programs that allow teachers to design contextualized proposals" (MEN, 2026, p. 25). However, as the document itself admits, "these are elements that do not depend on curricular updating, as they exceed the objectives of the curriculum in the area of Social Sciences" (MEN, 2026, p. 17). This statement is both honest and alarming: it recognizes that the most critical variable for the success of reform is beyond its reach.

3.2. Axis 2: History as a Higher Cognitive Process — From the Integrated Axis to the Structuring Axis

The most significant difference between the 2002 and 2026 guidelines on cognitive matters lies in the treatment of historical thinking. In 2002, history was integrated into the social sciences as a whole "without there being a specific formulation of

historical thought as a differentiated competence" (MEN, 2002; MEN, 2026). This responded to the logic of disciplinary integration of the time, but left "a certain margin of indefiniteness around the specific cognitive processes associated with the understanding of historical time" (MEN, 2026).

The 2026 update, promoted by Law 1874 of 2017 and the recommendations of the CAEHC, positions "thinking historically" as one of the six generating axes of the area, along with: (1) Identities, diversities and social subjects; (2) Critical thinking, communication and citizen dialogue; (3) Thinking historically; (4) Conflict, historical memory and peacebuilding; (5) Territorial action, sustainability and social commitment; and (6) Democracy, active citizenship and social justice (MEN, 2026, p. 71).

Following Vilar (1997, 1999), the document defines *thinking historically* as "the tool for analyzing social processes in their specific contexts, both geographical and temporal, taking care not to fall into anachronisms" (MEN, 2026, p. 46). This definition marks a break with traditional teaching focused on "significant characters, dates, and events of the past" to focus on "understanding the processes of change in historical time and their influence on the present, that is, learning to think historically" (MEN, 2026, p. 100; Carretero and Montanero, 2008).

The conceptual domains of the axis include the structuring concepts of historical science: "time, sources, source criticism, change, continuity, multicausality, recurrence" (MEN, 2026, p. 84). From the formative point of view, "to think historically is to understand that the future is built from the decisions of the present and from the memory of those who preceded us" (MEN, 2026, p. 84). And from the point of view of critical awareness, "the teaching of history must aspire not so much to accumulate knowledge as to teach to think, to doubt, to ensure that students do not accept facts as if they were data to be memorized but as opinions and interpretations that can and should be analyzed and discussed" (Fontana, 2011, p. 32, cited in MEN, 2026, p. 82).

The CAEHC had proposed distinguishing three interrelated types of thinking: historical thinking (evaluation from knowledge), historiographic thinking (evaluation from procedures) and critical thinking (evaluation from the attitudinal and axiological aspects) (CAEHC, 2022, p. 79). The 2026 guidelines take up this triad by articulating historical thinking with critical thinking, defined as "the ability to interrogate reality, analyze it from multiple perspectives, recognize its contradictions, and take a position on the problems that cross their lives and that of their communities" (MEN, 2026, p. 44). Critical thinking, the document warns, "is not reduced to a cognitive skill, but constitutes an

ethical, political, and pedagogical condition of comprehensive education" (MEN, 2026, p. 44; Biesta, 2017; Brookfield, 2012; Giroux, 2011).

This articulation between historical thinking and critical thinking constitutes what this article proposes to call **historically informed social intelligence**: a form of cognition that is not exhausted in the processing of information about the past, but integrates the ethical, political and projective dimension of social knowledge. The reincorporation of history as an axis is not a change of *content*, but an **update of the cognitive operating system** of the Colombian student.

However, here the crucial question arises again: **who will teach how to think historically if teachers themselves have not been trained to do so?** As Ibagón Martín and Minte Münzenmayer (2019) point out, "historical thinking in school contexts" requires specific disciplinary training that most social science bachelor's degree programs in Colombia do not sufficiently provide. Pantoja (2017) formulates it as a "challenge between didactics and discipline" for which initial training does not prepare. It is not enough for the guidelines to declare that thinking historically is a structural axis; It is necessary for teachers to have the epistemological, methodological and didactic tools to translate this aspiration into effective teaching sequences.

