

Historical-political background of the agreement establishing the Spanish-British integrated curriculum

Antecedentes histórico-políticos del convenio para la implantación del currículo hispano-británico integrado

<https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2023-403-603>

Gonzalo Jover

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6373-4111>

Universidad Complutense

Diana Paola Ponce

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6765-9454>

Universidad Complutense

Rosa González-García

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4904-7822>

Independent Researcher

Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this paper is to analyse the key political aspects that led to the signing of the collaboration agreement in 1996 for the development of an integrated curriculum between the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council. **Methodology:** An exhaustive historical approximation will be conducted throughout the 20th century. The latter period leading to the agreement has been hardly studied, compelling us to conduct archive searches in Spain and the United Kingdom. **Results:** The analysis allows the identification of five factors that historically converged in the path towards the agreement: the strategic function of the Council in maintaining British influence in Spain during a period in which official relations were constrained by the dictatorship; the fundamental role that the British Council School played within the structure of the British Council in Spain; the limited importance attributed throughout decades to the teaching of foreign languages in the education system; the

political evolution of the system since its international opening during the 1960s and the constitutional period; and the personal endeavours of certain key players. Discussion: For a long time, the possibility of bilingual education in English and Spanish was reserved to the privileged classes. Nevertheless, the agreement provided opportunities to those who, if it wasn't for these programs, would have never been able to access bilingual education. To address the political instrumentalisation of bilingual education, nowadays further research is needed to assess whether it is the appropriate moment to bring the bilingual system to all the schools and under what conditions.

Keywords: British Council, bilingual education, educational policy, international relations, cultural diplomacy, English teachers.

Resumen

Introducción: el objetivo de este trabajo es analizar las claves políticas que llevaron a la celebración, en 1996, del convenio de colaboración entre el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia español y el *British Council*, para el desarrollo del currículo integrado. Metodología: seguiremos una aproximación histórica de amplio recorrido a lo largo del siglo XX. Especialmente, la fase postrera de esta historia ha sido apenas estudiada, lo que ha obligado a la búsqueda en diversos archivos en España y en el Reino Unido. Resultados: el análisis permite identificar cinco factores que confluyeron históricamente en el camino hacia el convenio: la función estratégica del Consejo en el mantenimiento de la influencia británica en España, en una época en la que las relaciones oficiales estaban limitadas por la dictadura; el papel fundamental que en la estructura del *British Institute* español jugó la *British Council School*; la escasa importancia que durante largas décadas se dio a la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras en el sistema educativo; la evolución política del sistema desde la apertura internacional de los años sesenta y en la época constitucional; y los empeños personales de algunos personajes clave. Discusión: durante mucho tiempo, la posibilidad de una enseñanza bilingüe español-inglés estuvo reservada a las clases privilegiadas. El convenio abrió esta posibilidad a quienes, de no ser por estos programas, no habrían tenido nunca la oportunidad de acceder a la misma. Frente al uso político instrumental que a veces se hace de esta enseñanza, se precisa hoy más investigación que permita plantearse si ha llegado la hora de llevarla a todas las escuelas y en qué condiciones.

Palabras clave: Consejo Británico, educación bilingüe, política educativa, relaciones internacionales, diplomacia cultural, profesores de inglés.

Introduction

On February 1, 1996, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia*, henceforth, MEC) and the British Council (henceforth, BC) signed a collaboration agreement for the development of the integrated Spanish-British curriculum. The agreement entailed the implementation of a program that allowed for the early introduction of public schoolchildren, from the age of three, to bilingual education in Spanish and English. This model would be delivered through an integrated curriculum based on the national curriculum of Spain, England and Wales. The objective was that at the end of compulsory education students would be able to obtain qualifications in both systems and have an appropriate command of both languages.

In 2021, the bilingual program MEC-BC celebrated its 25th anniversary. Throughout these years, the program's development has not been exempt from controversy. For instance, not long ago, one could read in a newspaper headline: "Bilingual education: Education or politics? Those responsible for education from some of the national media outlets are mistaken. They should know that bilingual education has no ideology" (Gisbert, 2021). The headline is indeed correct in exposing the instrumentalisation to which education is often subjected within the context of political struggle. Nevertheless, even when this instrumentalisation may be abhorrent, one should not erroneously deny the intrinsically political dimension of education as it refers to ways of life and values, converting educational environments into civic spaces (Jover, López, & Quiroga, 2011).

The antidote against the political instrumentalisation of education cannot lie at the core of denying its intrinsically political nature. On the contrary, it is necessary to place the focus on its relevance, to investigate the political elements behind the educational proposals. This is what we intend to do in this analysis. Our objective is to analyse through a historical approach, covering much of the 20th century, the political background that led to the signing of the 1996 agreement. We will walk through the macropolitics of international relations, cultural diplomacy and educational plans and the micropolitics of the Administration's intricacies, diplomatic offices and school organisation.

