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## QUANTITATIVE REVIEW OF ARTICLES ABOUT COMIC & EDUCATION IN IBERO-AMERICA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reviews articles in educational journals about comics and education in Ibero-American journals, exploring frequency and impact of these articles. Time-lapse analysis covers the years 2010 - 2019. Scientific journals of the educational field included in the virtual repository Dialnet are taken as reference, as well as the bibliographic data that this offers us. The data search is confined to the field of Psychology and Education. The terms used for the search have been '*comic*', in journals with full text included in Latindex. The aim is to explore state of the art, paying attention to four issues: years, journals, countries and themes. The results show a higher quantity of articles published in Spain; these articles being the best positioned in the categories CIRC and CARHUS + 2014. Contributions from Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and Chile have been analyzed in all the languages found (Spanish, Portuguese and Galician). Most of the production is in the years 2010 and 2017. About the journals, the dispersion is remarkable, finding only five journals that contribute more than one. On the developed topics, they stand out: language, social and natural knowledge and other learnings. To conclude, this review can serve as a basis for deepening this issue within the Ibero-American environment and make comparisons between countries.

**Keywords:** *Comic; Didactic; Literature review; Reading; Ibero-America;*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*The only thing I regret in my life is that I never drew comics.*

*Picasso*

Comics have been seen on numerous occasions as entertainment or a minor artistic activity (Groensteen, 2007; Hatfield, 2009; Martínez, 2014). However, its role as a form of popular culture of singular importance is indisputable, and it has mutated to adapt to both commercial and artistic needs (Pons, 2011). It is one of the media in which the human being adopts one of its main roles: storyteller (López, 2017). One of the most relevant developments was marked by the milestone of the Pulitzer Prize won in 1992 for Art Spiegelman's 'Maus: A Survivor's Story' (Hatfield, 2009; Berenguel, 2011; López, 2017). Eco (1964) was one of the first researchers who studied comics as a mass culture phenomenon. Several authors discuss comic definition and characteristics (Eisner, 1985; Rodríguez, 1991; McCloud, 1993; Groensteen, 2007; Alatríste, 2007; Paré & Soto Pallarés, 2017a) but these are not *sine qua non* conditions. Comic books tell stories based on two key elements for our understanding of the environment: the image and the word.

Regarding the origins of the ninth art, *le neuvième art* (Beylie, 1964), we find authors who point out the relationship with different graphic representations that go back to the Egyptian hieroglyphs (Ferrer-Ventosa, 2018) although most of them agree on taking as a reference of modern comics the comic strip of 'The Yellow Kid' in 1896 (McCloud, 1993) and the work of the Swiss pedagogue Töpffer in the first half of the 19th century (Paré & Soto, 2017b).

As we can see, comics already had a strong educational component from the beginning, linked to the transmission of facts, narration or social criticism (McCloud, 1993; Maza, 2012; Paré & Soto, 2017b). Some key authors point out the relevance of comics for development of several skills, like visual literacy, critical literacy or language literacy itself (Dallacqua, 2012; Pantaleo, 2015; Wallner, 2017) Within this educational point of view, different contributions may be found in the Spanish/Latin American research in the past years. Berenguel (2011) makes a didactic proposal in which practically all the basic competences appear (with the exception of mathematics), although evidently where it seems to be most relevant is in the promotion of reading (Blanco & Carro, 2015; Cardeñoso, 2014; Cerrillo, 2007; Cunha & Miguel, 2017; López, 2013; Paré & Soto, 2017b; Quiles, Palmer & Rosal, 2015; Segovia, 2012). There is also no lack of references to critical reflection and values (Berenguel, 2011; Blanco & Carro, 2015; Botón *et al*, 2019; Cardeñoso, 2014; Chacón, 2014; Oliveira & Maio, 2015; Paré & Soto, 2017a; Texeira & Dos Santos, 2017), which as can be seen in the references is not absolutely exclusive of the promotion of reading. Other authors point out the comic's potential in relation to diverse themes such as History (Berenguel, 2011; Botón *et al*, 2019), orientation within nature (García, Cuadrado, Amor, & Argudo, 2010), Astronomy (García, 2017), the human body (Kawamoto & Lunardi, 2014), therapeutic treatment (López, 2017; Sanjuan, 2011), learning second languages (Parés & Soto, 2017a; Parés & Soto, 2017b), or creativity (Bugallo, Zinkgräf & Pedrazzini, 2020; Fernandes, 2010; Tavernini, Olguín, & Minervino, 2015).