3.3. Axis 3: Adjustment of evaluation — From measuring to accompanying, a transition that requires trained teachers

One of the most significant advances of the 2026 guidelines is the transition from a *learning assessment model* to one of *assessment for learning*. The document is explicit: evaluation "must be detached from that component of 'measurement' to which it has long been associated, and defined as 'a pedagogical tool of accompaniment'" (Salinas, 2025..., p. 5, cited in MEN, 2026, p. 106). It is proposed to "think of evaluation in terms of feedback, trust, self-regulation, reflective construction" (MEN, 2026, p. 106).

This shift has profound cognitive implications. Formative assessment, as documented by Black and Wiliam (2009), is one of the interventions with the greatest impact on learning, precisely because it activates metacognitive processes: the student not only learns content, but also learns to monitor his or her own comprehension process. In the social sciences, this means evaluating not the memorization of facts, but the way in which "students analyze conflicts, recognize diverse memories, interpret data, dialogue with dissonant perspectives, and generate collective proposals" (MEN, 2026, p. 110).

However, formative assessment is, paradoxically, the most demanding pedagogical practice in terms of teacher training. It requires the teacher to have an in-depth understanding of the cognitive processes he or she seeks to develop, to be able to design timely feedback, and to manage the tension between student autonomy and learning orientation. As the 2026 document itself warns, "this conception of evaluation requires the participation of the educational community for its development; it is not a vertical relationship between teachers and students" (MEN, 2026, p. 108). But building this horizontal relationship requires professional skills that are not acquired by decree.

The CAEHC had recommended an "urgent and in-depth review of standardized tests (Saber 11)" and demanded that they have "a clear connection and coherence with the new curricular guidelines" (CAEHC, 2022, p. 132). The 2026 guidelines reflect this orientation by proposing that evaluation focus on second-order content: multicausality, change and continuity, analysis of sources, historical perspective, ethical dimension, but as long as the Saber 11 Tests are not structurally transformed, the *backwash effect* will continue to guide teaching practice towards reproduction.

4. Discussion: Guidelines without trained teachers, a ship without a crew

The central discussion of this article is articulated around a thesis that the Colombian experience of the last 24 years strongly supports: **no curricular reference, no matter how well-founded, transforms classroom practices without a comprehensive and sustained policy of teacher professional development.**

The 2002 guidelines were, in many ways, a visionary document. His proposal for an open, flexible, integrated and spiraling curriculum anticipated debates that today are central to the teaching of social sciences at an international level. However, as the 2026 guidelines themselves recognize, although "teachers have assimilated the 2002 curricular guidelines" in some way (Sánchez, 2012; 2021), the implementation conditions never lived up to the aspirations of the document. The *implementation gap* was not a failure of curriculum design, but a failure of educational public policy: what to teach was reformed without reforming how to train those who teach.

Now, the 2026 guidelines significantly raise the level of cognitive and pedagogical demand. Teachers are expected to:

Design didactic sequences based on **Relevant Social Problems (PSR)** and socially living issues (Santisteban, 2019).

- Facilitate **historical thinking** by working with sources, historiographical criticism, and the construction of grounded narratives (Vilar, 1997; Ibagón Martín & Minte Münzenmayer, 2019).
- Implement an **assessment for learning** focused on formative feedback, not summative measurement (Salinas, 2025; Black & Wiliam, 2009).
- Integrate **gender, anti-racist, and intercultural perspectives** in the approach to history and social sciences (Walsh, 2017; Segato, 2016).
- Address **sensitive issues** such as armed conflict, historical memory, and reconciliation from a critical and plural perspective (Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, 2022; Jelin, 2021).
- Articulate **nine dimensions of being** (environmental, civic and political, cognitive, communicative and creative, bodily, cultural, ethical, historical, and historical memory, socio-emotional) in their daily practice (MEN, 2026, p. 62).