Some general aspects of this history or specific aspects of the BC's activities in Spain during certain periods have been addressed in studies such as those of Taylor (1978), Donaldson (1984), Berdah (1998),

Corse (2013), Martín García (2012), Martín García and Rodríguez Jiménez (2013 and 2015), and Pérez de Arcos (2021a and 2021b), among others. However, a comprehensive, *longue durée*, approach was missing, such as the one addressed in this research that directly focuses on unravelling the historical factors that led to the signing of the agreement amidst the changing relationship dynamics between the two countries. The last phase of this history, in particular the one closest to the signing of the agreement, has hardly been studied, thus compelling us to search archives. We have consulted the *Archivo de la Fundación Felipe González* (AFFG) and the Margaret Thatcher Foundation (MTF), both online, and in person, the *Archivo Central del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional* (ACME) and the *Archivo General de la Administración* (AGA) in Spain, and the BC section and other sources from the National Archives (TNA) in the United Kingdom.

We extend our gratitude to the staff of the aforementioned on-site archives for the assistance provided during the time we were working in Alcalá de Henares and in Kew (Richmond). Also, many thanks to Lucio Calleja, Deputy Director General of Academic Organization of the *Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional*, for his help in finding some fundamental information and to Sheila Estaire, teacher and Director of the Teacher Development Unit of the British Council in Madrid from 1980 to 1998, for the revision and notes to an earlier draft of this paper. We greatly appreciate the time dedicated and attention provided by Mark Levy, Head of English Programmes of the British Council Spain and Mercedes Hernández, Head of the British Council School. Last but not least, we are tremendously grateful to Álvaro Marchesi for his valuable comments. He was Secretary of State for Education during the time the agreement was approved. All analyses and statements made in this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors.

The landing of the British Council in Spain

Government initiatives to reach out to audiences in foreign countries through culture and education already existed at the end of the 19th century. Worth highlighting the pioneering leadership of France with the creation of *l'Alliance Française* in 1883. In Spain, the involvement of the Duke of Alba, Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart y Falcó, was fundamental in fostering cultural and intellectual relations with the United Kingdom. In

1923, a few months before the military coup of Miguel Primo de Rivera, the Spanish-English Committee was created, leading several initiatives for the dissemination of British language, literature and culture in Spain (Ribagorda, 2008). In the United Kingdom, the Foreign Office promoted the creation of the British Committee for Relations with Other Countries in 1934, later becoming the British Council. Sir Reginald Leeper, the advocate for the BC, insisted that the Council should not depend exclusively on government funding (Taylor, 1978, p. 251). Following the outbreak of World War II, the Council was granted a Royal Charter in 1940, becoming an independent legal organisation that promoted culture; nevertheless, the distinction between cultural action and political propaganda was far from clear particularly in the context of war (Berdah, 1998).

By 1938, the BC had already established its first four offices in Lisbon, Warsaw, Bucharest and Cairo. The establishment of the BC in Spain did not take long. It was prompted by the personal contacts of the Chairman of the Council, the conservative politician George Lloyd, with Francisco Franco and the support of the Duke of Alba who was the Ambassador in London (Donaldson, 1984, pp. 86-87). After the end of the Civil War, the BC offered the Spanish government material assistance, books for libraries destroyed during the war and scholarships for British university students to study in Spain. The BC also proposed the possible creation of a cultural institution that would serve as a meeting point for young English and Spanish individuals and youth from other nationalities (De las Bárcenas, 1939). The proposal came to fruition and, in 1940, the BC opened its headquarters in Madrid under the name of British Institute. The Spanish government made it a condition that its staff be Catholic. The person chosen to direct it was the Hispanist Walter Fitzwilliam Starkie, who had met the Duke of Alba in 1924 at a conference organised by the Spanish-English Committee (Hurtley, 2013, p. 253). The latter described him as “Catholic, Irish, educated in England, humanist, musician, epicurean, profound connoisseur of Spain, competent flamenco devotee, with great people skills, energetic, all of the qualities that my friend has” (El Duque de Alba, 1948, p. 6). These qualities made Starkie the ideal candidate to serve as the bridge between British and Spanish culture and to build a centre of cultural dynamization during the iron dictatorship of the forties. Eminent personalities, from the most diverse walks of life and relevant within the Spanish and foreign cultural and scientific scene of the time, gathered at the Institute.

The possibility of opening the Institute caused some friction and disputes over control within the governmental spheres. The Ministry of National Education demanded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the authority over the teaching degrees and the recognition of the studies taken at the centre (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1940). Foreign Affairs clarified that “at the proposed British Institute, studies of any kind will not be delivered, since it will only be limited to housing a Library and Reading Rooms and to presenting lectures led by speakers specially sent by the British Council and who have received prior approval by this Ministry” (Peche, 1940). This was not the case and, in September 1940, the British Institute School began its operations within the structure of the Institute. The school initially admitted schoolchildren between 4 and 10 years old, offering a modern education based on the Montessori and Froebel methods (Pérez de Arcos, 2021a, p. 550). The children of families from the United Kingdom and other countries, who had settled in Spain, together with children of aristocratic and white-collar Spanish families who sought a different education, “in English, of a liberal nature and coeducation” (Urgoiti, 2016. p. 22) attended the school.

