



History of Education Review

Great projects and crude realities: Advances and retreats of the educational policy in contemporary Spain

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Article information:

To cite this document:

Miguel Ángel Giménez Martínez , (2015), "Great projects and crude realities", History of Education Review, Vol. 44 Iss 2 pp. 186 - 202

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/HER-11-2013-0020>

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Great projects and crude realities

Advances and retreats of the educational policy in contemporary Spain

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyze the circumstances that have conditioned the development of education in Spain from the enlightenment to the present day.

Design/methodology/approach – Multidisciplinary scientific approach that combines the interpretation of the legal texts with the revision of the doctrinal and theoretical contributions made on the issue.

Findings – From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the history of education in Spain has been marked by constant fluctuations between the reactionary instincts, principally maintained by the Catholic Church and the conservative social classes, and the progressive experiments, driven by the enlightened and the liberals first, and the republicans and the socialists later. As a consequence of that, the fight for finishing with illiteracy and guaranteeing universal schooling underwent permanent advances and retreats, preventing from an effective modernization of the Spanish educative system. On the one hand, renewal projects promoted by teachers and pedagogues were inevitably criticized by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, obsessed with the idea of preserving the influence of religion on the schools. On the other hand, successive governments were weak in implementing an educational policy which could place Spain at the level of the other European and occidental nations.

Originality/value – At the dawn of the twenty-first century, although the country has overcome a good part of its centuries-old backwardness, increasing economic difficulties and old ideological splits keep hampering the quality of teaching, gripped by neoliberal policies which undermine the right to education for all. The reading of this paper offers various historical clues to understand this process.

Keywords Democracy, Spain, Catholic Church, Contemporary history, Educative system, Enlightened, Francoism, Liberals, Republicans, Socialists

Paper type Research paper

The terms for “education,” “teaching,” “instruction” and “training,” all of them relatively old and consolidated from the sixteenth century in the Spanish vocabulary, gained new meanings and functions in the eighteenth century and, in particular, in the nineteenth century. They were associated with multiple designations and indicators (national, public, female, popular, vocational, etc.), which specified and oriented their definition and content. From that time, education became linked to the policies launched by the State and other institutions or collectives, as well as to the general process of literacy and schooling conducted in the contemporary period.

However, Spain reached the twentieth century without completing the process of popular instruction (i.e. universal primary education), as established by nineteenth-century schooling legislation and, more specifically, in the Law on Public Instruction of Claudio Moyano, which proclaimed the principle of compulsory schooling for all Spanish children aged from six to nine years old. Nevertheless, the schooling model was gradually imposed as the essential space for elementary learning (reading, writing,



arithmetic), and as a key place for socialization founded on an ever present moral and religious education, in contrast to the family, the working place and the street. As the schooling process was gradually consolidated, this association between “school” (specific learning space for young people) and “education” (process of transmission of knowledge and rules) was constant.

1. The enlightened and the liberals

The pedagogue Pablo Montesino[1] insisted on this close relationship when affirming that “providing education” meant “sending the kids to school to learn how to read, write, count and learn the Christian doctrine, with some etiquette [...] and preparing the children and the youth for a specific career or profession: commerce, any art or handcraft and even for scientific professions” (Montesino, 1840/1988, pp. 82-83). However, in relation to nineteenth century pedagogy, an essential distinction between “education” and “instruction” is made, which constitutes the focus of the constant generation of new theories, although both terms are included in the schooling system: “In children’s schools, instruction and education should be at the forefront providing each other mutual support, but the latter should prevail over the former” (Avendaño and Carderera, 1850, p. 23).

Jovellanos was the first scholar to emphasize the relevance of education vs just mere instruction when remarking that a young man “adorned with much and good instruction could be a ‘badly educated man’, as a ‘well educated man’ was not he who has acquired useful knowledge but he who has been instructed on social etiquette and on the manners of what is denominated good upbringing” (Jovellanos, 1802/1963, p. 232). At the dawn of the nineteenth century, education was situated in the field of urbanity and courtesy, that is, social etiquette and manners. They were included in the school curriculum. The Count of Cabarrús, an *afrancesado* (francophile) confirmed that education “comprises [...] all influences in our life, of things, of events, of men, those of the climate and of the Government” (Cabarrús, 1808/1965, p. 570).

Thus, education became “people’s rules for life, established in any society” (Campomanes, 1775/1975, p. 129), differences depending on social class although resting, according to Campomanes, on some underlying principles, such as religion and public order. The terms “urbanity” and “education” ended up overlapping and confused: “Urbanity is the reflection of good education: of good customs in dressing, walking and talking; of the rectitude of intentions of thoughts and feelings and of honesty in behavior” (Calleja, 1901, p. 12). The notion of “training” also dates from the late eighteenth century, both practical and vocational, thanks to which “craftsmen” would receive the tools “respective to each craft and to the bearing according to the profession they exercise” (Campomanes, 1775/1975, p. 130). Therefore, the enlightened discourse on education presents both a political and an economic base, founded on the notion of usefulness.

