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# CHEAP, SUITABLE, PROMISING: MONITORIAL SCHOOLING AND THE CHALLENGE OF MASS EDUCATION IN EARLY LIBERAL SPAIN (1808–1823)

*Económico, adecuado, prometedor: la enseñanza mutua y el desafío de la escolarización de masas en la España del liberalismo temprano (1808–1823)*

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**INTRODUCTION.** The problem of establishing a modern inclusive system of education in Spain was not only one of large structures, but also one related to day-to-day operations in schools including didactics and methods. If liberals in Spain wanted to integrate a large section of the Spanish population into a school system, that system had to be conceived of as a mass system with an unprecedented reach within the schooling tradition of that country. In a context of financial scarcity, a rejection of pedagogical traditions, and a strong claim for more efficient techniques, the monitorial system of education from England became a new panacea for Spain. **METHOD.** With particular attention to the historiography of the reception of foreign educational models, this contribution presents historical evidence about this particular constellation of emergence of a national system of education in Spain. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.** By analysing a sample of printed and archival historical sources concerning the early reception of this system of teaching up until 1823, this contribution shows the inescapable character monitorial instruction acquired in these years and points at the ideological factors that led to this outcome. It shows that at the very beginning of the 'national' system of education, foreign elements were constitutive of the history of Spanish school system.

**Key words:** *Elementary teaching, Monitorial system of education, Liberalism, Reception, Classroom organization.*

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## Modern educational systems and instructional practices

Modern educational systems are essentially inclusive systems. Their foundation rests on the

premise that children, increasingly also women, need to experience institutional schooling for a certain period of time in order to become full members of society. This basic inclusion of entire generations in institutional settings

does not mean that educational equality is a constitutive objective of modern educational systems. In the view of sociology, the inclusion educational systems perform is not oriented towards values—as in the case of the new discussion regarding “inclusion” for disabled children in regular schools. Inclusion refers rather to the mechanism of enabling much needed common experiences in the context of highly differentiated societies (Luhmann, 2002; Meyer & Ramírez, 2000).

When European and North American societies began to advance educational programmes built around this idea of a disciplining and acculturating form of inclusion for the whole younger population at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an urgent question which arose was how to achieve such ambitious purposes with the existing organizational and instructional means. The enormous task of schooling all had consequences, in the long run, for finances, bureaucracy, families, teachers, school organization, and teaching methods. The demands for transformation that schooling in a comprehensive educational system implied also became urgent questions when Spanish liberals wrote the educational paragraphs of the Cádiz Constitution. Initially “inoffensive” sentences referring to a future with literate citizens, an obligation to establish elementary schools in all villages, parliamentary regulation of the envisioned educational system, and so on, had to have enormous consequences on governance, institutional, and instructional practices.

This contribution deals with the irruption of the English system of mutual teaching, also known as the monitorial system of education, in Spain, as one major attempt at processing the new challenge of establishing a national system of education. Independently of its actual implementation, monitorial schooling—a system conceived in order to deliver basic instruction to a large number of children at a low cost and high level of efficiency—became the panacea capable of responding to the self-defined challenge of

establishing an inclusive modern educational system. In the first section, I will describe how the quest for a cheap, suitable and efficient system of elementary instruction had been circulating in Spain even before the disruption of the old political order in 1808 began. I will then briefly sketch the elites’ first positive reception of this system of instruction from 1815 onwards, and, in a third section, the radicalization of these possibilities during the heyday of transformative liberalism up until 1823. I will advance the thesis that the monitorial system of education simultaneously addressed different problems of the Spanish educational institutions as perceived by contemporary actors. Due to this situation and additionally fuelled by the imperative of advancing a true modern educational system—despite all its liberal shortcomings this primarily meant following a defined set of general norms—monitorial schooling, a “foreign” system of instruction, became inescapable just when a “national” system of education was being established.