The BC's landing in Spain can be framed within Winston Churchill's policy of pragmatic rapprochement with the Franco regime, and his efforts to secure Spain's neutrality in World War II, even through bribes when necessary (Wigg, 2005). The presence of the BC represented a force of social attraction or “soft power”, as Nye (2004) has called it, to act as a counterweight to the influence of the Axis countries both in Spain and in the international context. During the war, the Council's possibilities for expansion were greatly reduced because it could not operate in enemy or invaded countries, for this purpose countries considered to be neutral were especially coveted for “cultural” propaganda (Corse, 2013, pp. 32-37). Control over the Mediterranean was also important for the development of the war. Towards the end of 1942, these conditions existed in Spain as it was one of the few European countries accessible to the British, along with Portugal, Sweden and Iceland (Donaldson, 1984, p. 85). In turn, for the Spanish government, the presence of the BC could reinforce the country's image of neutrality. While the BC's establishment had Franco's support, it was also opposed by the influential Minister, fascist-minded, Ramón Serrano Suñer, who first acted from the Ministry of the Interior and then from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, the Institute had to make its way through actions that enjoyed greater official and media support, such as the Italian Institute that opened shortly before and the German Institute established

in 1941. However, it is worth mentioning that the Institute won the support of intellectuals such as Pio Baroja and the young Camilo José Cela (Corse, 2013, pp. 129-167). As the outcome of the war became more evident, the influence of the institution grew. In 1944 Starkie managed to secure from the Minister of National Education, José Ibáñez Martín, the commitment that Bachillerato would offer the possibility to choose between English and German which meant putting an end to one of the privileges that the German language had until then in Franco's policy (Hurtley, 2013, p. 271). Other Institutes were opened in several Spanish cities, originally as sections of the Madrid Institute: Barcelona in 1943, Bilbao in 1944, Valencia in 1945 and Seville in 1946 (Starkie, 1948, p. 271). There were also proposals to open it in other cities, such as Vigo (Barkworth, 1947).

The Spanish British Institute and its school in Madrid were impacted by the economic difficulties in the United Kingdom as the result of the war and post-war reconstruction. After the war, the continuity of the school was questioned by the BC offices in London. For the Foreign Office; however, the closure of the centre was "inadvisable on political grounds" (Regional Officer, 1948). The interest that the United Kingdom had for Spain during the war remained once the war was over. In 1946 the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that urged the withdrawal of the member states' ambassadors from Madrid. Although the United Kingdom supported the resolution, it did not fully complete the diplomatic rupture, maintaining trade relations which were vital for its economic recovery (Johnson, 2006). In addition, Spain could be an ally to oppose communism, which in years after the war the BC considered a sign of their own identity (Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, Colonies and Commonwealth Relations, 1951, p. 5). These and other circumstances, including the Francoist regime's strategic relationship with the Arab countries (Rein, 1998), could have contributed to the privileged treatment that, from the 1950s onwards, Spain received from the BC in order to maintain rapprochement through cultural diplomacy, despite not being a friendly country (Donaldson, 1984, p. 167). The favourable treatment did not prevent some of the previously opened British Institute centres from having to close.

International openness and modernization of the education system

In 1960, a decisive step was taken towards consolidating cultural cooperation between Spain and the United Kingdom, with the signing of

a collaboration agreement for the promotion of mutual knowledge in intellectual, artistic, scientific and technical activities (Instrumento de Ratificación del Convenio Cultural entre España y el Reino Unido de Gran Bretaña e Irlanda del Norte, 1961). The agreement established that each country would assign a specific agency to carry out the stipulated tasks. The BC would be the organisation entrusted by the British government. The signing of this agreement took place at a time when Spain began to experience significant economic growth due to increasing tourism and industrialization, a trend that is reflected in the BC's annual reports (British Council Spain, 1973). The modernization of the country was followed by what has been called the technocratic reform of the educational system, sponsored by international organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank and the OECD (González-Delgado, 2023; Jover and González-Delgado, 2023). The result was the *General Act on Education and Financing of Educational Reform (Ley General de Educación y Financiamiento de la Reforma Educativa, LGE)*, approved in 1970 with Villar Palasí as head of the Ministry, that a few years earlier had changed its name from Ministry of National Education to Ministry of Education and Science. The law introduced, among other measures, a greater presence of foreign languages in the school curriculum, establishing for the first time the teaching of these languages at the compulsory stage, Basic General Education.

The LGE had a great impact on the activities of the British Institute and the School. On one hand, some of its articles affected the work that the institution had been carrying out and it was discussed whether its legal status, derived from the 1960 agreement, exempt it from some of the requirements of the new regulations in educational, labour and tax matters. As a result of this discussion, it was clarified that the British Council was the representing body in Spain while the British Institute, as it had been called until then, was merely an operational extension of the British Council (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1975). On the other hand, the law provided a new impetus to the English teacher training activities carried by the British Institute, which in 1962 had created an English language teacher training centre in Madrid (Martín García, 2012, p. 813). For this purpose, the institution established collaborative relationships with several Institutes of Education Sciences at the beginning of the 1970s, created by Spanish universities for the development of educational research and innovation and the training of secondary education teachers (British Council Spain, 1971, p. 2).