Coined in the first period of the early enlightenment, the denominations “public education” and “public instruction” constitute central propositions of nineteenth century Spanish history, both conceived as major sources of social prosperity (Aymes, 1989, pp. 47-75). For nineteenth-century liberals such notions were generalized in relation to their political and ideological projects (Álvarez de Miranda, 1992, pp. 423-428). Without education, they thought, it was “hopeless to expect an improvement of manners”; and in the absence of the former, “the best laws were useless.” The “freest institutions, those which grant rights to citizens in excess” could be “dangerous and harmful” when the

country was lacking “enlightened will, exclusive gift of free peoples, and also exclusive fruit of upright national education” (Dictamen y proyecto de decreto, 1814/1820, p. 4).

The said will expressed by Spanish liberals to achieve universal elementary schooling was manifest from the Cadiz Constitution of 1812, the only Spanish constitutional text which dedicates a whole chapter to education. Chapter IX planned the spread of elementary education through the creation of a dense school network, capable of teaching basic literacy to all Spanish people. As stated in Article 366: “Introductory schools shall be established in every town throughout the Kingdom, in which children shall be taught to read, write and cypher, the catechism of the Roman Catholic Religion, and a brief exposition of natural and civil duties and obligations.” The report drafted by Manuel José Quintana in 1813 – which constitutes the foundations of all Spanish legislation on education and its administration was directly inspired by a report written by the French author Concordet. It laid down the general principles: standardizing public education (courses, methods, manuals), free education and the organization of schools into three levels (primary, secondary and university). According to the report, instruction should be “universal, that is, should be extensive to all citizens” and provide “as equitably as permitted by the limits necessary by way of cost, distribution of people in the territory, and the period of time – longer or shorter – that the advocates can dedicate to education” (Quintana, 1813/1946, pp. 176-177).

Therefore, education had to be for the whole of the people. The idea that a country’s prosperity depended on its popular public instruction was openly shared in the first half of the nineteenth century. Success would lead to the emergence of a “cultural minimum” for all, primary or elementary schools and a uniform educational obligation by the State toward its citizens: “The first teaching is the general and bare essential instruction which must be provided to infancy [...]. This instruction shall be provided in *public schools of first letters*. In these schools in accordance with [...] article 366 of the Constitution, children will learn how to write and read correctly as well as the essential rules of arithmetic, and a catechism which comprises basic religious dogmas, good moral maxims and civil rights and duties” (Reglamento general de Instrucción Pública, 1821/1989, pp. 44-45).

Primary instruction was presented as “one of the most effective means to improve the people’s condition.” Agriculture as a school subject was made compulsory from 1849: “The elements of agriculture, due to their common daily applications and practical use, must be a necessary complement to the elemental instruction which is disseminated through children schools, especially in an essentially agricultural country like ours” (Real Orden sobre enseñanza de la agricultura, 1856, pp. 393-394).

However, debate had just begun and voices rose to explain that even elementary education was not good for all, and should be reserved just for some. In 1851, Juan Bravo Murillo argued in relation to the Industrial School at Cervera (Lérida): “Here we don’t need men who think but oxen to work” (Garrido, 1870, p. 918). Not far from this approach was Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch: “In Spain there is a wrong conception of education; [...] there is no desire to understand that there is a different education for each social hierarchy; [...] it is ignored that every status and condition is a career with its privative teaching, in the absence of which it is just mere chance that the poor man knows how to be poor and the rich man gets right how to be rich, since one thing and the other are to be learnt more than it seems” (Hartzenbusch, 1843, p. 137).

From the comparative analysis of the educational policies developed in the nineteenth century, the generalization of the school model as a space for elementary, sometimes vocational training but mainly for socialization, a panacea in the presence of

social deviations, becomes evident. For Antonio Gil de Zárate[2], first General Director of Public Instruction and inspiration of the General Programme of Studies of 1845, it was clear that “the question on education was a question of power: the one who teaches has the power, since teaching means training men in agreement with the views of he who indoctrinates them” (Gil de Zárate, 1851, p. 117). Therefore, public education was intellectually limited, controlled with respect to its ideological content, which “the masses” should receive for the benefit of all. Thus, the government should watch that “no one lacks instruction,” as it was interested in “enlightening the masses with the knowledge which constitutes primary education, in the absence of which there can be neither good citizens nor good heads of family; neither can fortune and general well-being – which is simply made up of the individual’s fortune and prosperity – ever grow and be consolidated” (Quinto, 1841, pp. 22-23).

