

DO THE SPANISH LOMCE CURRICULA ON SECONDARY EDUCATION IMPROVE THE PRECEDING EDUCATIVE LAWS WITH RESPECT TO LANDSCAPE TEACHING?

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INTRODUCTION

The European Landscape Convention (ELC, henceforth) was held in Florence in 2000 in response to the increasing concern for landscapes loss and the maintenance of the natural and cultural European heritage. The Convention highlighted the importance to foster landscape awareness and education among the public (Council of Europe, 2000).

In order to address its educational objectives, the ELC invited to carry out courses on landscape, study specifically addressed to each student grade (Chapter 2, Article 6c). Although a wide range of educational activities on landscapes may be appropriate and welcome, they would probably be more efficient when implemented after a previous teaching on landscape fundamentals. This basic landscape education should follow some important guidelines, as those presented in the “5th Council of Europe Conference on the European Landscape Convention” (Council of Europe, 2009, pp. 75-84) or the ones suggested by Jaume Busquets (2011, pp. 75-84). The most important guidelines are summarized below:

- Landscape is both a territorial and social reality because it results from the interaction between humans and any given piece of land. It is part of both the natural and cultural heritage of a region and it holds interlaced cultural, historical and ecological values.
- Landscape teaching has to address the attention to all types of landscapes, encompassing areas of high quality and outstanding beauty, as well as *degraded* and *everyday* landscapes (geographically proximate to the students).

- The study of landscape should be interdisciplinary and adopt a holistic approach that combines reason and sensitivity. It should also be carried out *in situ*, in direct contact with the landscape under study. Many didactic resources, like the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), maps, diagrams, photographs, Geographic Information Systems, etc. should as well support it.

The Spanish National Curriculum¹ sets up the minimum contents to address within each grade and subject during the Primary and Secondary Education periods. This document provides also a basis for the further development of the regional curricular proposals (Regional Curricula). As an intended result, all the Spanish students should learn and share eventually a common basis of knowledge, yet diversified within each Spanish region and adapted to it. Thus, the National Curriculum should ensure, at least in theory, an appropriate landscape teaching during the compulsory education period.

OBJECTIVES

This research studies the education on landscape implemented through the official Spanish Secondary Education context. Firstly, it analyzes one of the most significant landscape educational initiatives known in Spanish education—advanced and implemented a century ago by the “Institución Libre de Enseñanza” (1876-1936)—, together with the Spanish legislation on education passed during the last 50 years. Secondly, it compares the references to landscape contained within the “LOMCE” National Curriculum with the Regional proposals stemming from it.

METHODOLOGY

To analyze the landscape teaching proposal developed by the “Institución Libre de Enseñanza”, some selected monographs and papers regarding this matter were compiled and examined (for example, Ortega, 1986, 2001; Porto, 2012).

The National and Regional curricula analyzed are available on the websites of the respective Spanish and Regional Official Bulletins. They collect and publicize the National Curricula of all the laws on education passed from the “Ley General de Educación” (1970) to the “LOMCE” (current law) and the Regional Curricula stemming from this last law.

¹ In Spanish, it is named “Diseño Curricular Base” (DCB).

To extract the complete contents on landscape across all the National Curricula of the educational laws passed during the last 50 years, the Spanish word for “landscape” (“paisaje”) was looked up. Once localized and gathered, this information was analyzed and compared. Complementarily, the number of landscape mentions across each of the “LOMCE” National and Regional Curricula was registered.

Finally, “identification tables” –that show the presence or absence of specific landscape contents in each of the analyzed curricula– and “bar graphics” –that present the frequency of occurrence of landscape contents in the “LOMCE” National and Regional Curricula graphically– summarized the landscape information previously compiled.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions obtained refer to the five following issues.

Regarding the evolution of landscape teaching in Spain from the “Institución Libre de Enseñanza” to the LOMCE...

The old model of landscape teaching developed by the “Institución Libre de Enseñanza” (“ILE”, forward) is surprisingly the one that currently better adjusts to the guidelines of the European Landscape Convention. The holistic conception of landscape of the “ILE” and its experiential learning methods (*in situ* learning), together with the confluence of the scientific, aesthetic and ethic views when addressing the landscape study, make the Institution become a visionary and valuable early referent regarding the teaching on landscape in Spain.