By the middle of the decade, the United Kingdom's official relations with Spain were characterised by uncertainty regarding the future of the Franco regime. The Labour Party, unseated from government in the first half of the 1970s, returned in the second half with Harold Wilson and James Callaghan as Prime Ministers. The Labour Party had traditionally been hostile towards the dictatorship. However, during the regime's later stage there were some special conditions which, in the context of the economic crisis at that time, made the situation more uncertain. As a consequence, Wilson's government had to consider the possibility of reorienting its position, as evidenced by declassified documentation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, compiled by Hamilton and Salmon (2006). The relationship between the two governments was conditioned by the Gibraltar matter and the attitude of European countries towards Spain's desire for closer ties with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), something that for many could not be foreseen as long as Franco remained in power. Nevertheless, similar to other governments, the British government was also concerned as to how events would unfold once Franco was no longer in power and the effect that the Portuguese revolution of 1974 and the influence of communism might have on Spain. This fear suggested a rapprochement with both the moderate opposition and the more open spheres of the regime, including members of the army. At the same time, British influence continued to be exercised through the cultural and educational activities of the BC. Between 1974 and 1977, the economic benefits obtained by the BC in Spain, with the direct teaching of English, increased considerably (Martín García, 2012, p. 804). The Council used this channel to disseminate greater knowledge of British society, history and institutions, as a way "to instil in young Spaniards traditional British habits of moderation", something that, at the political moment the country was going through, was considered of utmost importance (Cultural Relations Department, 1976).

Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council

Francisco Franco died on November 20, 1975. Three years later, on December 6, 1978, the Spanish people ratified through referendum the Constitution, establishing a democratic political system. Within the framework

supported by the Constitution, it became customary that when a region of the country acquired powers as an autonomous government, it requested the BC to establish a headquarter in its territory for the teaching of English. Even, if necessary, they were ready to provide facilities and other assistance, something that, according to the Council, did not happen anywhere else (Cavaliero, 1983 and 1987). Correspondence between the BC, the British Embassy and the Foreign Office reveals a sense of success. It did not take long for private language centres to grow discontent which escalated to court in the form of an appeal against the Council for unfair competition and dragged on for several years (England, 1991).

The success achieved through the direct teaching of English enabled the BC to explore new possibilities. At the beginning of the 1980s, the preparatory documents for its activity in Spain mention: “to lead from the commercial success of DTE [Direct Teaching English] into a stronger teacher-training effort in the state sector” (British Council, 1981, p. 10). The Council redirected its policy of collaboration with the university Institutes of Education Sciences in teacher training towards a direct relationship with the MEC. Although some earlier steps had already been taken, the arrival of the socialist José María Maravall at the Ministry consolidated the definitive start of this collaboration. Maravall was well acquainted with the educational policy developed by the British Labour Party during the sixties and seventies, especially the one promoted by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Anthony Crosland. Doctor from the Complutense University in 1969, Maravall also received his doctorate from Oxford University shortly after, having his thesis supervised by Albert Henry Halsey who was Crosland's former advisor. Maravall was part of the British Labour Party before joining the Spanish Socialist Party (González Moreno, 2021, p. 83).

This Labour adherent had to initiate the socialist reform of the Spanish educational system while Margaret Thatcher carried out the conservative reform of the British one. Thatcher's notebook contains an entry that, although anecdotal, highlights this dissonance. The situation was caused by Maravall's official trip to the United Kingdom in July 1984 to meet with the Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph, and to visit British schools. Taking advantage of the trip, the education spokesman in the Labour Shadow Cabinet, Giles Radice, invited Maravall to meet with the opposition leader Neil Kinnock and other members of the Labour Party. This invitation led to a series of diplomatic consultations

within the Prime Minister's office on the possibility of introducing contacts to the opposition in the official program of a foreign minister's visit (Prime Ministerial Private Office, 1984). Beyond the anecdote, the visit marked the formal start of a collaboration between Maravall's Ministry and the BC. During the visit, the Minister had a conversation with the Council's Director-General, agreeing to strengthen cooperation in several areas including teacher training (British Council Spain, 1985, p. 2). A few days later, José María Maravall and the Director-General, John Charles Burgh, signed a letter of agreement in which five possible areas of collaboration were established: a) integrated research actions with universities; b) Fleming scholarships for postgraduate studies in the United Kingdom; c) teacher training; d) special education; and e) computers in education (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1984).

These five areas will be the foundation of a *Memorandum of Understanding on Collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Science in Spain and the British Council* signed by both organisations on June 15, 1987. This time, the signatories are Stewart Ranson Smith, Representative of the BC in Spain, and Joaquín Arango, MEC's Assistant Secretary-General. The *Memorandum* added to the areas detailed in the letter of agreement of 1984 a sixth element of collaboration due to recent joint interest in curriculum development (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1987). Between the signing of the two documents, two events took place, justifying this desire to consolidate and extend the collaboration: Spain's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) through the signing of the Treaty of Accession on June 12, 1985, and the preliminary work that would lead to the approval, a few years later, of the *Act on the General Organization of the Educational System (Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo, LOGSE)*.

According to Pardo (2011), while Spain's transition to democracy in regards to domestic policy could be deemed completed in 1982, for foreign policy it would have to wait at least until 1986 with the entry into force of the Treaty of Accession to the EEC and the ratification of permanence in NATO. Despite the political change, several European countries were still wary of Spain's integration into the European institutional environment. But this attitude began to change, partly due to the process of democratic consolidation on its own, and also due to economic interests which were very important for the United Kingdom (Leigh, 1978). The problem of Gibraltar continued to be a latent issue in

the EEC's integration process. To ease it, the Spanish government opened the fence to pedestrian traffic which smoothed the negotiations leading up to the Brussels Agreement in 1984, in which London agreed to discuss sovereignty and Madrid to fully open the frontier (Pardo, 2011, p. 87). In a note sent by Margaret Thatcher to Felipe González in April 1985, the British Prime Minister congratulated the President of the Spanish Government on the progress of the integration process, reminding him that "we in Britain have consistently supported Spanish accession to the EC and worked for rapid conclusion of the negotiations" (Thatcher, 1985).