The need to limit the scope and content of the instruction provided according to socio-economic levels won out rapidly among liberals. Secondary and higher education levels were reserved for “those who can pay,” “as the teachings there provided are only the concern of those who are well off and, therefore, have the means to pay for them” (Gil de Zárate, 1851, p. 164). The purpose of this measure was to make known to “honest and working classes its real position in the world,” so that their education, linked to their “status and needs” could allow “the dissemination of the seeds of order, of work and virtue” (Cardenera, 1858, pp. 278-279).

It is worth repeating Pablo Montesino’s view in 1842 on “the compelling need to educate the great mass of the Spanish People, or the great number of people who lack the means and the will to receive education.” From his point of view, if knowledge was only provided to the affluent class, then “the poor will be situated in worse circumstances that they were before; as world businesses will increasingly require new skills they lack” (Montesino, 1842, pp. 351-357).

2. Renewal, conflicts and reaction

As opposed to the liberal tradition, in the second half of the nineteenth century new trends emerged. The main group was the “krausists,” heirs to the ideas of the German philosophers Karl Christian Friedrich Krause and Heinrich Ahrens. Their main representative in Spain, Julián Sanz del Río, had a determining influence on the founders of the most interesting school of the Spanish nineteenth century: the Free Institution of Instruction (*Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, ILE), established in 1876. The driving force, Francisco Giner de los Ríos[3], conceived instruction at the ILE in terms of freedom of teaching and independence from any state and ecclesiastical power; any religious and political doctrine. For Giner de los Ríos, the purpose of education was “to educate men,” to develop their potential intellectual, moral, affective and physical skills, individually and socially (Molero Pintado, 2000, p. 146).

However, krausists were criticized by the church and its allied traditionalist and fundamentalist sectors. In the face of a trend which threatened scholastic control of culture and which was successful among liberal youth, it is not surprising that krausism ended up accused of all imaginable “wrong” concepts: pantheism, atheism, materialism, rationalism and, worst of all, freemasonry. Although freemasonry had been charged by “neo-catholics” of the 1860s, it was Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, critic of krausism as an obscure, unintelligible and scarcely original philosophy, who associated the ILE with freemasonry, using Krause’s subscription to secret societies to charge all his disciples as “enlightened” members of a “phratry,” of a “heterodox sect” (Ureña, 1998, pp. 96-97).

Shortly before that, the “statism” of Queen Isabella’s governments had generated the first tensions. In October 1864, the Minister of Fomento (internal development) Antonio Alcalá Galiano, drafted a circular reminding teachers of the enforcement of Article 179 of the *Ley Moyano*, which specified the doctrines which could or could not be taught in the universities. Emilio Castelar, full professor of Spanish History at the University of Madrid, replied that the circular was “anathema against science and an attack on constitutional law” (Castelar, 1870, p. 152). This caused the removal of both him and the rector Juan Manuel Montalbán, from their positions.

Despite student protests, which even saw street clashes with the police and army units (April 10, 1865), the government strengthened its position and the new Minister of Internal Development, Manuel Orovio, published a royal decree in January 1867 setting limits and objections to academic freedom. The succeeding acceptance “statement” to Queen Isabella II distributed to teachers was followed by disciplinary action against those who did not subscribe it or who demonstrated against it.

The new rector of the University of Madrid, the Marquis of Zafra, determined to subdue professors, especially Nicolás Salmerón and suppress unrest in classrooms due to the introduction of the krausist doctrines. The intransigence of progressive radicals, of “neocatholics” and some democrats, ended with the removal of Sanz del Río, Salmerón, Giner de los Ríos and Fernando de Castro from their university chairs (Rupérez, 1975, pp. 89-115).

After the revolution in September 1868 there was change. Obstacles to school participation were often reported. “Even with all its flaws and concerns,” as stated by the *Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores* (AIT) through its newspaper *La Emancipación*, “the school today is a privilege for the one who has inherited estate. The poor man, the dispossessed, cannot send his son to school as he has no means to pay for it and he even needs his son’s time and strength to contribute to the family’s subsistence” (Guereña, 2002, p. 262).

Some Spanish sections of the AIT went beyond denunciation and attempted to build their own school network. One of the speeches presented in the III Conference of the Spanish Regional Federation at Cordova in 1873 reported on the establishment of “purely international schools in as many towns as possible.” The “instruction advisable for us and, in general, instruction for the entire class [...] should be provided by ourselves, since the State, supreme protector of privileges and monopolies, has taken up all means available only for the benefit of those who own capital, that is, for the parasites and exploiters” (AIT, 1873, p. 13).

