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Carlos Arteaga Basurto, PhD, MSW (1952–2022)

Social Work Leader, Practitioner, and Educator: Constructing Citizenship

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Biography

Carlos Arteaga Basurto was born and raised in Mexico City. Arteaga Basurto learned the values of service and commitment from his parents, Fernando Arteaga Hernandez and Beatriz Basurto Leal. He began his university studies at the *Universidad Autónoma de México* (UNAM) in law school, where he realized that his true calling was social work, and he graduated with a bachelor's degree in social work. He later earned his MSW from the University of Toronto, Canada. He served as a professor of social work at the *Escuela Nacional de Trabajo Social* (National School of Social Work [ENTS]) at UNAM from 1976 until he died in 2022. Arteaga Basurto is a revered figure in the field of social work in Mexico. He held leadership positions in the National Program for the Prevention of Child Abuse and as Director of the National School of Social Work. He also served as president of the Latin American Association of Schools of Social Work. He was a mentor and educator to multiple generations of students and had a tremendous impact in the field of social work as an educator, practitioner, and leader.

Early Life

Carlos Arteaga Basurto was born and raised in Mexico City. He credits learning his values of service and commitment from his parents. His father, Fernando Arteaga Hernandez, worked for the Green Cross and in the Department of Health, modeling the importance of giving back to the community. Arteaga Basurto was also an athlete, playing American football. In an interview, Arteaga Basurto credits his experience in football for knowing how to work as a

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team and how to have fierce disagreements and remain close friends.¹ Football also taught him the importance of the team and teamwork.

“Por muy buen jugador que seas, si el resto de los demás no hacen su tarea tú no vas a lucir. Que si luces es porque tú tienes un buen equipo, no?” [You can be the best player, but if those who surround you don’t do their homework, you are not going to shine. If you shine it’s because you have a good team, right?]²

Another major influence in life was the extreme repression students experienced in 1968, when he was in preparatory school.³ On October 2, 1968, days before the opening of the Olympic Games, police officers and military troops shot into a crowd of unarmed students in Tlatelolco Plaza, leading to panicked demonstrators as tanks bulldozed their way through. Eyewitnesses described the bodies of hundreds of young people being hauled away and beaten. Many youths were jailed or disappeared, and the final death toll remains unknown. Students had been protesting an authoritarian government.^{4 5} As a college student in 1971, this was still very “fresh.” Arteaga Basurto entered law school, where he clashed with conservative professors who would claim the students deserved what had happened to them.⁶ These experiences ultimately led him to the conclusion that he needed to change careers. As he considered other course plans, he discovered social work and was intrigued by community social work.

As a BSW student, he was part of the group that formed the *Grupo de Activistas de Trabajo Social* (Social Work Activist Group). He also made his mark by advocating for the independence of the school of work, becoming the ENTS. The School had previously been a major within the School of Jurisprudence, Law School, and Social Sciences. In 1973, the H. University Council, the highest governing body of UNAM, approved the creation of the ENTS. He also saw the need to update the social work curriculum to include the theories of

¹ Homenaje póstumo, Maestro Carlos Arteaga Basurto 1952–2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQjFh1H3IM>

² Ibid.

³ *Preparatoria* or preparatory school in Mexico is equivalent to 10–12th grades in the United States.

⁴ Segal, R. (2008). Mexico’s 1968 massacre: What really happened? All Things Considered. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2008/12/01/97546687/mexicos-1968-massacre-what-really-happened>

⁵ Link to the song “Que Vivan los Estudiantes” that paid homage to the pro-democracy and anti-authoritarian student movement in Mexico. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64okvvtVULI>

⁶ Arteaga Basurto, C., & Gamboa Guerrero, S. (2020). Entrevista. *Trabajo Social UNAM*, (20), 151–158. <https://doi.org/10.22201/ents.20075987p.2019.20.77083>

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the state, social class theories, and social policy. Arteaga Basurto believed this content was a necessary part of gaining the tools for social justice.

*Empecé a ver como una posibilidad fuerte, y que desde entonces he dominado, la política social como espacio de acción y de reflexión, o de reflexión y acción del trabajador social [I began to see as a strong possibility, and since then I've specialized in, social policy as a space for action and reflection, or of reflection and action for the social worker].*⁷

These early experiences were just a prelude to the continued influence and impact Arteaga Basurto would continue to have on the social work profession nationally and internally.

Social Work Education and Practice

After earning his BSW at the ENTS Arteaga Basurto obtained a Master's of Social Work with honors and on the Dean's List in 1999 from the Faculty of Social Work of the University of Toronto, Canada, and completed doctoral coursework in Public Administration at the Institute for Higher Education in Public Administration. Arteaga Basurto held various leadership positions in public administration at the federal level. He was the head of the Social Work Department in the National Program for the Prevention of Child Abuse, the Ministry of Health and Assistance, and he was the technical coordinator of social integration and substitute homes at the Directorate of Social Assistance and Rehabilitation of the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family. He also served as head of the Research Department for that department.