These being some, but not the only, educational possibilities of comics, it is worth asking whether we are facing a rejection of what has traditionally been considered a cultural product of the second (or third) order (Martínez, 2014) or whether the effects of bad press on comics, which in the United States peaked with Wertham in 1954 and his work '*Seduction of the Innocent*', which led to the imposition of self-censorship, and which suffers from serious methodological shortcomings, similar to those presented years later by the theses of other forms of leisure, such as the detractors of video games (Pérez, Mampaso, Corbí, & Martín-Moreno, 2014) or role-playing games (Tizón, 2010).

It is curious to note that in France there is a very favourable outlook with regard to the world of comics within the educational environment. Next to France, in Spain, the presence of the comic book as a resource is less explicit; the French Ministry of Education, establishes reading lists organized by levels and genres, including one specifically dedicated to comics (Paré & Soto, 2017b). In France, for more than thirty years, the teaching of image reading has been a standardized task in the classroom, being incorporated into the different stages between the mid-nineties and the beginning of the century. In 2013, the list of comics doubled (from thirteen to twenty-seven titles in compulsory schooling). In 2008 the subject *History of the Arts* (compulsory) was created, classifying comics as visual art. In France, comics are clearly explicitly recognized for their educational relevance (Paré & Soto, 2017b) as well as being used in several therapeutic treatments, within non formal educational contexts (Sanjuan, 2011). In the English-speaking world we can also find different works such as Ellis & Highsmith (2000), which show how comics have been integrated into libraries since the 1980s, giving comics a consideration comparable to books. Global studies like Wallner & Eriksson Barajas (2020), review 55 research papers about education from fourteen countries. There are no authors from any Ibero-American country. The results show that most of the analysed studies had been carried out in North America. With these data, it seems that Ibero-America does not care about comics. This is a significant gap.

It can be concluded that comics are an important educational resource for the development of reading and writing, both for young people and adults, contributing to the understanding of the social environment around us. The main pedagogical benefits of comics are the following (Barrero, 2002, quoted by Paré & Soto, 2017b; Ortiz, 2009):

- Reading comprehension and vocabulary.
- Oral and written expression, as well as memorization.
- Concentration
- Adapt to the student's own reading rhythm.
- Orthography and synthesis.
- Complements audiovisual media.
- Critical attitude.
- Understanding of the social and cultural reality of their immediate environment
- Education in values.
- Stimulate creativity
- Language learning
- Iconic language leaning
- Knowledge of the environment

As we can see, there are many possible benefits from the educational use of comics. There are also several educational initiatives such as activities for schoolchildren and teacher training at the *International Saló of Comic of Barcelona*. In 2019 the 12th Conference was held, organized by the Department of Education of the Generalitat, with the collaboration of FICOMIC, with participation of teachers from different educational compulsory levels (<https://www.comic-barcelona.com/es/actividades-pedagogicas.cfm>). Another initiative is the University Master's Degree (own title) in *Comics and Education* of the University of Valencia, the first University Master's Degree of this kind in the Hispanic environment. Also remarkable, is the participation of big companies like *Marvel* in awareness campaigns led by superheroes, for example against bullying (Ryan *et al*, 2017). There are signs of the potential and interest generated by comics, as well as an academic interest in Latin America production (Scholz, 2020) and a worldwide trend in articles about comics and education for the last decade (Wallner & Eriksson Barajas, 2020); it is also important to highlight that these last authors did not find Ibero- American reviews.