With regard to the evolution of landscape teaching in formal educative contexts (Secondary official curricula) during the last 50 years, the analysis of the National Curricula points out that the study of landscape has become apparently more frequent over the years. But this does not necessarily imply unfortunately an improvement in the quality of landscape contents contained in these documents. In fact, along this period, the very of landscape has become poorer. On the other hand, the National Curricula do not encourage or even mention explicitly the need for experiential learning, in direct contact with the landscape. Instead, it fosters the use of images or photographs.

Accordingly, it seems that there was not a deep enough reflection regarding curricular contents on landscape during the education system reform periods. The recent change in educational laws (from “LOE” to “LOMCE”) missed thus an excellent opportunity to foster a landscape teaching better adjusted to the guidelines of the European Landscape Convention.

Regarding the planning of landscape study in the “LOMCE” context...

The landscape contents are generally addressed and studied explicitly during the 1st and 3rd year of Secondary Education. They are addressed from three complementary subjects: Biology and Geology, Geography and History, and Arts.

Geography and History is a compulsory subject taught over the whole Secondary Education (4 years). Therefore, it is the only one allowing a certain continuity in the study of landscape along this period. Although this is a positive fact, it is still insufficient because landscape teaching also demands to be interdisciplinary.

Regarding the academic treatment of landscape in the “LOMCE” curricula...

In general, the contents of the “LOMCE” curricula focus on humanised landscapes, those that result from the economic activity of humans. It is necessary to address these contents, but in isolation, they might provide a poor vision of the complex reality and value of landscapes, reducing them somehow to resource repositories or places for human societies settlement. Some complementary core contents on landscapes – for example the necessity to value their diversity and richness, or the consideration of landscape as heritage– only appear in a few curricula (Andalusia, Canary Islands, Catalonia and Community of Valencia). They should instead be present as well in the National Curriculum because of their relevance.

Regarding the concern about the study of landscape of the different Spanish regions...

The Canary Islands curriculum is the one that presents a higher number of discrete contents or references to landscape (13), followed closely by the curriculum of the Community of Valencia (12), while the Basque Country curriculum only includes 3 discrete contents and references.

The Canary Islands curriculum stands out as well because four different subjects address the study of landscapes: the three traditional ones (Biology and Geology, Geography and History, and Arts) and History and Geography of Canary Islands². On the contrary, the Catalanian curriculum explicitly address the study of landscape from one sole subject: Geography and History.

As the above reasons reveal, the concern about the study of landscape is significantly different in each Spanish region. Complementarily, the Regional Curricula do not incorporate the extensive and respective regional expertise acquired on landscapes through the own regional landscape management, planning, or protection initiatives and

² It is a subject exclusive of the Canary Islands curriculum.

experiences. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Catalonia, one of the regions that has made of late more progress in the achievement of the European Landscape Convention educational objectives... tough not through the educative regional curriculum. Actually, the analysis of the Catalonian curriculum reveals a disconnection between those agencies and professionals who have a valuable experience in education and those who have a valuable one in landscape management, planning and protection.

Regarding the minimum contents of landscape that the National Curriculum should include and guarantee...

The National Curriculum might become a very useful and indispensable tool to promote a minimum education on landscape, common to all Spanish students. Consequently, its landscape contents should be more complete, correct and consistent with the European Landscape Convention guidelines.

Landscape reflects humans' relationship with our environment. Both the positive and the negative aspects of this relationship are important to address, promote and eventually attain a respectful and responsible behavior of humans towards both nature and society within and across the land. Thus, landscape education may and should contribute to the overall moral education and thus favor the adoption of a more sustainable development model and way of living.

Finally, landscape study, owing to its inherent complexity, requires an interdisciplinary approach, as well as the use of different, complementary educational resources (ICTs, photographs, maps, descriptions, literary texts, etc.) and methodologies. The direct perception of landscape, meaning field work, is also essential. Landscape study presents thus an opportunity to develop an experiential, ethical and emotional interdisciplinary model of integrated education, just like the one promoted by the "Institución Libre de Enseñanza" in the late 19th century. Landscape should be learned about, but also provide a best environment to favor moral learnings transcending the materiality of landscapes themselves.