He held various leadership roles in professional organizations as well. He was a founding member and national general coordinator of the Association of Mexican Social Workers (ATSM), now the *Colegio de Trabajo Social*. He was also the advisor in the Interdisciplinary Council on Health and Social Assistance of the Health and Social Assistance Commission of the I Legislative Assembly of the Federal District (today called the State Congress of Mexico City).

Professor, Director, and Leader in Higher Education

⁷ Ibid.

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Hired in 1976, Arteaga Basurto was a research professor for 46 years at the ENTS at UNAM. Arteaga was incredibly productive as a faculty member, directing 65 theses at the bachelor level and 15 at the master's level. He participated in 130 professional and 20 degree exams. In the early 2000s, he was recognized by his peers in the social sciences in Mexico as one of the experts in social policy analysis in the field of social work. This honor was well deserved; Arteaga Basurto published 35 articles and book chapters on issues of social work and social policies and edited seven texts on issues of poverty and social policies. He presented at more than 200 national and international academic events and conferences and taught 25 different courses for social work faculty and professionals, both in educational institutions and the public sector.

Specific notable intellectual contributions include the *Manual de Supervisión para Trabajadores Sociales* [Supervision Manual for Social Workers]; *Tópicos de Trabajo Social y las Políticas Públicas* [Social Work Topics and Public Policy]; *Guía para la Elaboración de Tesis en Trabajo Social* [Thesis Completion Guide in Social Work]; *Ciencias Sociales e Investigación Social* [Social Sciences and Social Research]; and *Gestión Social y Evaluación de Proyectos Sociales* [Social Administration and the Evaluation of Social Projects]. Arteaga Basurto continued to publish throughout his career. His most recent publications include *Política Social: ¿Crisis o Renovación?* [Social Policy: Crisis or Renovation?] (2018); in co-authorship, *La Irracionalidad: Porque de lo Irracional También se Puede Hacer Teoría* [Irrationality: Why the Irrational Can Also Be Theory] (2020); and *Una Aproximación a la Política Social en México: Una Perspectiva del Trabajo Social* [A Social Policy Approximation in Mexico: A Social Work Perspective] (2021).

As a result of his sense of vocation, responding to contemporary issues, and leadership, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he promoted the *Seminario Internacional Interdisciplinario: COVID-19 y la Transformación de las Comunidades del Siglo XXI* [International Interdisciplinary Seminar: COVID-19 and Community Transformation in the 21st Century]. The papers presented at this conference were later published by the ENTS as *Los Rostros de la Realidad: Trabajo Social ante COVID-19* [The Face of Reality: Social Work in the Face of COVID-19] (2024).

Between 2000 and 2008, Arteaga Basurto was appointed by the H. Governing Board of UNAM as director of the ENTS. During his first term, he improved the quality of the offerings and the infrastructure, including a restructuring that led to an increase in the number of faculty in the ENTS. Arteaga Basurto also oversaw the inauguration of the Information

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Center and Library Services, after which he was awarded his second term from 2004–2008. During his second term, in 2004, he launched the Master's in Social Work program. He led the training of the first several generations of professionals with a master's degree in social work. He also developed the Social Specialties program and the Bachelor of the Open University System and Distance Education.⁸ In 2006, the ENTS Information Center and Library Services were formally recognized as one of the best libraries in the UNAM system.

Moreover, as part of the institutional infrastructure of the ENTS, Arteaga Basurto developed and strengthened the research coordination, elevating the academic productivity of its faculty (i.e., teaching, research, social intervention, and academic technical).

Arteaga Basurto continued to serve his profession throughout his academic career. He was national coordinator of the Association of Mexican Social Workers A.C.; president of the Latin American Association of Schools of Social Work (2001–2004); founding member of the Mexican Academy of Research in Social Work (2011); member of the Advisory Committee of the Local Community Development Program of the Historical Center Foundation of Mexico City (2012), as well as academic referee of the Social Co-investment Programs of the National Institute for Social Development, reviewing 45 social projects (2008–2016), in addition to having been president of the Editorial Committee of the ENTS until his death. His influence extended globally, as he served as president of the Latin American Association of Schools of Social Work, and his publications are read across Latin America.

Arteaga Basurto had a lasting impact that continues to inspire social workers and other professionals. He was a beloved mentor to so many students, faculty, and professionals. His legacy was to motivate and inspire the cultivation of vocation and the belief that good teamwork would lead to the forging of new scholarship and leadership with the potential to influence the welfare of society. In the 2019 interview, Arteaga Basurto leaves the following concluding words:

Si tú no crees en algo, es muy difícil que logres algo; si no crees en el cambio, no vas a lograr absolutamente nada. Estar completamente convencidos de tu profesión, de tu carrera, de ti mismo, en las posibilidades en un sentido real [If you don't believe in something, it is very difficult to achieve anything; if you don't believe in change, you

⁸ *Historia de la Escuela Nacional de Trabajo Social.* <https://trabajosocial.unam.mx/acerca/historial.php>

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won't achieve absolutely anything. Being completely convinced of your profession, your career, yourself, in the possibilities in a real sense].⁹

⁹ Arteaga Basurto, C., & Gamboa Guerrero, S. (2020). Entrevista. *Trabajo Social UNAM*, (20), 151–158. <https://doi.org/10.22201/ents.20075987p.2019.20.77083>