A report by Trinidad Soriano to the conference at Zaragoza in 1872 introduced the topic of “integral education,” conceived as the development of all capacities of the individual “up to the point of being capable of understanding all phenomena verified in the natural order” (AIT, 1872, p. 119). This notion would hit hard during the Restoration, both in Giner de los Ríos’ institutionalism and also in republicanism, anarchism and socialism. In response, during the next six years’ revolutionary period, the concept of educational freedom appeared in the conservative media: “It is totally contrary to reason that the State, which has no children of its own to be taught and has no other monetary means to finance education than those received from the nation, that is, from individuals and families, can hold the exclusive right to provide education as it pleases” (Martínez de Irujo, 1868, p. 287).

During restoration, education moved backwards as evidenced in the “University question.” In February 1875 the Ministry of Internal Development, Manuel Orovio, drafted a circular reminding university professors of their obligation to be faithful to

authorized text books and not to teach any doctrine contrary to religion and the person of the King. Protests by some professors led to their removal from chairs and the exile of Augusto González Linares, Laureano Calderón, Emilio Castelar, Gumersindo de Azcárate and Nicolás Salmerón, among others. Laureano Figuerola and Eugenio Montero Ríos in solidarity resigned from their positions also. This controversy did not end until 1881 when under the Minister José Luis Albareda, those professors who so wished were restored to their positions (Azcárate, 1967, pp. 161-179).

The different governments in the two-party system, so-called *turnistas*, went further in the liberal tendency to consider the State as the main architect of education, as a sign of the country's progress and modernity. The ministers of Internal Development of the late nineteenth century included the costs of schooling, normal and secondary, and inspection in the general budget (1886) and set up the General Inspectorate (1887). Nevertheless, the government remained unaware of the resurgence of the controversy around popular education as instruction for "all the people [...] with no class or position distinction" (Labra, 1911, p. 9). Likewise, from the Disaster of 1898, the concept of "state education" was again frequently used by regenerationist intellectuals. The program adopted by the *Asamblea Nacional de Productores* (National Assembly of Producers) in 1899 stated that "the problem of regeneration in Spain is pedagogical rather than economical or financial and requires deep educational change at all levels." It was necessary to "put more emphasis on physical and moral education [...] in order to strengthen character and create habits of culture, honesty and work." The compulsory education of trades, school trips and camps, intuitive methods, using more developed countries as models, was advocated (Conclusiones o programa de la Asamblea Nacional, 1900, p. 92).

The nineteenth century saw educational consolidation, at least at a speculative level. Nevertheless, the confrontations between different educational policies caused stagnation, a situation which became more serious with the want of adequate funding. In 1872 the illiteracy rate in Spain was 72 percent, and in 1895, 63 percent. At the onset of the twentieth century the use of the terms "public education," "national education," "popular education" and emerging "female education" reflected different aspirations. Some were defensive instruments or a means for the legitimation of the existing social order, or regulatory mechanisms, or useful tools for individual or collective independence (El nuevo socialismo, 1870, p. 25).

3. From regenerationism to the Second Republic

In contrast to the theoretical discourses and vacillations characteristic of liberal administrations in the previous century, the twentieth century is a period which starts with dispositions directed to fulfill *de facto* the task of providing literacy to the population and guaranteeing effective education for Spanish people. Therefore, analysis should start from such measures as the creation of the Ministry of *Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes* or the reform in secondary education by Antonio García Alix (both in 1900), as well as the following year's initiatives under the Count of Romanones, such as obligatory schooling until 12 years and the inclusion of state teachers' salaries in the government budget. For this reason, 1900-1902 has been considered as "one of the most fruitful periods of the century" (Puelles Benitez, 2000, p. 12).

Nevertheless the breach between legislation and reality, between theory and practice, prevented the educational reality from undergoing a radical change with the turn of the century. Some figures could show the disheartening situation in Spain. The illiteracy rate was 56 percent of the population over ten years, as a result of the

irregular attendance of this sector of the population. Thus, the “legal declaration of obligatory education for children aged 6-12 was pure sarcasm” (Viñao Frago, 2004, p. 11). For this reason and as a reflection of the crisis of 1898, education became a central topic in intellectual and political debates at that time. For regenerationists, the central problem in Spain was education. Ricardo Macías Picavea drew a devastating portrait of the situation: teachers, “deprived of any hint of prestige and social influence, lacking the respect from the masses and ill-treated by bosses”; high schools were “anything but educative and teaching centres,” not just due to the buildings, similar to “ramshackle stables,” but rather because their organization “ignored any modern teaching approach” (Macías Picavea, 1899, pp. 123-125). In this context, it is worth mentioning Joaquín Costa’s motto: “The school and the larder, the larder and the school: there are no other keys to open the path for regeneration in Spain” (Costa, 1916, p. 215).