### **The sense of a “necessary” reform: the Spanish Enlightenment grappling with Spanish educational traditions**

Long before an inclusive system of schooling became the flagship of early liberal forces, Spanish enlightened circles had critically scrutinized the inherited structures of elementary schooling. The main features of elementary schools, structures of schooling provision, the lack of a modernizing agent in this field and even the pedagogical traditions were accused of defective education and insufficient disciplining (García Hurtado, 2005). Influential actors such as Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811) published invectives against the current state of affairs and reclaimed modernizing “plans” for schooling (Cabarrús, 1808; Jovellanos, 1811/1831; Morales, 1789). They were part of a broader offensive against the established powers in urban elementary schooling—the schoolteachers organized in guilds and their ties to the municipal powers. Critics viewed

these teachers as inefficient and unimaginative, obsessed merely with the details of calligraphic mastery. In fact, the focus of urban teachers on teaching writing, practiced in almost artisanal one-to-one interactions, to the detriment of school discipline problems and teaching reading persisted, and provided an opportunity for explicit alternatives (Ávila Fernández & Corts Giner, 1986; Ruiz Berrio, 2004).

One of the main actors of this intended change was the court itself, where many projects experienced a new form of patronage. It was not only problems related to morals, religion and social discipline which became an issue for the enlightened elites in Madrid. Pedagogical questions related to the day-to-day operations of schools, until then a largely neglected field in the reform projects of the elites, became matters of interest. The well-known attempts at modernizing elementary teaching in the schools by re-organizing the traditional guilds of the schoolteachers in Madrid and in the main towns were a central part of this reform strategy. The struggles for pedagogic ascendancy that two groups of teachers and patrons fought in Madrid between 1780 and 1805 are a good case in point. Under the protection of prominent court officials, a small group of schoolteachers under the leadership of the diplomat Joseph Anduaga y Garimberti (1751-1822) proposed an organization of elementary classrooms capable of dealing with a larger number of children and proposed new methods for teaching, particularly teaching writing, then considered the most prestigious form of teaching (Anduaga y Garimberti, 1781, 1790). The disputes over the new proposals even reached the daily press and remained a contested issue until the two groups of schoolteachers conceded to reunite into one organization in 1803 (Caruso, 2010b; Pereyra, 1988).

While this concerted effort to renew elementary pedagogy took the centre-stage of educational discussion for a long time, similar attempts to organize a suitable form of mass schooling at

a low cost became a recurring issue in many cities after the expulsion of the Jesuits. For instance, the student Francisco Salas launched an experiment in teaching reading in Zaragoza in 1781 that focused strongly on the organization of large classes. In his "Diary of the method", the issue of efficiently teaching reading was closely related to the question of managing large classes by a combination of group instruction and mutual instruction among students (Salas, 1997). A lawyer who would remain active in the field of education well until the 1830s, Domingo Bacas Rojo, initiated similar experiments in Medina del Rioseco from 1805 onwards. His experiments explicitly addressed the deficient efficacy of traditional teaching. He called the usual methods "barbarian", producing only "dissonant cries" in the classroom and disorder. He also proposed modes of classifying children and putting some of them to work as helpers in the classroom. This would also be a central mechanism in rendering schooling compatible with the disciplining possibilities of teaching large groups (Bacas Roxo, 1820: 40-46). In sum, in many Spanish towns the same uneasiness with inherited practice resulted in local experiments that were mostly in line with the official preferences in Madrid: large groups had to be efficiently schooled and, for this purpose, a stronger emphasis on teaching reading had to be paramount (for the town of Lorca: Gil Castroverde, 1997). Even the local *sociedades económicas* in many cities, although still close to traditional pedagogic models, increasingly looked for alternative efficient models of organizing mass teaching (Ferraz Lorenzo & Fuentes Pérez, 2002).

The search for alternatives to the urban schools organized by guild schoolteachers produced an apparent alternative that at the time was particularly difficult to legitimate. Both the Jesuits and their counterparts and competitors in the field of elementary education, the Piarists, offered models for schooling large groups. They did so with combinations of group and mutual teaching and, in the case of the Piarist order, they

developed wall charters in these decades that could be used simultaneously by whole groups of children (Infantes, 2004; Sánchez Giménez, 1979; Scío, 1780). Since Jesuit techniques were deemed politically inconvenient at that time, but also due to the fact that enlightened circles wanted to extend a disciplinary and more efficient form of schooling to a degree unknown to these teaching congregations, it was not possible to simply adopt these traditional modes of organizing massive scenes of teaching. Such ambitious projects had to deal with the exceptionally scarce financial resources of the time, a fact that limited all grandiloquent drafts for reform. This aspect of school reform, certainly a chronic problem (García Hurtado, 2005: 69-72), became evident again when the elites enthusiastically embraced the inauguration of the first Pestalozzian school in Madrid (Sureda García, 1982). Beyond all the frenzy related to the new pedagogy, it was certainly not very promising to adopt such an intensive and patient mode of teaching that catered to small elite groups. In this sense, after three decades of reforming elementary schools in Spain, the search for a cheap, suitable and promising system of mass teaching was still yielding poor results.