Finally, the objective of this review is to explore academic articles about comics and education within Ibero-American journals, paying attention to four issues: publication years, journals, countries (of the journals) and topics.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is of a descriptive-interpretative, review type. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is taken as a reference (Kitchenham *et al*, 2009), although in our case the perspective used is closer to an exploratory vision of the subject, typical of *mapping* (like other educational studies, for example Grande *et al*, 2020), with a quantitative approach to give a global vision of Ibero-America, regarding comics and education. First of all, a search for articles was carried out in Dialnet, being this virtual repository chosen for its relevance in the Ibero-American context, which has a wider representation than in the *Scopus* and *Web of Science* (WoS) databases, where the dominant language is English. Even the amount of educational Ibero-American journals is increasing in WoS (mainly Emerging Sources Citation Index, ESCI) and Scopus. For example, for category Education, the Ibero-America region, SJR (Scimago Journal & Country Rank) based in Scopus, has 122 journals (in 2019), meanwhile Dialnet (Dialnet Métricas 2019) has 226.

Dialnet (including its advanced service, Dialnet Plus), is one of the largest bibliographic portals in the world, focused on giving visibility to Hispanic scientific literature, being the main database with Hispanic contents. Nowadays, it has almost 7 million referenced documents, including journal articles, collective works, books, conference proceedings, book reviews and doctoral theses (Fundación Dialnet, 2019). So, Dialnet provides this research with a wider choice of journals, including Scopus and WoS, and letting to define search for fields and countries. Other high-quality reviews (Wallner & Eriksson Barajas, 2020) do not find any Ibero-American references, probably because non English journals are underrepresented in, for example, WoS, Scopus or ERIC.

The selection criteria have been articles with full text, published between 2010-2019, within the field of 'Psychology and Education', included in Latindex. Latindex is an academic information system, non-profit and free of charge, specialized in academic

journals published in Ibero-America. Thus, it provides certain academic guarantees. The term used for the search has been '*comic*' (in titles and abstracts). This term is often used in several languages (like Spanish and English) and is very useful for searching (usually should be in the title or keywords of related articles). Our search is not limited by idioms, only for countries. The articles have been analysed by making frequency tables based on countries, years, journals and journal classifications. Specifically, a total of 29 articles belonging to 22 journals have been reviewed, of which two articles have been excluded as they are not related to the subject matter.

As it appears on Dialnet's website, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es>, CARHUS Plus+ 2014 and CIRC are Spanish classification systems for journals in the Social Sciences and Humanities, rating them from A (high impact) to D (low scientific status). CIRC also offers an additional classification: A+ (excellence). Journals classified as A+, A, B or C are indexed in the JCR or in some quartile of Scopus, ESCI, ERIH or equivalent. So, CARHUS and especially CIRC offers a quick reference for a journal's impact.

Of the articles consulted, 29.63% are in the CARHUS+ 2014 base and 77,77% in CIRC, inside the Social Sciences Area. Although, according to CIRC criteria, as they are all indexed in Latindex, we could consider those that do not appear in the CIRC to be equivalent to CIRC D.

Each article was analysed using simple datasheets and categorised for descriptive statistical analysis, mainly percentages, a descriptive methodology (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). The categorisation of topics was carried out on the basis of keywords and abstract content.

### **3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

After the analysis of the bibliographic review, the results have been organized on the basis of the following sections:

- Year of publication
- Journals consulted
- Articles by country (location of journals)
- Topic of the articles analysed.

#### **3.1. Scientific production analysed by year**

As can be seen, the years 2017, with seven articles, and 2010, with four, stand out in terms of production volume.

