



REciprocal maieutic Approach pathways enhancing Critical Thinking

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REACT MODEL MANUAL

An innovative Reciprocal Maieutic Approach
for a critical thinking skills acquisition in
secondary schools



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3.4. Spain

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Introduction

Historically, Spain began an extensive educational reform at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. It was indeed a convulsive period all over Europe, but for Spain at the end of the 19th century the State became a republic forcing the monarchy into exile. During this period, the 1900s, education became key for the development of the country. Over this period of reforms, Spain looked mainly to Germany, France and England. It is also true that Maria Montessori visited Spain in 1914, instead of travelling to England as planned. Because WW1 had begun, she decided to visit Barcelona instead and experiment with some of her pedagogies there. These proved to be very successful and Maria Montessori, visited Spain on several occasions later, setting up her model in several schools in Cataluña (Cañigual, 2022; Porto Ucha & Vázquez Ramil, 2014). In 1907 a group of intellectuals led by Enric Prat and the Catalan bourgeoisie wanted a Catalan educational system. Because some of them visited different countries like France with new and innovative pedagogies coming from the USA, they wanted to transform the Catalan society using some of those ideas. Different educational journals started to pay attention to Maria Montessori work in Italy and how her system was working very well. Because the Regional Catalan Government at that moment was led by two great intellectuals (Egenio Dórs and Puig i Cadafall) a Pedagogical Department or Council of Education was created, in order to start applying Montessori's pedagogies in orphanages such as the Orphan Home from Barcelona (Cañigual, 2022).

The rate of illiteracy was very high: up to 50% of the population was estimated to be illiterate) and poverty and child labor was the norm at that time. The main teaching method was memorization and corporal punishment in class was the norm. As the famous saying from those times goes: "la letra con sangre entra" (letters are learnt with blood). It was in this context that certain politicians such as the Aragonese Joaquín Costa and José Ortega y Gasset, having liberal views and an idea of what was happening in the rest of Europe, thought and fought for dramatic changes in education, believing that the real change that Spain needed so



much, had to begin with changes in Education. They fought for this with the help of writers and university

professors such as Miguel de Unamuno, Francisco Giner de los Ríos and Santiago Ramón y Cajal. It is important to note that Spain never had an Enlightenment era (it returned to an absolute monarchy again after voting for the 1st constitution). So, the economy of the country depended mainly on agriculture based on large estates owned by the few with the majority of the population living and working for these rich landowners for miserable salaries.

History of new methodologies in Spain the role of women pedagogists/educators

It is in this context that some professors from the Central University in Madrid, tired of the lack of academic freedom, and the imposition of the Catholic Church, and its intervention in the curricula, decided to opt out and create the “Institución Libre de Enseñanza” (ILE) (The Free Teaching Institution). In 1876 the ILE was created following the German School of Krausism. It was without a doubt, the major educational reform in Modern Spanish times. A coeducational institution for the 1st time in Spanish history, very rare for those times. The focus of the ILE was on innovative and active methodologies following the Socratic model, such as: no memorization, the use of debates in class, promoting critical thinking, no books, the use of games and gymnastics in the school, no exams and the link between health and education, arts and crafts, artistic subjects and music.

The main pedagogical idea was that children need to be educated rather than taught, in the sense that children should be educated as responsible future citizens. From the ILE several important departments and institutions were created: the Ministry of Public Instruction, “La Junta de Ampliación de Estudios” (The Department of Education Extension), The Pedagogic Museums, The Meteorologic Museums, and the University Dormitories (Mujeres para un Siglo: María de Maeztu, 2022). The Pedagogic Museum was responsible for the new curricula for schools, in which active and innovative methodologies were implemented. The idea was to train

future teachers to create a new educational system where schools would be cultural centers (Investigar la Educación, Escuela en la Segunda República, 2013).