### **Embracing the promise: the monitorial system as a comprehensive solution for the extension of schooling**

The situation of elementary schooling worsened in many aspects after 1808. The instability of the political situation, the War of Independence, and quarrels over the new forms of government certainly led to an unprecedented number of reform proposals and projects. Yet these same contexts weakened existing schools and determined the definitive bankruptcy of the state some years later, adding a financial breakdown to the political one (Fontana, 2002). However, it was also in this context that the quest for a cheap, suitable and promising model of teaching the masses became urgent.

The inclusion of a brief chapter on education in the Cádiz Constitution shows the highly political significance of the issue. Furthermore, the first parliamentary drafts for a comprehensive, but still not universal, system of education confirmed that schools had become a central arena in which the new order of things had to take effect. The idea that schooling the people in order to re-educate it in the spirit of new institutions was of utmost importance was widespread. But even the most conservative and reactionary forces that controlled the political situation after 1814 now had to admit that a return to the “good” old order had to be accompanied by a more intensive effort regarding schooling, in order to counteract the political and social innovations of the time.

Although Spanish liberals did not intend to establish a centralized system of education and instead preferred a design in which local, regional governments and civil society had to play a certain role in the organization of mass schooling, they still pursued the idea that centralization should be the rule for general regulations carried out by regional, local, and civic actors. Among these general rules, pedagogical models including the organization of teaching and teaching methods were at the forefront and represented a will to rationalize pedagogical practices. This issue was not only addressed by the first formulations of a liberal educational policy by Jovellanos (Jovellanos, 1811), or the liberal draft for a general regulation of primary schools from 1822 (Proyecto de reglamento, 1822), but the first general regulations for schools issued in 1825, in the middle of the political restorative era, also focused heavily on day-to-day operations in schools (Plan y reglamento, 1825). Whereas other European countries such as France and Prussia only regulated this field towards the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, early drafts for a national inclusive school system in Spain considered this issue in particular.

Against this background, it is not surprising that the most sensationalist news circulated in Spain

when the monitorial system of education, originally an English proposal for efficient, quick, and cheap elementary instruction for groups of hundreds of children, began to spread through France after 1815: "From Saint Petersburg to the Pyrenees, the propagation of these schools is being projected and enacted; these are schools in which children receive a greater amount of instruction in a shorter time" (Suiza, 1817: 107-108). The semi-official monthly *El Mercurio de España* accompanied these developments and registered how other enlightened but by no means liberal governments such as Denmark and Sweden were adopting the new device. Yet independent newspapers closely related to the defeated liberal forces were also second to none in celebrating the new system of teaching. The *Crónica científica y literaria*, for instance, prophesied that "in a short time the Northern countries in Europe will have banned all other forms of elementary teaching" (Educación, 1817: 1). The more liberal forces voicing the new mode of schooling in particular buttressed its relations to a broader project of modernization. First, the irruption of the new system was an opportunity to banish "the hurdles, the errors and the routines that obstruct the spread of elementary education among us" (Educación, 1817: 2). Second, and even more significantly, the new form of mutual schooling became a centrepiece in the strategy of advancing a modern society, since "only the enemies of all advancement, the detractors of vaccine, of the lightning rod, of lithography, of jury trial, those who believe that there is no human happiness outside of the circle of ideas of the 13<sup>th</sup> century have openly rejected the mutual teaching as put into practice by the rightly highly-praised Mr. Lancaster" (Educación pública, 1817: 7-8). It is evident that inflated expectations and exaggerations when depicting the results became a central element of this first wave of enthusiastic reception.