The main legacy of regenerationism was moving to the foreground of the debate, a perspective defended 25 years earlier by Giner de los Ríos and Manuel Cossío, among other professors who had hoped to transform the country through action in the Free Institution of Instruction, capable of generating a new type of man. Rafael Altamira is an example of the synthesis of regenerationist and institutionism approaches. Altamira, a disciple of Giner de los Ríos, wrote books on educational theory (Altamira, 1915, 1923) becoming General Director of Primary Education (1911-1913). He enacted measures to improve teachers’ training and incorporate women into adult education on the same conditions as men. In this respect, the vacuous radicalism in some regenerationist sectors should be noted, as opposed to materializations directly or indirectly promoted by the ILE during the early twentieth century, such as the Board for Extension of Studies (*Junta de Ampliación de Estudios*), 1907, and other institutions including: *Centro de Estudios Históricos* (1910), *Residencia de Estudiantes* (1910) and the *Instituto-Escuela* (1918) (Larrosa Martínez, 2004, pp. 539-544; Porto Ucha, 2004, pp. 551-556).

Despite relevant events as the creation of the first chair in pedagogy in Madrid (1904) or the School of Teachers’ Education (1909), the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a permanent “tension between projects and reality” (González Rodríguez, 1998, pp. 219-234), since the task of educational centers would hardly exceed the narrow range of an elite group and would not benefit the whole of society. Santiago Alba, Minister of Public Instruction from 1912 to 1918, denounced “the chaos and arbitrariness which prevailed in the recruitment procedures of teachers” and “the almost total absence of modern teaching material, sanitary conditions and truly educational requirements that schools are currently suffering” (Alba, 1916, pp. 63-64).

One of the retarding elements was the perpetual conflict with the church, in opposition to any measure aimed at reducing the establishment of religious orders and eroding its influence in education. This produced a heavy burden for reformism and a constant restraint on legislation. Romanones, as Minister of Public Instruction legislated in favor of optional religion in schools and for the validity of certificates from religious schools.

The *Ley del Candado* of 1910 increased protests from the Church and exacerbated hostility toward liberal government. Nevertheless the church’s effort persevered, maintaining its traditional teaching methods and values (Bartolomé, 1997, p. 739). In addition to schools and religious orders (Marianists, Marist Brothers, Salesians, etc.), was the establishment of the Teresian *Institución del Padre Poveda* (1917). It was an attempt to give a response from Christian humanism to ILE approaches, whose underlying ideology fell within the ideas eventually outlined in Pius XI’s encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri* (Capitán Díaz, 1994, pp. 552-563).

On the opposite side were secular schools, advocates of freethinking and rationalism. There was the school founded by Francisco Ferrer, pervaded with anarchist and libertarian ideology. The socialist movement, with a more formal organization, set culture and education among its priorities by establishing *Casas del Pueblo* (Houses of the People) throughout the Spain (Luis Martín, 1993, pp. 81-174). Manuel Núñez Arenas, member of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) promoted the creation of the "New School" from 1910, based on the principles of integral education, with a spirit of renewal. Its instruments included co-education, active pedagogy, laicism and "equality," that is, free access with no exception to all educational benefits. It stressed the importance of teacher training and academic freedom, a rejection of oppressive church control (Tuñón de Lara, 1970, p. 160).

The first third of the twentieth century also witnessed intellectuals' strong demand for education, especially political education. The legacy received from Giner the los Ríos and his disciples proved fruitful even outside the ILE, whose contribution became a patrimony for the whole of Spanish society. Relevant is the example of José Ortega y Gasset in his speech "Social pedagogy as a political program" (1910). For Ortega, if education was mainly the activity of transforming something into something better, pedagogy and politics could be defined in relation to their goals, ultimately to converge in social transformation. Ortega and other intellectuals within his sphere were skeptical about conventional political parties and put their trust on "those intervention instruments which can serve for culture dissemination" (Menéndez Alzamora, 1995, p. 474). As a result, different groups emphasizing political education were established. They included the *Liga de Educación Política*, giving rise to an ideological positioning which emphasized the cultural character and significance of both liberalism and socialism (Ortega y Gasset, 1983, pp. 119-132).

Discussion through to 1930 would be incomplete without mentioning other reform movements which emerged in the internationally. Hygienism flourished in the early twentieth century, as evidenced by several conferences and the "*Journal of School Hygiene*" (*Revista de Higiene Escolar*), which included interdisciplinary reflections on student's health.

Essays that responded to work by John Dewey, Pierre Bovet or Jean Piaget were published, encouraging student spontaneity or strengthening the cooperative sense on the basis of a rational use of freedom. Associated with this trend was the Italian, Maria Montessori, who received great attention in Spain. A proliferation of periodical publications on the theory and practice of education occurred. The *Revista de Pedagogía* is a representative of this approach in the 1920s (Sureda García, 1994, pp. 267-285).