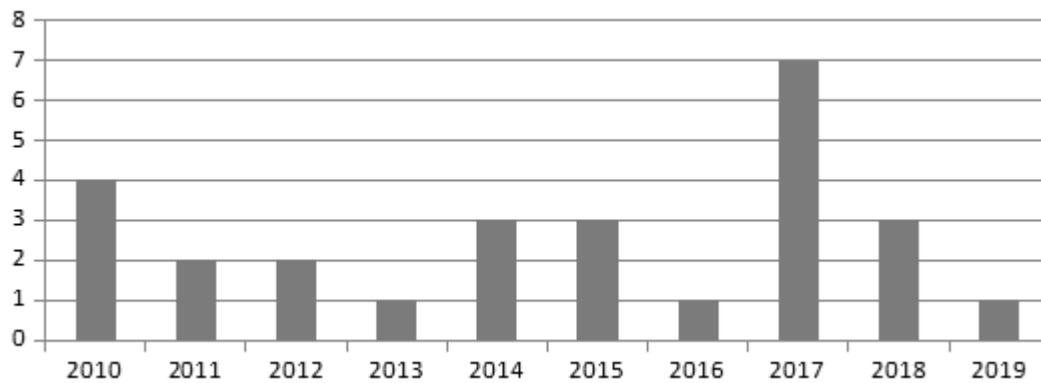


Figure 1. Educational scientific articles analysed between 2010 and 2019.

Between 2014 and 2019 two thirds of the publications are found.

### 3.2. Scientific production analysed by journals

Among the journals reviewed [name journal translation], those with the greatest weight due to the number of articles are

- *Arte, individuo y sociedad* [Art, individual and society]
- *Eduga: revista galega do ensino* [Eduga: Galician teaching journal]
- *Espiral. Cuadernos del profesorado* [Spiral. Teachers' Notebooks]
- *Perspectivas docentes* [Teaching perspectives]
- *Praxis Educativa* [Educational Praxis]

These five journals each contribute two articles, within the search parameters, with a total of 37.03% articles. Other journals (a total of seventeen) have included one article each one in the period studied.

The most important journals are those indexed in Scopus, CARHUS+ or ERIH, such as *Arte, individuo y sociedad* [Art, individual and society], *Ocnos* (both in the first quartile of Scopus), *Educatio siglo XXI* [Education 21st Century], *Estudios Pedagógicos* [Pedagogical Studies] and *Revista Complutense de Educación* [Complutense Journal of Education], which have the highest ratings in the CIRC.

Of the 27 articles, 21 (77.77%) are valued within the CIRC (although, as they are all included in Latindex, the remaining six can be considered as part of the CIRC's category D in Social Sciences). Thus, four are in category B (14.83%), seven in category C (25.92%) and ten in category D (sixteen including those not categorised, 59.25%)

With regard to the CARHUS+ 2014 classification eight (29.63%) of the articles are included, two in category A (7.40%), another two in category C, four in category D (14.82%).

About languages, in our search for articles in Ibero-America, 19 are written in Spanish (70.38%), five in Portuguese (18.52%), one in English (3.70%) and two in Galician (7.40%).

### 3.3. Scientific production analysed by country

Spain (España) leads the way in the publication of articles on the subject matter sought, although the presence of four Latin countries seems to indicate that this subject matter arouses interest in different places, with different characteristics.

