

Juan Moreno Vera – *Critical discourse analysis of democratic consciousness in Spain's history education curriculum*. *História*. Revista da FLUP. Porto. IV Série. Vol. 13 nº 2 2023. 24-39.
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Análise crítica do discurso sobre a consciência democrática no currículo do ensino da história em Espanha

Critical discourse analysis of democratic consciousness in Spain's history education curriculum

Analyse critique du discours de la conscience démocratique dans le programme d'enseignement de l'histoire en Espagne

Análisis crítico del discurso sobre la conciencia democrática en el currículo español de la enseñanza de la historia

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Resumo: O principal objetivo desta investigação é a análise qualitativa das narrativas sobre a educação democrática no currículo oficial de História de Espanha no 2º ano do Bacharelato (17-18 anos). Para atingir este objetivo, foi aplicada uma análise crítica do discurso (CDA em inglês) e um instrumento concebido *ad hoc* para a investigação. Os resultados mostram que o currículo espanhol contém uma descrição neutra da educação democrática, sem julgamento dos grupos sociais representados, embora haja um discurso subjacente que tende ideologicamente para os valores da social-democracia.

Palavras-chave: democracia, educação histórica, consciência, valores, comunidade.

Abstract: The main objective of this research is the qualitative analysis of the narratives on democratic education in the official curriculum of Spanish History in the 2nd year of the Baccalaureate. In order to achieve this objective, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) and an instrument designed *ad hoc* for the research were applied. The results show that the Spanish curriculum contains a neutral description of democratic education without judgement of the social groups represented, although there is an underlying discourse that tends ideologically towards the values of social democracy.

Keywords: democracy, history education, consciousness, values, community.

Resumen: El presente trabajo de investigación tiene como principal objetivo el análisis cualitativo de las narrativas que se hacen sobre la educación democrática en el currículo oficial de Historia de España de 2º de Bachillerato (17-18 años). Para lograr el objetivo se ha aplicado un análisis crítico de discursos (CDA en inglés) y un instrumento diseñado *ad hoc* para la investigación. Los resultados muestran que en el currículo español aparece una descripción de la educación democrática neutral sin juicios de los grupos sociales representados, aunque existe un discurso subyacente que tiende ideológicamente hacia los valores de la social-democracia.

Palabras clave: democracia, educación histórica, conciencia, valores, comunidad.

Résumé: L'objectif principal de cette recherche est l'analyse qualitative des récits sur l'éducation démocratique dans le programme officiel d'histoire espagnole de la deuxième année du baccalauréat. Pour atteindre cet objectif, une analyse critique du discours (CDA) et un instrument conçu *ad hoc* pour la recherche ont été appliqués. Les résultats montrent que le programme espagnol contient une description

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neutre de l'éducation démocratique sans jugement des groupes sociaux représentés, bien qu'il existe un discours sous-jacent qui tend idéologiquement vers les valeurs de la social-démocratie.

Mots-clés: démocratie, éducation historique, conscience, valeurs, communauté.

1. Introduction

What kind of education is encouraged by policy documents in relation to democracy and historical consciousness? Authors like Estepa (2017) considered that the main purposes of teaching and learning history is to permit the students to understand the problems of today and to promote citizenship and democratic values.

Those have been a key question in relation to history education from the middle of 20th century according to authors from the “École des Annales”. For example, Bloch (2018), Febvre (1952) or Braudel (1958) remarked the importance of learning history starting from the problems of today. Even Pierre Vilar said that “history has to be useful to interpret a newspaper (Gómez & Moreno, 2023). In his book “L’histoire, pour quoi faire?” Gruzinski (2015) defended a useful history for society: like all the social sciences, a history base don evidences and interpretations (Chapman, 2011) that would allow a dialogue between the past and the present.

And, obviously, in that case, the purpose of learning history would continue beyond postivism and memoristic learning of fact, events, dates or characters (Buchanan, 1998) and getting closer and closer to the development of second order concepts of historical thinking (Seixas & Morton, 2013) that will help the students, in the future, to better understand complex processes as the actual rising of populism, fascism, nationalism, problems of sustainability, gender equality, LGTBIQ+ rights, climate change, refugees and migrations or the understanding of controversial and recurring events as wars, unemployment and economic crisis.

To face these “problems of today”, the Council of Europe (2017) suggested that history education should integrate the knowledge about the past experiences and the challenges of the future. In that sense, history teaching should promote the learning of the complex history of democracy, the activities of common people, recognising that there are people of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, valuing multiple identities, especially the ones that have been “invisible” for years, providing historical sources and combatting manipulation, fake news and post-truth, addressing issues that might be controversial or balancing the ethical dimension of learning history.