Theoretical effervescence contrasted with poor achievements, however. Reforming decrees often clashed with parliamentary obstacles, the pressure from conservative elements, the government instability and the problems, especially those outside large population centers, including bossism and the lack of investment. Despite advances in favor of the "graded school" (*escuela graduada*)^[5], primary and secondary education in the 1920s remained stagnant, lacking resources and not far from the situation of 1900. Illiteracy was widespread (40-50 percent).

The 1920s reforms failed for familiar reasons. The plan prepared by the Minister César Silió, which granted autonomy to universities, was canceled by his successor, Tomás Montejo (López Martín, 1995, p. 100). In addition, under Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, despite some material improvements, its conservatism was signified by reducing academic freedom (Royal Order of 13 October 1925). The most ambitious plan to reform secondary higher education (Plan of Eduardo Callejo) failed

for want means and sustained political will. Another attempt in 1928 to reform higher education suffered the same fate.

During the Second Republic (1931-1936) there was a reactivation of regeneration hopes. Theorists in high positions at different levels of government addressed educational backwardness. They understood their mission with a providentialist aura. Rodolfo Llopis (General Director of Primary Education in 1931) wrote that “a revolutionary is also an instructor, and this one, in turn [...] can be nothing else but a revolutionary” (Lozano, 1980, pp. 143-174).

To understand the changes carried out by the Republican Provisional Government, we review the early decrees: regulation of bilingualism in Catalonia, reorganization of the Council for Public Instruction, and, as expected from a regime supporting militant secularism, establishment of religious freedom. The Constitution of 1931 dedicated three articles to education. Article 48 summarized republican and socialist ideology by including issues such as unified schools, obligatory and free primary education, academic freedom, the state’s concern for teachers, secular education and human solidarity.

Nevertheless, the reformist effort, evident mainly in the first two years under Ministers Marcelino Domingo and Fernando de los Ríos, gradually diminished until the abrupt end implied by the Civil War (Capitán Díaz, 2002, pp. 331-349). Some of the educational initiatives of the republican era were more wishful than effective, but they included the creation of the Pedagogical Missions and the National Foundation for Scientific Research, the five-year plan for schools construction, attention to teacher training and salaries, the reform of inspection in primary and secondary education, the concern to extend adult education and improvement in vocational training.

4. Franco’s dictatorship and democracy

In spite of its limitations the Second Republic was the period of the greatest effort yet in the attempt to modernize education in Spain. It came to an end with Francoism (1939-1975). One of the first dispositions of the “New State” was to discipline teachers; over a quarter of them suffered punishment or reprisal in a profession that had generally favored republican political ideas. That was the regime’s judgment signified in one of its first decrees, which mentioned the problem that “teachers, at any level and with very few exceptions, have been influenced and nearly monopolized by the dissolving ideologies and institutions” (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 1936, p. 207).

Repression produced a multiplying intimidating effect on the entire profession (Morente Valero, 1997, p. 46). After the Civil War (1936-1939), teachers were asked, above all, to be faithful to the principles of the *Movimiento Nacional* (the fascist single Party) and to the figure of the *Caudillo* Franco. Education had to forget the concept of freedom, instead, transmitting religious (Catholic) and political (those of national authoritarianism) values. However, religion and politics, represented within Francoism by the Church and the falangists, seemed elements difficult to combine beyond the war alliance.

After the victory of the Allies in Second World War, it was clear that the fascist and totalitarian configuration project was unattainable. Thus, some intellectuals who had supported fascist education for youth, such as Dionisio Ridruejo, Antonio Tovar or Pedro Laín Entralgo, witnessed responsibility for education passing almost exclusively into the hands of the Church. Beyond the controversy on the “ideology characteristic of Franco’s regime itself,” there is no doubt that “the religious element constitutes a key point in this framework,” to such extent that “a number of external signs speaks eloquently concerning the suffocating catholic sense which is intended to be imbued into education” (Cieza García, 1985, p. 115).

The National Catholicism prevailing after the Civil War did not provide any significant innovations to education, marked by traditionalism, emphasis on strict discipline and systematic distrust toward anything which could seem liberal or modern. This situation extended to women's education, always lagging behind in educational matters. Francoism meant "the return to the old ideal of femininity as opposed to feminism" (Ballarín Domingo, 2001, pp. 113-117).

Within this framework a parallel evolution to that suffered by the regime as a whole gradually took place. With the consolidation of the legal-political system and foreign recognition, reflected in agreements with the USA and Holy See, there was a move from the repression and intransigence of the early times to a relative openness. In education, this materialized during the term of Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez as Minister of National Education (1951-1956). Although he failed in most of his objectives, his policies actually meant the beginning of the "definitive decline in National Catholicism" (Navarro García, 1993, pp. 92-95).