While the system of mutual instruction conducted by monitors was credited with considerable efficacy and a low-cost service, the fact that it appeared to be suitable to Spanish conditions

was partly due to the fact that the main idea of using children to teach other children had become a common element of almost all modernizing attempts of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Even those actors that rejected the modernization of teaching writing had no problems with the general adoption of monitorial teaching as an organizational device. A good example is the Duque of Híjar, the president of the *sociedad económica* in Madrid. He presented this society with a complete plan of education in 1817 in which he showed no sympathy for modern concepts of education and repeatedly evoked the merits of the Spanish traditions (Híjar, 1817). Yet, at the same time, he was one of the founding members of the group of men coming from the upper nobility that attempted to introduce the system to Spain. The main idea of the system, children teaching children, was not alien to many of these men, and it was not considered a rupture with inherited practices.

All relevant forces in the field of changing schooling, reforming nobles and urban enlightened professionals, agreed on the merits of this system as a suitable reform option for Spain. The first results of this consensus were the publication of some manuals describing the operations of the system, the organization of the first male and female normal schools in Madrid, and the early establishment of the monitorial school in Cádiz in 1818 (Caruso, 2010a: 264-277). When Ramón Chimioni, a member of the *sociedad económica* in Madrid, visited the local male normal school, he confirmed the suitability of this system of teaching as being the core of a forthcoming uplifting of all Spanish schools: "Considering this, I am of the opinion that this method by Lancaster and the school established in this city along the lines of his model are highly useful; it will be very convenient for this school to continue to operate in order to instruct the persons who can propagate it in the rest of the country" (Chimioni, 1818: no pages). Again, Chimioni mentioned one significant element of the monitorial system of education in his report that reinforced the question of suitability. In

view of the fact that “the method followed in these schools brings the children to see and copy letters from the very beginning”, Chimioni considered “it is the most suitable that we can conceive” (Chimioni, 1818: no pages). One of the strongest assets of the new system in Spain was its proposal of simultaneously teaching reading and writing from the very beginning. Sensational news concerning the almost miraculous powers of the system of instruction very often focused on the ability to write, until then a capacity acquired only after some years of patient schooling and which was now often being achieved in only a few weeks. Even the crypto-liberal *Crónica científica y literaria* judged the quality of the new school on the basis of progress made in writing (Educación, 1819). Even when the monitorial system unequivocally represented aspects associated with “Englishness”, it proved highly compatible with traditional features of Spanish elementary schooling.

Although urban teachers, particularly in Madrid, were adamant in their rejection of the “foreign” system that menaced their reclaimed expertise in the all-important object of teaching writing (Naharro, 1818), the irresistible attraction of the new system of teaching as a simultaneous solution for pedagogical, financial and tactical problems in the extension of schooling worked. For instance, the lawyer Bacas Roxo in Medina del Rioseco, who had worked on new organizational and didactic models for elementary classrooms focusing on teaching reading, also associated his own proposals with the prestige of the new imported device. He insinuated, quoting one of the strongest slogans of propaganda in favour of the monitorial system, that his proposals based on the use of children as little helpers made it possible to teach up to one thousand of them in one school (Bacas Roxo, 1820: 46). And even the still prestigious Piarists tried to legitimate their elementary teaching as being a system of mutual teaching “without exaggeration” (*Exposición que hace a las Cortes el Vicario General*, 1820: 27). We do know that conservative circles eschewed the

new proposals and that the Catholic Church also mistrusted the “Protestant” origins of the system (Caruso, 2010a: 303), but the attraction of monitorial schooling seemed to be inescapable at the very beginning, and this led to a situation in which no strong and articulated opposition to the monitorial system existed among the elites.

### **Radicalizing the promise: distinct liberal acceptance of monitorial schooling**

The political situation changed again in 1820. With the uprising led by Riego, the moribund monarchy was given a chance to survive, now under the rules established by the Cádiz Constitution. Conflict between more moderate and more radicalized branches of liberalism determined the years up until 1823, and revealed the huge differences between them. In this new setting, the political potential of monitorial schooling came to be fully displayed. The radical-liberal daily *El Constitucional* was unambiguous about it: “The famous Jean Baptiste Say wrote to a Spanish *sociedad económica* a few years ago: If people could only read, the other things will come. Now, another prestigious philosopher writes: spread the system of mutual teaching, and this will be the end of the aristocracy” (*El Constitucional*, 1820: 6). Considering these hopes, it is not surprising that many liberal groups established monitorial schools in some cities (Benito Pascual, 1994; Fernández Bulete, 2001). This occurred without any central supervision and represented a strong discontinuity with the path of centralized school reform focused on pedagogy and methods that had prevailed since the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Caruso, 2007a).