Entry to the European Community affected different Spanish public policies, including education. Once the reforms of the *Act on University Reform (Ley Orgánica de Reforma Universitaria, LRU)* and the *Act on the Right to Education (Ley Orgánica Reguladora del Derecho a la Educación, LODE)* were completed, and following the failed attempt of the experimental reform of secondary education, Maravall initiated the structural transformation that would culminate with the approval of the LOGSE in 1990. A fundamental aspect of the reform was teacher training. In 1984, Maravall's team proposed a profound modification of initial teacher education, facing various corporatist and logistical obstacles (Benejam, 1986, pp. 153-163). Having exhausted this path, the Ministry turned its attention to permanent education. In this strategy, Maravall knew how to take advantage of the BC's success and strengthened collaboration with the organisation through a professional development program for English teachers supported by the auspices of the 1960 agreement. The actions were implemented in Spain and in the United Kingdom, although the Ministry was particularly interested in strengthening training in British territory (Poe, 1985).

Therefore, this is the context in which the Ministry signed the Memorandum of Understanding of 1987. The BC in Madrid considered it a great achievement. In a note sent to the London offices the same afternoon of its signing, Representative Smith explained its significance, highlighting that "no such agreement exists with other countries and none is envisaged". This represented the continuity of the commitment signed by the Director-General of the Council and José María Maravall in 1984 and endorsed what had been done in the past. Smith indicated that, according to what he had been told by the Ministry's officials, "Britain remains for them the first priority overseas country", although they felt "políticamente ofendidos porque el gobierno británico en Londres muestra poco

interés” (Smith, 1987b). The complaint had to do with the attitude of indifference perceived by the Spanish Ministry of Education in the British Department of Education and Science as revealed by the correspondence between the Ministry, the BC offices in London and those in Spain.

The collaboration agreement for the development of the integrated curriculum

From the second half of the 1980s, the MEC and the BC had been working on consolidating their collaboration and extending it beyond the training of English teachers, placing special attention “over the entire curriculum” (Smith, 1987a). This interest was materialised through the signing, on February 1, 1996, of a collaboration agreement between the MEC and the BC for the development of the integrated Spanish-British curriculum. On this occasion, the signatories were the Minister, Jerónimo Saavedra Acevedo, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, David Brighthy, and the Director of the BC, Peter John Wittaker Taylor.

Legally, the integrated curriculum stems from the regulation’s update on foreign schools in Spain. The new legislative framework required the adaptation of the previous 1978 regulation. This was done through the Royal Decree 806/1993, signed by the Minister Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba. The Decree’s first additional provision established the possibility of setting up an “integrated curricula of foreign educational systems and the Spanish educational system, whose completion would lead to the simultaneous award of foreign and Spanish academic degrees” (Real Decreto 806/1993). The British Council School soon became interested in this possibility. In mid-1995, its recognition as a foreign school, obtained in 1981, came to an end and was required to renew according to the new regulations (Vale, 1993, p. 1). Consequently, the School proceeded to adapt its curriculum and teaching staff to the changes required by the LOGSE, while simultaneously considering to request advice from the British educational inspectorate on the implementation of the national curriculum. A document from the school, dated February 15, 1995, stated that “both of these developments are linked to the development of the School's integrated curriculum in response to Annex 1 of the Royal Decree for Foreign Schools in Spain” (British Council School, 1995a).

The School's interest coincided with the efforts of the State Secretariat for Education, led by Álvaro Marchesi, to strengthen and make public education more attractive particularly, among other areas, in the teaching of foreign languages. "In the case of bilingual education, we looked for the approach that could be the most beneficial and powerful: an integrated curriculum and English teachers to be incorporated into Spanish schools. It seemed to us that the *British* was the ideal partner and so it was" (personal communication from Álvaro Marchesi, January 8, 2023). The agreement came to fruition. Forty-three public infant and primary schools were initially linked to the program, together with the British Council School, foreseeing its subsequent implementation in secondary schools and other possible centres (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1996). The project was based on the bilingual teaching experience of the School which would be in charge of BC's management of the integrated curriculum (personal communication from Sheila Estaire, December 26, 2022). For the BC offices in London, the centre then represented "a shop window for British educational excellence, and an influential vehicle for promoting the position of English in the Spanish education system" (British Council, 1996, p. 9). Gone were the suspicions of the past, when London did not always understand the role that a school for children could play as part of the British Institute.

In the selection of participating public schools, the Ministry prioritised those located in less favoured areas or conditions. The agreement thus embodied the social orientation of education that had inspired Maravall's policy years earlier. In Spain, there were private schools specialising in English teaching or offering the British curriculum. The novelty was that the agreement opened up this possibility to the public school system. In his intervention in the press, Marchesi made sure to emphasise this social aspect, stating that "the English language does not have to be the exclusive inheritance of those sectors that have economic means... The idea is that public schools should offer a wide range of options for children to master the Spanish and British language and culture" (Álvarez, 1996).