After the Civil War and until the 1950s, the authentic role of the state in education was very limited. With the Stabilization Plan of 1959 there was a greater interventionism parallel to economic liberalization, which ended up meaning a gradual postponement of the strongly ideological approach for something less defined. It finally emerged as technocratic effectiveness. In addition to the social changes of that moment, a less doctrinal education broke through. It aimed for an allegedly neutral education of the student, since the priority now was economic development and modernization.

The highpoint of this approach was the "*White Book*" published by the Ministry of Education and Science in 1969 (Escolano and Fernandes, 1997, pp. 157-158), which is worth mention in Franco's dictatorial regime since different critical sectors were involved in its preparation. The "*White Book*" marked the "new mentality, deriving from a more secular, deideologized and culturally exogamous society" which viewed education as a "promise for social mobility" (Fernández Soria, 1999, pp. 229-230). A fruit of this work was the General Law on Education (LGE) of 1970, defended by the Minister José Luis Villar Palasí as a pacification instrument for national integration, as a step forward against social discrimination and as a voice of the State's will, to correct its secular inhibition. For the citizen, he affirmed, "the only path of authentic social promotion lies in an increase of their cultural level," and for Spain it was the only way to avoid the danger of becoming the "the great supplier of unskilled labourers to the rest of Europe" (Boletín Oficial de las Cortes, 1970, p. 7).

Good intentions were not matched with the necessary means to achieve the goals. On the other side, it is noted that promotion of educational reform, from primary school to university, including vocational training, was to occur without previously undertaking the modernization of both the political system and the society which were to be the beneficiaries of reform. Despite this, Franco's educational modernization was mainly positive. Spain might "overcome to a great extent its almost atavistic situation of lack of resources and present in the European stage an image which was at least respectable" (García Garrido, 1994, p. 849).

However, the social effervescence of the late Franco period caused resistance from the grass roots and from opposition groups to the educational model that the dictatorship intended to impose: the LGE was totally rejected for being selective and class discriminatory, unjust and authoritarian, based on memorization and rigidity. Many alternatives emerged. They included the *Escola d'Estiu* (Summer School) promoted by the Catalan collective "*Rosa Sensat*," which drafted one of the most representative documents of this approach: "In defense of a new public school model."

Some nationally well-known ideologists such as Luis Gómez Llorente, Marta Mata and Eloy Terrón also emerged; new centers were established, usually as cooperatives managed by parents, either under the ILE ideology or supporting “education in freedom” and active teaching. Teachers themselves, dissatisfied with political instability and low salaries, started to refer to themselves as “teaching fellows” (*enseñantes*) or “education workers.”

Oppositional marches, writings, strikes and demonstrations completed the anti-establishment scene. The opposition focussed on making the “unified school” (*escuela única*)[6] a reality, extending obligatory schooling, achieving compensatory measures for students with difficulties and creating non-selective evaluation systems. There was opposition to the public funding of private schools, a long-term controversial matter that caused conflict with conservative parties. Specific management measures were advocated in two main areas: the democratization of educational centers and the establishment of a “single teaching body” (Gómez Llorente, 2003, pp. 20-22).

The subsequent difficulties in relation to the education can only be understood within the context of the circumstances which surrounded the political transition in Spain, that is, as the result of a transaction between ideologically opposed sectors. The need for an agreement and for flexibility – the requirement for the materialization of constitutional consensus – produced ambiguity around educational principles. Nevertheless Article 27 of the Constitution of 1978 established education as a fundamental right, emphasizing the development of personality within the framework of democratic values, with the acknowledgment of free and compulsory basic education, recognition of the state’s regulatory role and the autonomy of the university system.

Together with these principles and as a result of negotiations, some complex formulas were admitted to incorporate the “academic freedom” of right wingers – which meant in practice the protection of catholic schools – with the claims from left wingers of secular and equalitarian education, truly accessible for all Spanish people and not just as a mere theoretical statement.

In fact, the harmonizing and compromising character of the new Spanish constitution, forsaking monopolistic whims, would enable future legislative advances in differing directions (Fernández Soria, 2002, p. 53). Thus, after several centrist governments which maintained a hesitating and changeable position in the field of education, the accession to power of the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party) in 1982, with José María Maravall as Minister of Education, saw a new period of rapid reform. The initiatives were intended to modernize the educational system. First was the Organic Law on the Right of Education (LODE) of 1985, then in 1990 the Organic General Law on the Educational System (LOGSE), and finally the Organic Law of Participation, Evaluation and Governance of Educational Centres (LOPEG) of 1995. The good intentions of the projects clashed with realities, even giving rise to regressive effects, such as a considerable decline of educational standards. Protests from the teaching community, from students to teachers at all levels, during the late 1980s were comparable with protests from the earlier transition period.