At just the same time a set of scholarships for teachers was established. Teachers could apply and have a short international stay in England, France, Germany, Belgium and other destinations. This gave teachers the opportunity to experience education in countries where they were doing excellent educational innovative projects (Rebordinos Hernando, 2014). There was also substantial investment in educational infrastructure. During this time, schools were conceptualized as clean, healthy, inviting places for children to learn and grow as human beings. During this time, what was called “Grupos Escolares” (Scholar Groups) were created, with bigger classrooms full of natural light, big playgrounds and even swimming pools for children to learn how to swim and practice sports.

In 1915 the Ladies Residence (Residencia de Señoritas), depending on the ILE, was created. This Institute, under the direction of one of the greatest Spanish pedagogists, María de Maeztu y Whitney, was established to help women progress in their education from secondary level to entry into the Central University of Madrid). The residence began with 35 women studying at the Central University and between the 1920s and 1930s this number rose to over 350 female residents studying at the university, even more than in the Residence for Men.

María de Maeztu y Whitney was a primary school teacher and a professor of Pedagogy at the university. She studied at the University of Salamanca under the supervision of Miguel de Unamuno and gained a scholarship to visit London, then Brussels and Belgium and later she spent three months in Cambridge, thanks to the “Patronato de Pensiones para Ampliación de Estudios” (Patronage of grants for the Continuation of Studies). She had a very different vision of what education should be, and she was very concerned with the education of women and the importance of training for primary and secondary teachers. Influenced by the pedagogic ideas of Giner de los Ríos and Manuel Bartolomé Cossío (Founders of the ILE), María de Maeztu believed that in order to improve the educational system in Spain teachers and mostly women

teachers should obtain a higher degree in education and be better trained in active and innovative methodologies.

In 1931 at the beginning of the Second Republic, 50% of the Spanish population was illiterate and at that time, 80% of Spanish women were illiterate. This meant access to only temporary,



badly paid jobs and a total dependency on their husbands (Mujeres para un Siglo: María de Maeztu, 2022).

María de Maeztu, followed the same pedagogies as the ILE, and tried to implement what she had seen during her visits abroad, she also included having important visitors to speak about their research. Some of the people who visited The Ladies Institute were Marie Curie, Albert Einstein and Maria Montessori among many others. She worked towards learning by doing, and a holistic approach to learning, promoting dignity and dialogue in the classrooms.

She tried to imitate the English and North American colleges, creating an environment of enquiry and dialogue from a scientific perspective. These innovations took place while Maria Montessori was in Barcelona implementing some of her new ideas in schools for children belonging to the bourgeoisie, very much related to the Catalan educational movement of “Nueva Escuela” (New School), which was also linked to the Regionalist Catalan Movement and directly linked to the Catalan bourgeoisie.

In 1934 Maria Montessori was invited by María de Maeztu y Whitney to give a course in Madrid. They connected immediately and try to cooperate as much as possible.

Sadly, all this was cut short suddenly with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. After three years of war, Spain commenced forty years of dictatorship during which time the educational system returned to its former state as it was before the 1st Republic. María de Maeztu y Whitney had to flee to Argentina. She never returned to Spain alive, although she was transported to Spain years later with honors and buried in Estella, Navarra, where her family was. This is just an example of what one of the greatest pedagogists in the Spanish educational system did over the same period as Maria Montessori. Many other teachers from the Republic

times were also forbidden to continue educating under the dictatorship regime. Many had to go through public hearings to prove that they were suitable for such a morally significant task. It is important to mention this, because it is still today a hidden part of the Spanish History of Education. When we refer to innovation and innovative methodologies, we do not consider that during the 1930s those methods were already being implemented.

During the beginning of the democratic period the educational laws changed, but it was not until the 1990s when the first acknowledgement of competencies and a more “innovative way



of teaching” was made and encouraged. The Spanish educational system during the last years of Franco’s Regime first attempted to democratize education at all levels of education.