Conclusion

On February 1, 1996, the signing of the agreement establishing the Spanish-British integrated curriculum was the culmination of a historical

process, tracing back to the first decades of the 20th century. Our review of this history, built on matches and mismatches, enables us to identify five factors that converged on the road towards the agreement: (a) the strategic function of the Council in maintaining British influence in Spain during a period in which official relations were constrained by the dictatorship; (b) the fundamental role that the British Council School played within the structure of the British Council in Spain; (c) the limited importance attributed to the teaching of foreign languages in the education system for many decades; (d) the political evolution of the system from its international opening in the 1960s and during the constitutional period; (e) and the personal endeavours of certain key players.

The BC arrived in Spain in 1940, shortly after the end of the Spanish Civil War and at the dawn of World War II. Even though its arrival could be seen as a genuine effort to consolidate cultural relations between the two countries, the geopolitical context of the time was filled with questions that transcended the mere scope of a bilateral cultural relationship. Even with the status of Royal Charter, the BC continued to represent the governmental interests of the United Kingdom. It is indeed curious the relative ease with which the British Institute was established in Spain, and the limited political interference from the Franco regime, beyond the failed attempts of Serrano Suñer and the imposition – not entirely fulfilled – that its staff had to be Catholic. It can be stated that, in this sense, the BC's activity operated as a “soft power” tool to bring closer the Spanish upper middle class and aristocracy to the United Kingdom and its values (Martín García y Rodríguez Jiménez, 2013 y 2015).

The immediate opening of the British Council School in Spain, as part of the Institute, was a peculiar initiative within an organisation whose objective was to strengthen British presence in the postcolonial world through cultural propaganda aimed at the social elites (Corse, 2013). Coherently with this policy, in the field of education, the Council was particularly oriented towards higher education, the dissemination of science and the possible recruitment of students for British universities. This “uniqueness” of the British Institute School, as it has been regarded (Cultural Relations Department, 1988), has not historically ceased to present problems related to funding, location, staff, etc. Fundamental to the Council's objectives was the teaching of English, but its “worthwhile targets” were adults and young professionals rather than children (Director South Europe, 1949). Representative Walter Starkie's perspicacity

consisted of understanding the instrumental role of the School to capture the attention of the social segments to which the BC's action was directed (Pérez de Arcos, 2021a, p. 544). Years later, the School would be in charge of implementing the integrated curriculum established by the 1996 agreement thus acting as a pedagogical model.

The signing of the 1996 agreement has a precedent, the cultural agreement between Spain and the United Kingdom in 1960, the latter represented by the BC. The same process of modernization and international openness that gave rise to this agreement would inspire ten years later the approval of the *General Act on Education and Financing of Educational Reform*. The Act promoted the BC's activity in the permanent education of English teachers through a collaboration with the Institutes of Education Sciences of universities. This policy would gain momentum in the 1980s, especially from 1984 onwards, with the signing of a letter of agreement between the BC and MEC. In 1987, a further step was taken with the establishment of the Memorandum of Understanding, establishing collaboration in the area of curriculum development. Both documents stem from the period when the socialist José María Maravall was leading the MEC, being able to involve the BC in the objective of reforming the Spanish educational system with the purpose of adapting it to the new reality of the country – opened up by the 1978 Constitution – from a social point of view.

During those years, the BC underwent a great expansion in Spain. Since the end of World War II, funding had been a permanent topic of debate for the organisation. Within this debate, obtaining great economic benefits from the direct teaching of English, in what was called the “Spanish miracle”, did not cease to amaze. The English press itself echoed this success, which mobilised private language teaching centres. In a chronicle published in the 1980s in the *Educational Supplement of The Times*, on the occasion of the establishment of the British Institute in Palma de Mallorca, the historian and journalist Richard Wigg ironically attributed this success to Franco himself, whose isolationist policy had awakened the necessity for knowledge of foreign languages (Wigg, 1985). The process of opening up the country shed even more light on this loophole. It soon became evident that it was not enough to only increase language teaching. First, it was necessary to act upon teacher training programs and then on the curriculum as a whole. The MEC found in the BC the ideal ally for this endeavour.

But all of these circumstances were supported by people, those who promoted the processes that would lead to the signing of the agreement. Key names in this history are, in more distant times, the Duke of Alba or Walter Starkie and, in more recent times, Stewart Ranson Smith, José María Maravall or Álvaro Marchesi. In his chronicle, Wigg also alluded to this factor. He stated that the activity of the BC, “has the clear encouragement of Spain's education minister, Mr. Jose Maria Maravall, an Oxford University-trained sociologist, who sends his two children to Madrid's council-run British school” (Wigg, 1985). Maravall was himself a former British Council Scholar. His relations with the organisation date back to the late 1960s, after having recently received his PhD in Spain, he obtained a grant from the BC to study Industrial Sociology at the University of Essex (British Council Spain, 1970, appendix B). It was not an exceptional situation that his children studied at the British Council School. The school's memoirs from the period in which the agreement was established give an account of the personal or family links of numerous personalities from Spanish public life with the school, among them many politicians from different parties, several of whom held important positions in the MEC (British Council School, 1995b).