Another step forward in the late twentieth century was the substitution of the rigid centralization of Franco’s period with a decentralized system in which the *Comunidades Autónomas* (autonomous regions) were, at different times, granted full competence, adapting the educational guidelines emanating from the government to their respective priorities. Those autonomies with a language different from Spanish sought to promote the study of their own languages, in some cases so vehemently that much friction emerged. In other cases, especially with regard Spain’s common history,

different programs and interpretations were developed, sometimes questionable, at the service of local interests (Zufiaurre, 1994, pp. 309-315).

This situation led to denunciation by the Popular Party, which had come to power in 1996, and more specifically, by the Minister of Education, Esperanza Aguirre, not only of the socialist praxis and the educational tendency of certain Autonomous Communities, but the failure the pedagogical model “inherited from Rousseau’s thoughts”, which had led to “a systematic and lethal denaturation of education” (Puelles Benítez, 2002, p. 436).

The conservatives’ educational policies, described simplistically – and with a blatant denigrating intention – as “neoliberal” were mainly aimed at correcting the alarming deterioration of the students’ achievement levels (so-called “school failure”), but they also established specific criteria in relation to competitiveness, reporting and the search for effectiveness – all described by left-wing groups as elitist, as well as prone to favor the more privileged strata of society. The translation of those policy aims into action was not cleverly performed, giving rise to widespread distrust. For this reason, support for private education grew. With a renewed insistence on religion as a school subject, the educational debate gained new passion and an ideological character similar to the dogmatism of the beginning of the twentieth century.

5. Concluding: educational challenges for the twenty-first century

Spain has witnessed enormous changes in the field of education if we look back to regenerationist criticisms. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the nineteenth-century liberals’ dream of total schooling has come true: in Spain today all boys and girls, aged between four and 14 years, attend school, and attendance rate of children aged between 14 and 16 is close to 100 percent. Macías Picavea and Costa complained about the lack of secondary schools in their time. Today there are thousands of them. In the last years of the nineteenth century, the number of university students hardly reached 15,000 while today it exceeds 1.5 million.

The Spanish educational system still has some important problems. However, they should not be allowed to obscure the spectacular educational development that Spain has undergone in the past two centuries. Current weaknesses in Spanish schools include low academic achievement, relatively high rates of early school leaving and grade repetition, lower average public spending than in more developed European countries, but the most important issue is that of “quality.”

In order to deal with the challenges of the new century that arise from European unification, economic globalization, technological revolution and the influence of communications, a new quality educational system is necessary. At the same time quality must not be dissociated from the requirements of freedom and equality. The challenge for Spain is to build a modern, pluralistic system, comparable to the best in western countries, offering quality for all, without marginalized, segregated, excluded or undereducated population sectors.

The final challenge of particular relevance for Spain is the transfer of educational responsibilities from the central government to all autonomous regions. Whether this occurs in the current scheme or in a different, more advanced, federal scheme, the problem will lie in reconciling diversity with the principle of basic unity, an issue common to all members of the European Union, including those with federal structures. Education can be a force for territorial cohesion. Germany and Switzerland are examples of this. In those countries there are not as many educational systems as

States or cantons, but there is an educational system based on a robust common foundation. The cultural values of each region must undoubtedly be taught, but also the shared values which have brought Spanish citizens together for several centuries: this is one of the greatest challenges in education for Spain.

Notes

1. Pablo Montesino was a man of liberal and progressive interests, exiled in London for ten years. After returning to Spain, he carried out the first implementation of the liberal education system. One of Montesino's greatest accomplishments was his Escuelas Normales, special schools delineated to provide adequate training for teachers.
2. Playwright, Antonio Gil de Zárate was also a pedagogue whose work is associated with Montesino. Gil de Zárate took steps to set up an educational model that responded to the economic, ideological and political demands of the nineteenth century, following the tenets of the bourgeois liberal pedagogy.
3. The Spanish bibliography about Giner de los Ríos is abundant, but for the English reader, Solomon Lipp (1985).
4. Father of regenerationism, Joaquín Costa denounced the corruption and stagnation that kept Spain from catching up with the rest of Europe through political, industrial, agricultural and educational reform.
5. The expression escuela graduada refers to the division of primary schools in different grades and classrooms, according to the students' age, with different teachers and in the same school building.
6. The fundamental goal of the concept escuela única or escuela unificada, introduced by socialist pedagogue Lorenzo Luzuriaga, was to overcome the class-based segmentation typical of the nineteenth century state educational systems by integrating primary and secondary schools into a single national system. This was to determine access to higher education by ability, not economic or social status.

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