However, the teaching pedagogies were based on memorization, and secondary education was focused on academicist approaches and goals. Spanish students reached secondary education with the aim of going to university and during all the years of secondary education they prepared for that. The teaching methodologies were not innovative or active, the classes were teacher centred and the students had to memorize and demonstrate learning through final exams (Lorenzo Vicente, 1996).

Recent educational laws promoting the implementation of innovative pedagogies

The Spanish educational system has undergone numerous changes in a short time, due to the approval of multiple educational laws that have modified the curricular content, the organization of the different educational stages and the operation of schools, among other aspects. Specifically, since the publication of the 1978 Constitution, the following educational laws have been enacted, with the rank of Organic Law, many of them currently repealed and therefore not in force:



Table 1. Spanish Educational Organic Laws from the Constitution of 1987 to 2020.

Year	Law Title	Validity
1980	LOECE, del Estatuto de Centros Escolares (Statute of SchoolCenters)	It did not come in force
1983	LRU, de Reforma Universitaria (University Reform).	Repealed
1985	LODE, del Derecho a la Educación (the Right to Education).	Amended and effective
1990	LOGSE, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (General Organization of the Educational System).	Repealed
1995	LOPEG, de Participación, Evaluación y Gobierno de los centros docentes (Participation, Evaluation and Government of educational centers).	Repealed
2001	LOU, de Universidades (Universities).	In force
2002	LOCFP, de las Cualificaciones y de la Formación Profesional(Qualifications and Vocational Training).	In force
2002	LOCE, de Calidad de la Educación (Quality of education).	Repealed
2006	LOE, de Educación (Education).	Amended by LOMCE and LOMLOE, in force
2013	LOMCE, de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (Improvementof Educational Quality).	Repealed by LOMLOE
2020	LOMLOE, Ley Orgánica 3/2020 de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la LOE-Ley Orgánica 2/2006 de 3 de mayo, de educación (Organic Law 3/2020 of December 29, which modifies the LOE-Organic Law 2/2006 of May 3, on education).	In force from January 19, 2021



As can be inferred from Table 1, there is a lack of consensus, sustainability and coherent progression in the quick succession and changes of different educational laws. Apart from the national laws, the Autonomous Communities also have some implication in their applicability. This is due to the decentralization process that took place over the democratization period, after Franco's Regime. It should be noted that the Autonomous Communities (or regions) have competences in the field of education, so that each autonomy can develop its own legal framework; the most significant legislation focuses, among other issues, on:

- The curriculum, that is, the contents, methodologies, and evaluation at each stage
- School coexistence regulations
- Attention to students with specific educational needs
- Regulation of the operation and organization of schools (especially for public schools).

It is important to note that even though many reforms began to mention the importance of acquiring competences, there is still confusion about how to do so. Another key factor is the increasing cultural diversity in Spanish classrooms, and how different educational laws have tried to be more inclusive and mention integration, but with few defined school plans or more flexible curricula that could actually help such inclusive schools (Bolívar, 2020; Baches & Sierra-Huedo, 2019).

As it can be inferred from the report, the figure of women pedagogists not only María Montessori but also María de Maeztu y Whitney had a great impact in education in their life span, but also nowadays. Thus, those pedagogies are as current as innovative as back then. One characteristic that it is important to highlight is the importance of looking to the children who have difficulties in learning in a standardized system, those who are minorities, or who do not learn as the system imposes. The main active methodologies back then focused on those children and youngsters. This will be an excellent consideration for the REACT project.

All these, obviously imply "new" teaching methodologies in which all students should play an important part in their own learning, having the opportunity to grow in a welcoming space which they feel part of. Learning by doing, learning how to learn, cooperative learning, project-based learning, communicating effectively across cultures are indeed key for the



success of all those methodologies (Delors, 1997). If we want to recover the spirit of Maria Montessori and María de Maeztu y Whitney and so many other women pedagogists we need to rethink how our children need to learn to become the best human-beings, and good global citizens. The Socratic Model it is not at all an outdated model and more fluent and effective communication is needed in order to overcome cultural barriers which are very much linked to learning styles and learning barriers.

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