Approved in the final phase of the first period of the socialist government, it would not be up to the latter to carry out the implementation of the agreement, but to the government of the Popular Party and the head of the Ministry of Education, Esperanza Aguirre. She herself was an alumnus of the British Council School and a great admirer of Margaret Thatcher. From the previous government, the change was lived with the fear of stagnation (Marchesi, 2020, p. 24). In 2003, Aguirre was elected President of the Community of Madrid and made the bilingual program for the teaching of English one of the pillars of her government in the Community. Her commitment led many to identify these programs with a certain educational policy, if not to denigrate them for this reason. In this paper we have tried to show the tremendous simplification that this association implies.

The recognition of the intrinsic relationship between education and politics should help us identify when it becomes instrumentalised. This happens when the supposed success or failure of the program is debated without the support of rigorous research of any type. In this work, we have used a historical approach that allows us to comprehend the long-term circumstances that led to the establishment of the integrated

curriculum. Much work remains to be done to unravel the results of the program, both in terms of the level of English proficiency achieved by students and, overall, their academic achievement, as well as the differential factors that may be influencing them. This is not to undervalue the long effort made to consolidate the bilingual teaching program in Spanish and English through the integrated curriculum. Its value lies precisely in the fact that it opened this avenue to those who, if it were not for these programs, would never have had the opportunity to receive this type of education, restricted for a long time to the privileged classes. Further research should help us assess whether the time has come to bring this possibility, with the necessary adaptations, to all schools and under what conditions.

Bibliographical references

- Álvarez, P. (February 7, 1996). Madrid. 2.500 niños de la región estudiarán en colegios públicos bilingües. *El País*. https://elpais.com/diario/1996/02/07/madrid/823695874_850215.html
- Barkworth, R.C. (1947, June 21). [R.C. Barkworth to Mr. Grant] (TNA, BW 56/15).
- Benejam, P. (1986). *La formación de maestros: una propuesta alternativa*. Laia.
- Berdah, J.F. (1998). La propagande culturelle britannique en Espagne pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale. Ambition et action du British Council (1939-1946). *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, (189), 95-107.
- British Council (1981, December 18). *Country Policy Papers. Spain. Draft* (TNA BW 56/41).
- British Council (1996, September). *The British Council Corporate Plan, 1996/97 to 1999/2000* (TNA, PREM 19/6005).
- British Council School (1995a, February 15). [Plans for 1996-99] (TNA BW 56/47).
- British Council School (1995b, August 2). *List of Parents / Past Pupils & Relatives* (TNA, BW 56/47).
- British Council Spain (1970, April). *Representative's Annual Report 1969/70* (TNA, BW 56/32).
- British Council Spain (1971, April). *Representative's Annual Report 1970/71* (TNA, BW 56/32).

- British Council Spain (1973, April). *Representative's Annual Report 1972/73* (TNA, BW 56/32).
- British Council Spain (1985, March 29). *Narrative Report 1984/85* (TNA BW 56/42).
- Cavaliero, R.E. (1983, June 3). [R.E. Cavaliero to R. Parsons] (TNA BW 56/27).
- Cavaliero, R.E. (1987, September 14). [R.E. Cavaliero to C. Pestell] (TNA BW 56/39).
- Corse, E. (2013). *A Battle for Neutral Europe. British Cultural Propaganda during the Second World*. Bloomsbury.
- Cultural Relations Department (1976, August 20). *The British Council's School Madrid* (TNA, FCO 13/809).
- Cultural Relations Department (1988, May). *Visit by Mr. T. Eggar MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to Spain 12-15 June. Draft* (TNA, BW 56/40).
- De las Bárcenas, D. (1939, June 14). "British Council" hace ofrecimientos de carácter cultural (AGA, file 19.926, record 267).
- Director South Europe (1949, September 29). *Institute Teaching Policy. Spain* (TNA, BW 56/14).
- Donaldson, F. (1984). *The British Council. The First Fifty Years*. Jonathan Cape.
- El Duque de Alba (1948). Walter Starkie. In *Ensayos Hispano-Ingleses. Homenaje a Walter Starkie* (pp. 5-6). José Janés.
- England, J. (1991, May 7). [J. England to M. Webb] (TNA, BW 56/54).
- Gisbert, X. (November 29, 2021). Enseñanza bilingüe: ¿Educación o política? *Magisterio*. <https://www.magisnet.com/2021/11/ensenanza-bilingue-educacion-o-politica>
- González-Delgado M. (2023). La UNESCO y la modernización educativa en el franquismo: Origen y desarrollo institucional del programa Education for International Understanding en España (1950-1975). *Revista Internacional de Teoría e Investigación Educativa*, 1, 1-13.
- González Moreno, J. (2021). *La política educativa del PSOE sobre escolarización y secularización (1976-1996)*. Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional.
- Hamilton, K.A. & Salmon, P. (2006). *Documents on British Policy Overseas. The Southern Flank in Crisis. 1973-1976*. Routledge.
- Hurtley, J. (2013). *Walter Starkie 1894-1976. An Odyssey*. Four Courts Press.