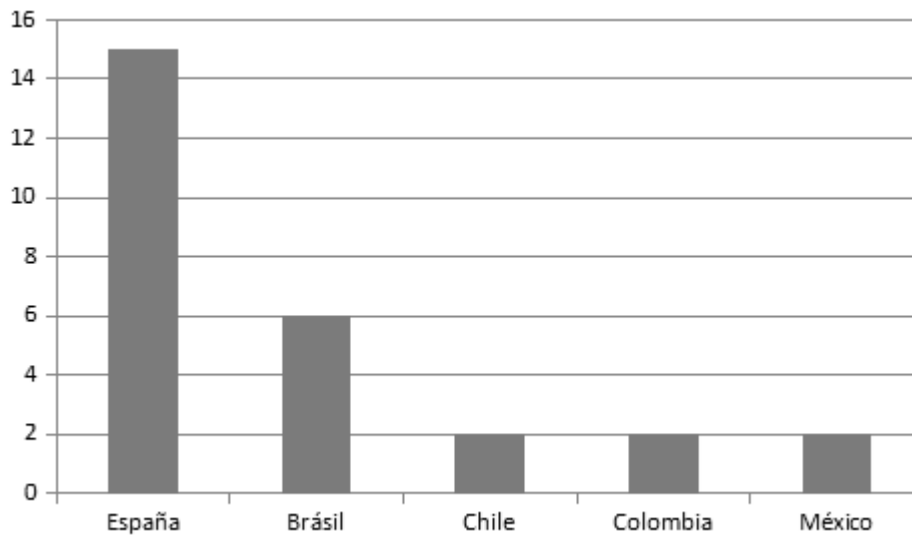


Figure 2. Educational scientific publications distributed by country of publication.

The articles analysed cover various topics as shown in the following tables. It is important to note that there are different types of articles: some are research papers, others are book reviews, ... all articles are included (not limited to research). Some of them are or include proposals for activities, but without research results (only reflection or description of the activity/experience) others are more theoretical reflections, ... These issues are summed up in table I.

Table I. Articles analysed: Spain.

Authors and year	Topics	CARHUS+ 2014	CIRC	Comments	Cited by (Google Scholar)
Pedroso (2010)	Opinion article on educational changes, illustrated.	D	D		0

Berenguel (2011)	History	--	C	A proposal that revolves around Maus, Pulitzer Prize winning comic.	17
Sanjuan (2011)	Therapeutic activity	A	C	Research and proposal.	3
Segovia (2012)	Narrative competence	C	B	Proposal	37
López (2013)	Literature (Poe) related to Primary	C	D	Proposal / reflection	1
Cardeñoso (2014)	Reading and Literature in Primary School	D	D	Proposal using Asterix and Obelix comics	7
Pérez, Mampaso, Corbí & Martín (2014)	Confusion about violence, psychology and, tangentially, comics.	D	D		1
Blanco & Carro (2015)	Theatre and comics	--	C	Case study, through interviews.	2
Tavernini, Olguín, & Minervino (2015)	Graphic humour and creativity	--	C	Quino vignette analysis	1
Paré & Soto (2017a)	Comics in French teaching textbooks	D	B	Document analysis	4
Paré & Soto (2017b)	Promotion of reading, French perspective.	D	A	Review / reflection.	10



Zea & Fernández (2017)	Organization of comic convention with guests, working on different competences.	--	--	Proposal / experience	0
Garcia (2017)	Transmedia narrative proposal (apps and comics) on astronomy	--	--	Primary Education	0
Sanchez (2018)	Book review	--	C	Quiles, M. <sup>a</sup> C., Palmer, I., & Rosal, M. (2015). Speaking, reading and writing: the discovery of words and linguistic and literary education. Madrid: Visor.	0
Ferrer (2018)	Reflection / analysis on the cultural roots of a hermetic-platonic-neoplatonic nature	A	C	Relationship with renowned authors from the world of comics such as Alejandro Jodorowsky or Alan Moore.	4

In the case of Spain, as can be seen in table I, it has most of the journals found and a large part of the best evaluated by CIRC (Social Sciences) and CARHUS+ 2014.

In the case of CARHUS+, all articles in indexed journals are in Spanish journals (ten in total).

Regarding the CIRC classification, a total of thirteen of the fifteen articles published in Spain are in categories B (3), C (6) or D (4). This means that of the eleven articles in the different countries found in categories B or C, nine are Spanish.