Yet another aspect of monitorial schooling became one of the most crucial political issues of the time. The Cádiz Constitution enfranchised all adult males. This had been a truly radical decision for the time and even some liberals began to



doubt the supposed beneficial results of this constitutional provision (Morange, 2006). However, the re-establishment of the Cádiz Constitution in 1820 also marked the educational agenda, due to an additional rule. All illiterate males would lose their right to vote in 1830, a provision aimed at defining the educated citizen as the virtuous one without *ipso facto* disenfranchising the great majority of the population. Ten years, liberals knew, were not a long period of time in education. There was an evident demand for a quick device for spreading literacy and thereby securing political rights, and the monitorial system of education definitely attracted the attention of the most progressive circles of liberalism. In view of this situation, liberal complaints about the sluggish advancement of elementary schooling were not exaggerated (*Reflexiones políticas*, 1821: 34). The link between the promises of monitorial teaching and the political imperatives of the time became a recurrent theme in liberal circles. For instance, the schoolteachers Ramón and Manuel Alaman in Huesca legitimated their own version of monitorial instruction in 1820, by invoking the constitutional provision on literacy (Alaman & Alaman, 1820/2009).

This constellation gave some impulse to efforts for schooling adults. Adults, particularly those organized in the liberal *milicias*, were already voters, and the possibility that this crucial constituency could be disenfranchised after 1830 alarmed the liberals (Cepeda Gómez, 1990). Repeatedly, they attempted to spread literacy by establishing schools of mutual instruction in the military regiments. As early as 1820, the King ordered a commission to be established for this purpose. Yet an impatient parliament ordered the establishment of such schools in all regiments in June 1821. One year later, due to the inactivity of the government, it adopted more precise regulations.

Beyond these initiatives that were located outside of the modern educational system as defined in the different drafts for a comprehensive law of education, the constitutional provision affected

the course of school policies as well. When parliament adopted general regulations for the educational system in 1821, the political motivation of securing franchises for the masses was explicitly referred to as being a central argument for the inclusion of the monitorial system in the document (*Colección de los decretos y órdenes*, 1821: 363). The next step, the concretization of these general regulations in rules issued by the central bureau for educational affairs, shows the ambivalences of this process. In the famous exposition that this bureau sent to parliament in 1822 with a complete regulation for all elementary schools, the authors confirmed the adoption of the monitorial system of mutual teaching although they saw in it some shortcomings. Yet the bureau strongly recommended the “Lancaster method for all things related to the particular organization of each school, the economy of time and the inner order of the school” (*Exposición a las Cortes*, 1822: 7).

Nonetheless, this document attempted to erase the English origins of the new system and described it as being the “old Spanish classification system”, a reference to the reform experiments from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was a clear offer to the urban teachers, above all the resilient schoolteachers in Madrid, so that they might accept the system of mutual teaching as being their “own”. This was indeed a crucial point. In these years, the first articulated and explicit criticisms against the monitorial system were published, and they came from the milieu of the schoolteachers. They discussed the supposed efficacy of this organization of crowded classrooms and manifested a strong preoccupation with the loss of teaching autonomy. In particular, these authors strongly rejected one of the most popular arguments for the introduction of monitorial schooling, the cheap delivery of mass instruction. One of them, José Díaz Manzanares, clearly asserted that the advocates of the English system “cannot deny that Lancaster did not make his calculations for Spain” (Díaz Manzanares, 1821: 26). The schoolteachers in Madrid were probably right:

the expected savings from using the monitorial system were, if at all, savings in the long run. The monitorial schools required large rooms, standardized furniture and wall charts as well as other materials such as signals, a raised desk for the teacher, and a clock, certainly luxury products at that time (Vallejo, 1825: 9). At least, the scant research results concerning this issue show that the early investment in this kind of school was higher than the operation of other types of schools.