- Instrumento de ratificación del Convenio Cultural entre España y el Reino Unido de Gran Bretaña e Irlanda del Norte, April 13 1961, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 164, July 11 1961.
- Johnson, E. (2006). Early Indications of a Freeze: Greece, Spain and the United Nations, 1946-47, *Cold War History*, 6(1), 43-61.
- Jover, G. & González-Delgado, M. (2023). An Overview of Historical Transitions in Politics of Education in Spain. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. <https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-1917>
- Jover, G.; López, E.; & Quiroga, P. (2011). La universidad como espacio cívico: valoración estudiantil de las modalidades de participación política universitaria. *Revista de Educación*, special issue, 69-91.
- Leigh, M. (1978). Nine EEC attitudes to enlargement. In M. Leigh & N. van Praag, *Nine EEC attitudes to enlargement. European political cooperation and the southern periphery* (pp. 5-58). Sussex University Press.
- Marchesi, A. (2020). La LOGSE en la educación española Breve relato de un cambio histórico. *Avances en supervisión educativa*. (33), 1-34.
- Martín García, O.J. (2012). Emisarios de la moderación. La diplomacia pública británica ante el fin de las dictaduras ibéricas. *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia*, 72(242), 789-816.
- Martín García, O.J. & Rodríguez Jiménez, F.J. (2013). ¿Seducidos por el inglés? Diplomacia pública angloamericana y difusión de la lengua inglesa en España, 1959-1975. *Historia y política*, (29), 301-330.
- Martín García, O.J. & Rodríguez Jiménez, F.J. (2015). The Engaging Power of English-Language Promotion in Franco's Spain. *Contemporary European History*, 24(3), 415-433.
- Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (1975, July 16). *Nota verbal* (TNA, BW 56/26).
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional (1940, June 19). [Ministerio de Educación Nacional a Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores] (AGA, file 19928, record 403).
- Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (1984, July 6). *Carta de Acuerdo entre el Consejo Británico y el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia* (ACME, box 100006, folder 4).
- Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (1987, June 15). *Memorandum de Entendimiento sobre Colaboración entre el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia y el Consejo Británico (British Council)* (ACME, box 99970, folder 19.2).

- Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (1996). *Convenio entre el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia y The British Council*. Gabinete de Prensa.
- Nye, J.S. (2004). *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics*. PublicAffairs.
- Pardo, R. (2011). La política exterior de los gobiernos de Felipe González ¿Un nuevo papel para España en el escenario internacional? *Ayer*, 84(4), 73-97.
- Peche, J. (1940, June 24). *Proyectado Instituto Británico en Madrid* (AGA, file 19928, record 403).
- Pérez de Arcos, M. (2021a). Education, Intelligence and Cultural Diplomacy at the British Council in Madrid, 1940-1941 Part 1: Founding a School in Troubled Times. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 98(4), 527-555.
- Pérez de Arcos, M. (2021b). Education, Intelligence and Cultural Diplomacy at the British Council in Madrid, 1940-1941 Part 2: Shock Troops in the War of Ideas. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 98(5), 707-738.
- Poe, P.J. (1985, December 20). [P.J. Poe a P. Ramos] (ACME, box 100006, folder 4).
- Prime Ministerial Private Office (1984, 20 de junio). [Advice from Foreign Office on visit to UK of Spanish Minister for Education] (MTF, PREM19/1976 f119).
- Real Decreto 806/1993, May 28, sobre régimen de centros docentes extranjeros en España. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 149, June 23 1993.
- Regional Officer (1948, July 15). *Madrid School* (TNA, BW 56/14).
- Rein, R. (1998). In Pursuit of Votes and Economic Treaties: Francoist Spain and the Arab World, 1945-56. *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 13(1/2), 195-215.
- Ribagorda, A. (2008). El Comité Hispano-Inglés y la Sociedad de Cursos y Conferencias de la Residencia de Estudiantes (1923-1936). *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 30(30), 273-291.
- Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, Colonies and Commonwealth Relations (1951, July 26). *Future of The British Council* (TNA, CAB 129/47/6).
- Smith, R.S. (1987a, February 11). [S.R. Smith to R.E. Cavaliero] (TNA, BW 56/40).
- Smith, R.S. (1987b, June 15). [S.R. Smith to E.J. Rayner] (TNA, BW 56/40).
- Starkie, W. (1948). The British council in Spain. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 25(100), 270-275.

- Taylor, P.M. (1978). Cultural diplomacy and the British Council: 1934-1939. *British Journal of International Studies*, 4(3), 244-265.
- Thatcher, M. (1985, April 4). [Carta de la Primer Ministro del Reino Unido felicitando al Presidente por la culminación de las negociaciones de adhesión de España] (AFFG, FER0044746, p. 132).
- Urgoiti, N. (2016). We were at school together. In *Yo fui al Británico* (pp. 18-22). JdeJ Editores.
- Vale, B. (1993, October). *The British Council School of Madrid Business Plan* (TNA, BW 56/47).
- Wigg, R. (October 25, 1985). Breaking down the language barrier. *The Times Educational Supplement*, (3817), 16.
- Wigg, R. (2005). *Churchill y Franco*. Debate.

Contact address: Gonzalo Jover. Universidad Complutense. Facultad de Educación, Departamento de Estudios Educativos. Calle Rector Royo Villanova, 1. 28040 Madrid. E-mail: gjover@ucm.es