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So, the main goal of this investigation¹ is to analyze the kind of narratives that democracy has in the History course of the national curriculum of Spain. Historical narratives have been widely discussed (Behan, 1987; Norman, 1991 or Welsch, 1998) and could be defined as the construction of the past made by the narrator (Norman, 1991), so it represents an specific point of view, in the case of this study, made by the state policy makers.

2. Literature

2.1 What is curriculum and why teaching historical consciousness?

In 2014, Kieran Egan discussed the topic what is curriculum (Egan, 2014) and found that some times the contents in the curriculum are based on educational myths, ritual and practices, but there is not a plural argument about what this curriculum should contain. At a superficial level, we find a great confusion about what curriculum is, but as Carr (1998) indicated the assumptions embedded in inherited curriculum ideologies are impeding the potential of the curriculum in modern democratic societies.

In fact, as Sung (2020) highlighted through interviews to more than thirty preservice teachers in Taiwan, while teachers were personally more oriented to teach historical consciousness and thinking skills, most of them believed that they should remain neutral on historical issues about national identities. In that sense, the traditional contents represented in the curriculum seem to be a border line between developing democratic values in history classes and implementing a memoristic history based on facts and events.

As it is obvious, teaching history has evolved along the years since it was one of the first school subjects in all educational systems. Initially, history has the goal of building new narratives to support the creation of the new liberal states and nations, that, in Europe and America, were leaving behind the Old Regime and monarchies. They target was normal in a context where it was necessary to justify the creation of the new modern nations and the state-center power that emerged from the revolutions at the beginning of the 19th century. But, today, as Moreno-Vera and Alvén (2020) commented the purpose

¹ This investigation is result from the Project “Teaching and learning historical competencies in Baccalaureate: a challenge to reach a critical and democratic citizenship” (PID2020-113453RB-I00), funded by la Spain’s National Agency of research (AEI/10.13039/501100011033).

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of history must fill a different gap. The students have to learn how to explain the contemporary society and its problems, the relationships between institutions in a global perspective, health crisis, economic disasters, climate change or transnational wars.

But, who is building this collective memories? Friedrich (2014) suggest that we have to analyze the curriculum's contents taking into account the producer of the discourses. In that sense, Friedrich (2014) proposed to make an analysis from different points of view trying to overcome the limitations and restrictions as the State-power, class struggle, gender inequalities, racist dynamics or colonialism.

Ammert et al. (2022) explained that, in this sense, history education (as all the other subjects and topics) is undoubtedly a human enterprise. For this reason, indicated Ammert et al. (2022) history teaching is not merely about history contents, but also about how a selection of historical contents and events could be taught to others in a way that renders them meaningful for them and make that new knowledge useful in new contexts. For the authors, historical consciousness is intimately interconnected with the human condition and, in that sense, teaching historical consciousness in relation to moral issues becomes pertinent.

Learning history, as Zimmermann (2015) indicated, is learning hermeneutics and that consists of a variety of perspectives, which are linked in the desire to comprehend how human experience affects people's conditions. So, learning historical consciousness is particularly interesting as explores the role that history plays in the fibres of human meaning-making (Ammert et al., 2022).

In that sense, authors like Rüsen (1987), Gadamer (1963), Kölber (2008) or Fontana (2006) already talked about the importance of teaching to think historically and reflecting on historical consciousness and collective memories. For them, it is important for the students to reflect their own interpretations of historical events and the different uses (some times political) of history. This reflection of historical consciousness is very linked, following authors like Sung (2020), Friedrich (2014) or Edling et al. (2020) to the theories of democratic consciousness and the ethical dimension of history (Seixas & Morton, 2013) that is one of the big six competencies to learn to think historically. Democratic consciousness is defined as Ammert et al. (2022) as "learning ethics for democratic citizenship education". That definition could be understood in terms of democratic education as the respect and tolerance of citizenship values as peace,

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solidarity, political freedom, social and economical equality, gender education, fighting against racism and support of minorities and invisible citizens human rights, as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) already recommend.

3. Method

3.1 Objective

The main purpose of this study is to examine the presence of democratic consciousness and the type of narratives (ideologies) that appear in the Spanish' History curriculum for 2º Baccalaureate (17 to 18 years-old).