Regarding the topics dealt with, based on Barrero (2002, quoted by Paré & Soto, 2017b), we can consider that these contributions -a total of 12- are mainly focused on language (40%) and knowledge of the environment (13.33%) -a total of 2-

Table II. Articles analysed: Brazil

<b>Authors and year</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>CIRC (CCSS)</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Cited by (Google Scholar)</b>
Fernandes (2010)	Creativity	C	Reflection and analysis on the narrative spaces in Alan Moore's work.	2
Kawamoto & Lunardi (2014)	Human Body	D	Review/reflection on the use of comics in Primary School for contents related to the human body.	53
Oliveira & Maio (2015)	Sexual diversity and homophobia	--	Review / reflection on the difficulties of awareness campaigns (including a UNESCO comic book campaign in 2010)	8
Teixeira & Dos Santos (2017)	Critical reading, writing by rewriting.	--	Research with secondary school students.	1
Cunha & Miguel (2018)	Literature review	--	It highlights the importance of comics as a tool for the development of reading, writing and understanding of reality.	1
Bagiotto, Ribeiro, Lourenço, Figueira & Falcade (2019)	History of Brazil	--	Critical reflection on slavery	0

The articles published in Brazil (see table II) show us the second country in terms of quantity of production analysed (22.22% of the total), with 33.33% of them -a total of three articles- within the CIRC evaluation (although let us remember that all the articles are included in Latindex and could be considered CIRC D).

Only one of them appears above the CIRC D, *Educação Temática Digital [Digital Themed Education]* (ETD), being the most prolific *Praxis Educativa [Educative Practice]*, with two articles.

Regarding topics, environment and language stand out, with 33.33% each (2 articles), creativity (16.66%) and other learning (16.66%), one article in each case.

Table III. Articles analysed: Other countries (Colombia, Chile and Mexico).

<b>Authors and year</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>CIRC (CCSS)</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Cited by (Google Scholar)</b>
COLOMBIA				
Cadavid & Parra (2010)	Self-perception of time in Primary School	D	The WISC-R Comics are used as instruments	7
Chacón (2016)	Training of readers	D		3
CHILE				
García, Cuadrado, Amor & Argudo (2010)	Physical Education: orientation in natural environments	D	Proposal for Primary Education.	11
López (2017)	Emotional memory. Traumas and their approach from the comic.	B		3
MEXICO				
Maza (2012)	Theoretical review on the origin of comics.	D		4

Salaya (2017)	Translation of onomatopoeias.	D	Higher Education (Philology / Translation)	1
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In Colombia, Chile and Mexico we found two articles in each of these countries that meet the search criteria.

All these articles are included in the CIRC D category (the lowest journal category, with the least impact), except for the Chilean journal *Estudios Pedagógicos* [Pedagogical Studies], indexed in *Scopus* (CIRC B).

In Mexico, both articles belong to the journal (*Perspectivas Docentes* [Teaching Perspectives]), being a publication of unusual topics regarding what was found in this search: higher education training of philologists and a theoretical study on the origin of comics.

Issues related to the environment and language also appear in these countries (16.66% one article each), but other learning and other issues, both with 33.33% (2 articles), are slightly more frequent.

Regarding the citations (Google Scholar), fifteen Spanish articles have a total of 87 citations, Brazil (six articles) has a total of 65 citations (highlighting relevance of Kawamoto & Lunardi, with 53), Colombia (10 citations), Chile (14 citations) and Mexico (5 citations) with 2 articles each one country. Most cited articles are Kawamoto & Lunardi (53 citations) from Brazil, Segovia (37 citations), Berenguel (17 citations), both from Spain, García, Cuadrado, Amor & Argudo (11 citations), from Chile, and finally Pare & Soto (10 citations, Spain). Pare & Soto are the only authors that has more than an article (two).

In summary, the articles published in Spain by number of publications and categorisation of the journals in which they are found stand out. On the subjects, we can find three main areas: language, learning about the environment and other learning.

### 3.4. Predominant topics in the articles

With regard to the topics of the documents analysed, it has been categorised as shown in Table IV.

Table IV. Articles according to the predominant theme. Own elaboration.