Regardless of these critical voices, the attractiveness of monitorial schooling remained. The challenge of building a national and comprehensive system of education with a broad basis at the elementary level fuelled the fantasies attached to these big schools, that seemed to deliver a quick, ordered, and sufficient level of instruction to an unprecedented number of children. The attraction this model of schooling exerted upon its contemporaries led to the main local alternative reform models being definitively adapted to the main idea of monitorial schooling. The aforementioned association of Piarist teaching with these devices was not the only proof of this trend. Bacas Roxo (1822) also presented his proposals in Madrid under the banner of “mutual teaching”, and the mathematician José Mariano Vallejo (1779-1846) combined “our excellent teaching methods” with the “discoveries made in recent times in the schools of mutual teaching in many countries” (Vallejo, 1825: 7-8).

The monitorial system of education remained one of the most influential references in educational discussions for three decades (for Madrid: Caruso, 2007b). This influential position in the field of educational reform alternatives might be in sharp contrast to its poor realization and the low number of schools actually operating with it (quantitative data after 1850 in: Caruso, 2010a: 345). However, in the first years of its reception in Spain, it was more than “influential”: It was rather the only plausible alternative for spreading schooling in

a short time and at a low cost. Contemporaries saw in its routines a genuine form of disciplining and a virtuous quest for competition and emulation. Only the strong identification of monitorial schooling with liberal efforts between 1820 and 1823 discredited the system in the eyes of the modernizer royalist fraction and consistently alienated any early Catholic support. For a few years, this system of mutual teaching seemed to monopolize the meaning of what was modern and rational in the field of mass education.

### **Conclusion: the challenge of large institutional designs to day-to-day operations**

Following the course of events presented above, the frenzy around the monitorial system in the first years of its reception in Spain certainly needs an explanation. The Spanish pedagogical tradition had presented options for the management of large groups of children. Not only Jesuit colleges, which were certainly not completely discredited or forgotten, but also models catered to elementary schooling, such as those of the Piarists, the reformist teachers in Madrid, and the efforts of individual innovators in provincial towns presented models of ordered instruction for a greater number of pupils. Why were these models discarded after 1808? Why could monitorial schooling attract so much attention and positive resonance with the most powerful actors in the Spanish educational scene? The question of enthusiasm provoked by the “promising” method was by no means a matter of “facts”. The conservative and sceptical members of the Council of Castile, then the highest administrative and judicial body in the country, shrewdly posed the question:

“The members do not realize how it has been possible to assert such proofs of its advantages when, on the one hand, the lapse of time in which it has been practised

has been so short and, on the other, these advantages have not adequately been made public..." (Fiscales del Consejo de Castilla, 1819: fol. 24).

Many different hypotheses are worth consideration. The general political rejection of inherited practices and strong anti-Jesuit sentiments are, of course, a plausible explanatory possibility focused on the politics of the time. The powerful position of the supporters of mutual teaching, in sharp contrast with the most humble reformist initiative of some groups of schoolteachers, would address the question of the continuity of cultural hierarchies beyond the transformation of the political scene. The English origins and French adoption of the system would put to the fore the processes of modernization as a result of transfer processes and dynamics of constructing references about the "international". Possibly, all these factors were effective in the production of this enthusiastic reception. I will also briefly advance an additional explanatory possibility, related to the shift of challenges the Cádiz Constitution brought to the political arena.

The problematization of schooling as a disciplining practice had indeed been a recurrent subject during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The quest for spreading schooling certainly required new possibilities of organizing elementary classrooms. However, the adoption of a comprehensive, yet not compulsory, school system in the Cádiz Constitution and in its following reports and regulations displayed an unprecedented challenge for Spanish educationalists. It was more about a systemic transformation of the scene of teaching, and not about the modernization of specific procedures of instruction. The inclusive impulse enacted in the process of adopting the constitution

introduced a fully new logic of regulation for elementary schools. They were now a substantial part of an encompassing ensemble of institutions addressed to at least the majority of the population (including women!). The challenge of building an educational system also suggested the need and convenience of a systematic approach to the scene of teaching. In this sense, the adoption of large institutional designs by no means meant multiplying the existing classroom arrangements and techniques, but rather systematizing it at a higher level. Succinctly, large institutional designs also represent a major challenge to day-to-day operations in instructional work, a fact that historical research on the establishment of modern educational systems has rarely addressed (Archer, 1984; Green, 1990; Ramírez & Boli, 1987, 1994). Complementarily, the availability of such organizational and instructional arrangements with their promising results, their purportedly low costs, and their suitability within the Spanish pedagogic tradition, made the abstract idea of a comprehensive system of education more realistic.