To reach this goal the authors frame the analysis trying to answer the following research questions:

- How is democracy understood based on descriptions? (Specific Objective 1)
- How do the policies describe the individual and the group? (Specific Objective 2)

3.2 Context

As we previously said, in this study, we are going to analyze the presence of democracy in the narratives of the Spanish history curriculum for the year 2º Bachillerato (17 to 18 year-old students). But, first of all, it is important to know the evolution of history in the Spanish curriculum in the last decades.

Until 1975 the country ran under Franco's dictatorship and history education was focused on the "glorious" days of Spanish empire and monarchy. During the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, history education started to change towards cooperatively works and the use of historical sources, although according to Sabino-Codina and Albert (2020) topics like genocides, the Holocaust or the crimes in the Spanish Civil War were still invisible on the national curriculum.

In this sense, Gómez-Carrasco et al. (2019) indicate that the presence of historical thinking concepts is a recent debate among researchers. Although history education in Spain is still linked to narratives and positivism, in the last years, researchers and teachers are making a great effort to develop new topics as democracy, gender equality, slavery or colonialism.

The last educational law, LOMLOE (Real Decreto 243/2022), introduces for the first time historical thinking competencies among the evaluation criteria linked to specific

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competencies in Social Studies. There are 8 specific competencies to develop during the course, each one is related to 2 evaluation criteria.

All the 8 specific competencies are related to democracy or citizenship:

1. Regarding movements in history to develop values like liberty comparing democratic regimes to dictatorships.

2. Related to de different identities in Spain, both cultural, ethnically and nationalistic.

3. The idea of progress, sustainability and social welfare in terms of history, how get that rights.

4. Historical consciousness about social diversity, labor movements, justice, inequalities and ways of life.

5. To analysis the concept of power through primary sources: monarchy, religions, political parties.

6. To make interpretations about the role of Spain in European institutions and the global world. To promote the idea of Europeism, solidarity and international cooperation.

7. To incorporate a gender equality approach in history learning. To value ethically the presence and role of women in history. To understand and fight stereotypes and silences in history. To value feminist movements to get new rights (vote, divorce, equal marriage, LGTBIQ+, etc.)

8. To value cultural heritage as a way to create collective memory and historical consciousness.

At the same time, the contents (in Bachillerato) in Spanish History are divided into 3 different blocks of basic knowledge:

1. Societies in time: Spain's history in contemporary era, from the French Revolution until 21st century.

2. Challenges of the actual world: migrations, climate change, populism, fake news, etc.

3. Civic compromise: democratic consciousness, values, constitution and citizen participation; Multiple identities; Ecosocial behavior: sustainability development goals (UN); Ethical citizenship in the digital world; European values and common programs; Solidarity and cooperation; Security, institutions, rights, liberty and social welfare.; Preservation of cultural heritage and collective memory.

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These kind of epistemological debates in history education in all western countries must turn to new learning and teaching topics, the use of practical methodologies, the introduction of evidence-based learning (Seixas & Morton, 2013) and historical thinking competencies to help the students to face new social and global problems (Monroe et al., 2019).

3.3 Instrument design and investigation procedure

In relation to the investigation instrument, a qualitative table of analysis was created *ad hoc* for the purpose of studying the narratives and descriptions of democratic values and democracy in Spain's history education curriculum.

The instrument was named “Preliminary Data Analysis Template” and was divided into three blocks:

- Block 1 of metadata: document level, title, authors, year, publisher, school age and evidences of use in schools.

- Block 2 Preliminary Analysis (adapted from Wodak, 2015) with two qualitative questions regarding the phrases and descriptions:

1. How are individuals, events or groups of people named and referred to linguistically (that is, what is the language used to describe people, topics and events, in relation to democracy, citizenship and/or forms of government)?

2. What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them (that is, in describing the exemplar topic/s, what is the language used in the sentences around the linguistic description and how is ideology evident in the information selected to be included in the text)? (adapted from Wodak, 2015).

- Block 3 Intermediate analysis with three qualitative questions linked to the ideological underpinnings:

The following critical discourse analysis questions are asked of the text:

1. By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimize the inclusion or exclusion of others?

2. From what perspective or point of view are these labels, attribution and arguments exposed?

3. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they even intensified or are they mitigated (Wodak, 2015).

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Regarding to the research procedure, data collection was based on the theory of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Wodak, 2015) and its application to analyzing policy documents and educational curricula in the field of citizenship and democratic education (Sharp & Parkes, 2017).

Many early CDA projects were centred around studying linguistics, however for a number of decades, the methodology has branched out to include broader studies - however text and the critical understanding of how language is constructed to communicate to its audience - remains as a key factor of discourse analysis. In this study, CDA is applied at a more macro level, as an overarching tool for the variety of sources gathered and analysed, rather than looking at the specific and grammatical functions of language.