TOPIC	COUNTRY	TOTAL
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	<b>Spain</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Other countries</b>	
<b>Environment</b>	2	2	1	5
<b>Language</b>	6	2	1	9
<b>Other learnings</b>	2	1	2	5
<b>Creativity</b>	1	1	0	2
<b>Others</b>	4	0	2	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	15	6	6	27

The references mainly aimed at:

- Language 33.33%
- Knowledge of the environment (18.52%), with a great weight of historical content
- Other learnings (18.52%), referring to values and emotional intelligence in the majority of publications
- Creativity (with a scarce 7.40%)
- ‘Others’ point out subjects of diverse nature, like for example, self-perception of time or theoretical review about origins of comics (22.22%)

#### **4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The main conclusion is that there is a great dispersion. No journal or author has played a major role in the decade under review. This may make us think that there are no research groups or researchers who are focused on the relationship or potential of comics in education. This lack of research groups reflects a lack of support in the educational field that can influence the fact that the contributions are often punctual, but also show an area of research to be exploited. This can be especially important if it takes into account the possibilities provided by ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) both for the production of comics themselves (with software such as Pixton) and for accessing digital comics, such as Ryan et al, (2017). The recognition that comics have in other countries, such as France (with comics as recommended reading) or the United Kingdom (as academic journals included in Scopus as Comic Grid, Studies in Comic or Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics),

could develop a more consistent production over time in Ibero-America. This does not mean that there are no authors or production of comics in these countries, they often approach comics from literary or artistic point of view, rather than an educational perspective, such as Trabado (2013) or Pons (2011; 2020). In any case, there are initiatives that seem to point towards a growing interest in comics within the educational sphere in Ibero-America, such as educational activities at the Barcelona Sal6n del Comic [Barcelona Comic Con] or the Master's Degree in Comics and Education at the University of Valencia, which began in 2019.

The results show a higher proportion of articles published in Spain (15), followed by Brazil (6), within a total of five countries. The categorisation of journals also accentuates the role of Spanish publications, which are mostly within the CIRC classification. It is important to bear in mind the possible bias of the tool (Dialnet), and of the classification systems, all of which are Spanish, although Dialnet is dedicated to all Hispanic scientific literature (Fundaci6n Dialnet, 2019). Indeed, in SJR Spain has almost the same amount of educational journals than Latin America. This should be a bias to take note, because perhaps it is a matter of institutional or regional policy. On the other hand, Brazil has a smaller amount of publications, but has the most relevant articles (better indexed and most cited).

In the period analysed, 2017 stands out with seven articles and 2010 with four. Dispersion predominates over journals, as only five journals contribute more than one article. With independent of the numbers (four or seven articles). It is a discrete amount of articles.

Regarding to the topics, the following stand out:

- Language
- Knowledge of the environment
- Values and emotional intelligence (inside results as 'Other learnings')

However, comic books do not seem to have achieved, at least at the moment, a great impact on scientific literature in the Ibero-American field of 'Psychology and Education', with few impact journals with related articles; on the contrary, their presence covers different perspectives in several Spanish-speaking countries, reflecting a certain interest in the academic field. These discrete impacts are noted in the small number of journals with an indexation CIRC A or B.

This *mapping of the* situation in Ibero-America can be used as a basis for further study and can be extended with contributions in other languages or fields, for comparison. Thus, further comparative studies with the Anglo-Saxon sphere could be enriching, and other aspects should also be considered, such as the percentage of journals within the indexing systems of the countries analysed, in order to consider the scientific relevance of these constructs in different regions. Also, an analysis of the profile of researchers (background, career, ...) may be interesting.

In conclusion, it seems evident that comics, both as reading in itself and because of the aspects related to the knowledge of the environment, creativity, values or critical thinking, are interesting resources that are rarely researched in Ibero-American education. This would suggest that comics are rarely used or at least have not yet

gained enough popularity in research, but there is an interest in different countries. It requires a deep theoretical foundation being a territory yet to be explored in Ibero-American given the scarce number of researches.

Some initiatives, already commented on, such as those carried out at the International Saló del Comic of Barcelona or at the University of Valencia, may represent a boost to the educational use of comics in Ibero-America, like some resources created by teachers, like <https://historiaycomic.com/> (web page with educational suggestions about comics) let us hope a growing interest in comics and their educational use in the classroom.

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