Each of these demands requires specific training that most bachelor's degree programs do not provide and that the system's continuing education programs insufficiently address. The 2026 document itself recognizes this with an honesty that should be valued: "curricular changes require sustained accompaniment, relevant teaching resources, and updating programs that allow teachers to design contextualized proposals" (MEN, 2026, p. 25). And it adds: "the policies that update the guidelines must provide financial and training mechanisms that train in didactics for citizenship, evaluation by evidence, differential approach and work with local memories" (MEN, 2026, p. 25).

This formulation is correct but insufficient. It is not enough to *provide* training mechanisms; a **public policy for teacher professional development is required** that is:

1. **Sustained over time**, overcoming the logic of one-off workshops and isolated pedagogical days to install accompaniment processes that cover cycles of several years.
2. **Disciplinarily specific**, distinguishing between general training in pedagogy and training in epistemology of history, didactics of social sciences and cognitive psychology of historical learning.
3. **Territorially situated**, recognizing that the teaching conditions in a rural school in the Colombian Pacific are not the same as in an urban school in Bogotá, and that the PSRs that mobilize the curriculum are, by definition, local.
4. **Collaborative**, involving universities, Teacher Training Colleges, Secretariats of Education and pedagogical groups in a training network that transcends the vertical MEN-teacher relationship.

5. **Rigorously evaluated**, not through coverage indicators (number of teachers trained), but through impact indicators on classroom practices and student learning.

The CAEHC was emphatic in this regard: "the educator is a fundamental axis in the design, definition, implementation and evaluation of educational policies; it is not only an executor" (CAEHC, 2022, p. 76). And it recommended "inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms to achieve the necessary coverage so that in the short term the greatest number of social science teachers can be impacted" (CAEHC, 2022, p. 44). These recommendations remain relevant and, in light of the 2026 update, are more urgent than ever.

International experience reinforces this position. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) have documented that curriculum reforms that are not accompanied by transformations in teacher education produce what they call *paper reforms*: changes in documents that do not alter practices. Fullan et al. (2017) argue that *deep learning*—the deep learning that the 2026 guidelines aspire to promote—requires not only new curricula, but new pedagogies and cultures of professional collaboration.

In the Colombian context, this discussion acquires a particular gravity. The material conditions of many schools, teaching overload, lack of bibliographic resources, scarcity of hours dedicated to social sciences, rurality, and residual armed conflict severely limit the possibilities of implementing teaching oriented to historical thinking. But these limitations are not arguments for resignation; they are arguments to invest more, not less, in the training of those who sustain the educational system with their daily work.

Is it possible, then, to have a democratic and peaceful citizenry without cognitive development based on historical memory and the critique of sources? The CAEHC formulated it forcefully: "In an education based on the reproduction and homogenization of uncritical human beings, the development and strengthening of competencies are not feasible" (CAEHC, 2022, p. 74). A citizen trained to reproduce information, without cognitive tools to critically evaluate it, is vulnerable to manipulation, denialism and the reproduction of cycles of violence. In the era of post-truth and disinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2017), historical thinking with its emphasis on the critique of sources, the contextualization of information, and the understanding of the intentionality of discourses constitutes a form of *cognitive literacy* that is indispensable for democracy.

But this literacy does not occur by spontaneous generation. It occurs in classrooms, mediated by teachers. And teachers are trained or not trained through public policies.

5. Conclusions: Towards cognition as ethical and social know-reflecting, mediated by trained teachers

The analytical journey carried out allows the following propositional conclusions to be formulated:

First. The update of the 2026 Curricular Guidelines represents a significant epistemological advance with respect to the documents of 2002 and 2016. By positioning *historical thinking* as a generating axis, by integrating nine dimensions of being, by moving towards assessment for learning and by incorporating contemporary challenges (post-truth, climate crisis, hyperconnectivity), the document offers a curricular framework consistent with the demands of the twenty-first century and with the recommendations of the CAEHC. The **structural continuity** with 2002 (generating axes, problematizing questions, conceptual areas, open and flexible curriculum) is complemented by a **conceptual and political deepening** that makes explicit what was previously implicit and addresses what was previously absent (MEN, 2002; MEN, 2026).