Instead, language is analysed within its broader education and social context, specifically in the area of history curriculum. By doing this, the focus of analysis is on the categories and discourses that emerge through the texts explored. To clarify, although specific words, sentences and paragraphs are closely analysed, a critique of the minutiae of grammar rules and linguistic features does not form the approach taken in this study.

This type of procedure is normal in recent studies in the field of Social Sciences Education. Gómez et al. (2019, 2020) used a similar quantitative analysis of different dimensions through the statistical package SPSS v 24, and, on the other hand Moreno-Vera et al. (2021, 2022) developed mixed qualitative and quantitative analysis of data using Aquad 7 as application (Hüber, 2013).

4. Results and discussion

As we already mentioned, the analysis of Spain's History curriculum was focused on the Real Decreto 243/2022 that establish the Baccalaureate studies. The official decree is published by the Spanish Ministry of Education in april 2022.

The total lenght of the document is 325 pages, but dedicated to the course Spain's History there are 10 pages. Its use in the Secondary Schools is mandatory. In this case, the History curriculum is divided into 4 parts: Introduction, Specific competencies, Evaluation criteria and Basic knowledge.

4.1 Results from Spain's Real Decreto 243/2022 in relation to the description of democracy (questions 1 and 2)

Regarding the specific objective 1, to analyze the descriptions and specific phrases of democracy. We find that in the Introduction there are 5 paragraphs and 35 lines dedicated to democracy or democratic education. The descriptions are always neutral talking in general about collectives (students, minorities, regional groups, religions, women, rural world) but without specific descriptions or ethical judgements of them.

“Igualmente, aprender a valorar identidades, las creencias, las ideas y las propias emociones.” (Real Decreto 243/2022, p. 176)

In the Spanish case, is very remarkable the mere mention to “identities” which includes different secessionist regional identities as Basque, Catalanian or Galician, which is a controversial topic for society (López-Facal, 2010).

In the part of specific competencies, there are 8 specific competencies to develop during the course, each one is related to 2 evaluation criteria. Here we find 15 paragraphs and 11 lines talking about democracy.

“Valorar los movimientos y acciones que han promovido las libertades en la historia de España, utilizando términos y conceptos históricos, a través del análisis comparado de los distintos regímenes políticos, para reconocer el legado democrático de la Constitución 1978 como fundamento de nuestra convivencia y garantía de nuestros derechos.” (Real Decreto 243/2022, p. 178)

All the 8 specific competencies are related to democracy or citizenship education. For example, the specific competence 1 regarding social movements in history to develop values like liberty comparing democratic regimes to dictatorships, comparing the Spanish democratic republic (1931-36) and Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975).

Something similar happen in the evaluation criteria epigraph, that is directly linked to the previous specific competencies. In this case, there are 15 evaluation criteria with 15 paragraphs and 69 lines dedicated to democracy. So, all the evaluation criteria are related to democratic values or citizenship in some way.

“Identificar y valorar el papel de la Transición en el establecimiento de la democracia actual y de la Constitución de 1978 como fundamento y garantía de los derechos y libertades de los españoles, a través de la elaboración de juicios propios acerca

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de los principales debates que afectan al sistema constitucional, mediante el dominio de procesos de búsqueda y tratamiento de la información” (Real Decreto 243/2022, p. 182).

Lastly, in regard to the basic knowledge, there are 3 different blocks of contents:

1. Societies in time (Spain's history in contemporary era) with 13 paragraphs and 43 lines.

2. Challenges of the actual world, where we find 6 paragraphs and 18 lines.

3. Civic compromise (this is the most related block of contents to democratic values, participation and citizenship). There are 8 paragraphs and 17 lines, related to:

- Democratic consciousness: values, constitution and citizen participation
- Multiple identities
- Ecosocial behavior: sustainability development goals (UN)
- Ethical citizenship in the digital world
- European values and common programs
- Solidarity and cooperation
- Security, institutions, rights, liberty and social welfare.
- Preservation of cultural heritage and collective memory

4.2 Results from Spain's Real Decreto 243/2022 in relation to the ideological underpinnings of the document (questions 3, 4 and 5)

Following the same structure of the curriculum, we find 4 different epigraphs to analyze: Introduction, specific competencies, evaluation criteria and basic knowledge.