Regardless of the fact that both the systematization of elementary teaching and the imposition of a comprehensive institutional design for an educational system would experience innumerable obstacles well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the terms of discussion were decisively altered after 1812. Even the most restorative forces had to acknowledge this and from 1825 onwards tried to regulate educational institutions in a comprehensive and "modern" way. It is this effect of changing the agenda of educational reform that also rendered the monitorial system inescapable, attractive, and unavoidable, and not only the rejection of local practices, the power of its supporters, or the prestige of its inventors.

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## Resumen

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*Económico, adecuado, prometedor: la enseñanza mutua y el desafío de la escolarización de masas en la España del liberalismo temprano (1808-1823)*

**INTRODUCCIÓN.** El problema del establecimiento de un sistema moderno inclusivo de educación en España no fue solo un problema vinculado a las grandes estructuras, sino también una cuestión que afectaba a las operaciones cotidianas de las escuelas en sus aspectos didácticos y metodológicos. Si los liberales españoles intentaron integrar a una parte importante de la población española en el sistema escolar, este sistema debía ser concebido como un sistema de masas con un alcance inédito dentro de la tradición escolar de ese país. En un contexto marcado por la penuria de las finanzas públicas, el rechazo a las propias tradiciones pedagógicas y el fuerte reclamo de técnicas más eficientes, el sistema de enseñanza mutua de corte inglés se convirtió en una panacea en la España del liberalismo temprano. **MÉTODO.** Con atención específica a la historiografía de la recepción de modelos extranjeros en educación, la presente contribución presenta evidencia histórica sobre esta particular constelación en la emergencia del sistema educativo nacional en España. **RESULTADOS Y DISCUSIÓN.** El artículo muestra el carácter inescapable del sistema de enseñanza mutua a partir de un análisis de fuentes impresas y de archivo sobre su recepción temprana hasta el final del Trienio (1823) y muestra los factores ideológicos vinculados a la popularidad de este método. El artículo afirma que desde el mismísimo comienzo de un sistema “nacional” de educación, la presencia de elementos extranjeros fue constitutiva para la historia del mismo.

**Palabras clave:** Enseñanza elemental, Enseñanza mutua, Liberalismo, Recepción, Organización de la enseñanza.

## Résumé

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*Economique, adéquat, prometteur : l'enseignement mutuel et le défi de la scolarisation des masses dans l'Espagne du premier libéralisme (1808-1823)*

**INTRODUCTION.** Le problème de l'établissement d'un système inclusif et moderne d'éducation dans l'Espagne du XIXe siècle n'a pas été seulement un problème lié aux grandes structures, mais aussi à la question des opérations quotidiennes dans les écoles comme les actions didactiques et les méthodes d'enseignement. Si les premiers libéraux espagnols ont tenté d'intégrer une partie importante de la population dans le système scolaire, ce système devait être conçu comme un système massif sans précédent dans l'histoire scolaire de ce pays. Dans un contexte marqué par les problèmes financiers de l'État, le rejet des propres traditions pédagogiques et la demande de techniques pédagogiques plus efficaces, l'enseignement mutuel anglais devint une panacée dans l'Espagne libérale. **MÉTHODE.** Avec une attention particulière à l'historiographie de la réception de modèles étrangers dans l'enseignement, cette contribution présente une preuve historique sur cette constellation particulière dans l'émergence du système éducatif national en Espagne. **RÉSULTATS ET DISCUSSION.** L'article analyse la position centrale que le modèle d'enseignement mutuel a eu jusqu'à la fin du triennat libéral (1823) en considérant des sources imprimées et manuscrites. L'article prend aussi pour sujet les facteurs idéologiques liés à la popularité de ce modèle d'enseignement élémentaire et montre que dès le début du système "national" pour la scolarisation des nouvelles générations, des éléments étrangers ont été constitutifs de cette histoire.

**Mots clés:** *Enseignement élémentaire, enseignement mutuel, libéralisme, réception, organisation pédagogique.*

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