Second. However, Colombian curricular history teaches that **documents do not transform classrooms**. The same gap that separated the 2002 guidelines from teaching practices can be reproduced with those of 2026 if the structural conditions of implementation are not addressed. The most critical mediating variable is **teacher professional development**, understood not as one-off training, but as a sustained, disciplinarily specific, territorially situated, collaborative and rigorously evaluated public policy.

Third. The new guidelines must operationalize cognition not as a technical *know-how*, but as an ethical and social *know-how*. This means that cognitive skills (analysis, synthesis, argumentation, inference) must be articulated with the axiological dimension (historical empathy, ethical judgment, democratic commitment) and with the procedural dimension (working with sources, constructing narratives, contextualized research). The triad of *historical thought - critical thinking - historical awareness* offers an integrating framework, but its translation into classroom practices requires teachers who understand and master it.

Fourth. It is imperative to **resolve the dissonance between the standardized assessment instruments and the formative purposes of the new guidelines**. As long as the Saber 11 Tests continue to measure competencies disconnected

from historical thinking, teaching will continue to be oriented towards reproduction, regardless of what the guidelines declare. The proposal for assessment for learning (Salinas, 2025; Black & Wiliam, 2009) formulated by the 2026 document is promising, but it can only materialize if teachers are trained in formative assessment and if the external evaluation system is aligned with the new references.

Fifth. The **historical memory of the armed conflict must be approached as a cognitive imperative**, not just an ethical or political one. The 2026 guidelines dedicate an entire generating axis to "Conflict, historical memory and peacebuilding" and recognize that institutions such as the Truth Commission and the National Center for Historical Memory offer inputs for the classroom (MEN, 2026, p. 34). However, working with these inputs requires teachers trained in what Zembylas (2007) calls a *pedagogy of discomfort*: the ability to confront difficult emotions in safe educational contexts. Without specific training, many teachers will continue to opt for silence on controversial issues, reproducing the *cognitive silence on the conflict* that has characterized Colombian schools.

Sixth. The new guidelines recognize that cognition does not operate in a cultural vacuum and propose that gender, intercultural, anti-racist, and territorial approaches are not mere thematic content, but **cognitive frameworks** that allow for the development of multi-perspectivity, historical empathy, and the understanding of diversity as conditions of democratic thought (MEN, 2026; Walsh, 2017; Segato, 2016). But teaching from these frameworks requires that teachers have reflected on their own biases and positions, something that only a sustained training process can facilitate.

Seventh. It is necessary to recognize that the 2026 update, as the document itself points out, "is not presented as a closed solution, but as a living guiding framework, which can be reinterpreted, appropriated and enriched by educational communities in their specific contexts" (MEN, 2026, p. 36). This openness is a strength, but also a risk: without accompaniment, flexibility can lead to dispersion. The key is to build **communities of practice** among social science teachers—pedagogical collectives, networks of research teachers, and teaching hotbeds that allow for the critical and contextualized appropriation of the guidelines.

In summary, the transition from accumulation to historical consciousness proposed by the 2026 guidelines, in continuity with Law 1874 of 2017 and the recommendations of the CAEHC, represents

the most significant opportunity that Colombia has had in a quarter of a century to rethink the relationship between cognition, education, and citizenship. But opportunities don't come by themselves. Taking advantage of this requires, above all, a firm commitment to the training of those who will make it possible in the classroom: the teachers of Colombia. Without them, the guidelines will be a dead letter. With them trained,

accompanied and valued, they will be able to become what they aspire to be: living tools for social transformation.

Because, as the 2026 document itself states, "teaching social sciences is, in essence, teaching how to be human in community, in society" (MEN, 2026, p. 72). And to teach human beings, we need teachers whom the system has treated, first, as such.

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