Attending to the ideological underpinnings that we can find behind the descriptions of democracy, citizenship or democratic values, in the Introduction we can find a progressive and social-democracy discourse. Concepts like democratic values, democracy, participation, social justice, gender equality, memory and territorial cohesion appear in this epigraph. It is important to notice, in this sense, the mention to territorial cohesion (instead of the nation's unity what would be closer to a conservative discourse), or the citation of gender equality and social justice, above all in these times when far-right movements are rising in Europe negating LGTBIQ+ rights, wealth redistribution through taxes or sexist violence.

Something similar happen in the specific competencies and the evaluation criteria that are directly linked in the document. In this case, the discourse is closer to the

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progressive/Liberals: developing concepts as citizenship, gender equality, respect for minorities or other cultural, ethnic or religious identities.

In this sense, it is remarkable that the decree mention that the students must develop the competence to understand the idea of progress, environment sustainability and social welfare, in terms of history, and how Spanish people got that rights. There also mentions to historical consciousness about social diversity, labor movements, justice, inequalities and ways of life.

Something interesting, in this case, is the appearance of an Europeist discourse, far from a nationalistic, traditional and conservative view of history.

“Señalar los retos globales y los principales compromisos del Estado Español en la esfera Internacional, así como los que se derivan de su integración en la Unión Europea, a través de procesos de búsqueda, selección y tratamiento de la información, así como del reconocimiento de los valores de la cooperación, la seguridad nacional e internacional, la sostenibilidad, la solidaridad, el europeísmo y el ejercicio de una ciudadanía ética digital” (Real Decreto 243/2022, p. 183).

It is interesting how the Spanish curriculum incorporates a gender equality approach in history learning. Valuing ethically the presence and role of women in history. To make the students understand and fight stereotypes and silences in history. And highlighting feminist movements to get new rights (vote, divorce, equal marriage, LGTBIQ+, etc.) in the history of Spain.

“Constatar el papel relegado de la mujer en la historia analizando fuentes literarias y artísticas, valorando las acciones en favor de la emancipación de la mujer y del movimiento feminista y recuperando figuras individuales y colectivas como protagonistas silenciadas y omitidas por la historia” (Real Decreto 243/2022, p. 183)

That is something linked to the last tendencies of making visible the history of women and including that characters and movements inside the general processes of history (Fernández Valencia, 2008).

To finish this qualitative analysis of the discourses, in the epigraph dedicated to the basic knowledge (conceptual contents) is where we can find a more progressive and social democracy discourse about civic compromise. In this sense, there are specific mentions to ideas as democratic participation, citizenship, multiple identities or eco-social behavior.

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“Conciencia democrática: conocimiento de los principios y normas constitucionales, ejercicio de los valores cívicos y participación ciudadana”. (Real Decreto 243/2022, p. 185).

In this case, the block dedicated to “civic compromise” has as basic knowledge dedicated to democratic consciousness in order to make the students understand the principles of the Spanish Constitution or how to apply civic values and democratic participation.

5. Conclusions

The main target of this investigation was to analyze the discourses and narratives of democracy and democratic values in the History curriculum of Spain.

In this sense, the first specific objective was linked to the descriptions contained in the official Decree (Real Decreto 243/2022). We find direct mentions in all the 4 epigraphs of the document (Introduction, specific competencies, evaluation criteria and basic knowledge).

The discourse is, in general, neutral avoiding to make judgements about the individuals or collectives cited. In this case, we find mentions to groups as students, minorities, regional groups, religions, women or people living in the rural world. It is interesting the citation of regional groups taking in account the political issues between the Spanish state and secessionists movements in Catalonia, Basque Country or Galicia (López-Facal, 2010). Although, they are not directly mentioned, the mere citation of these identities is a clear signal of a discourse that is line with the principles of history education recommended by the Council of Europe (2017).

Attending to the specific objective 2, about analyzing the ideological underpinnings that are behind the narratives in the curriculum. It is remarkable that the descriptions tend to be closer to a progressive discourse linked to social-democracy and liberal movements.

In this sense, for example, it is interesting the way that the curriculum includes a gender equality approach to learn history (Fernández Valencia, 2008). There are direct mentions to the processes of gaining liberty and individual rights (vote, divorce, abortion, equal marriage, etc.) for women. That is something very far from other political ideologies in Spain like the conservatives which still represent the traditional national-catholicism. Besides, it is important to remark that type of discourse very far from the

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populist extreme right parties that are rising in Europe negating sexist violence or LGTBIQ+ rights.

In short, the analysis of Spanish history curriculum shows an important presence of concepts linked to democracy and citizenship (Ammert et al., 2022). Even, there is a complete block of contents (basic knowledge) dedicated to civic compromise where we can find mentions to solidarity, rights, equality, social justice, europeism, collaboration, sustainability or eco-social behavior.

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