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Tomeu Quetgles

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# THE BALEARIC ISLANDS IN THE CONTEXT OF SPANISH EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Tomeu Quetgles  
Universitat de les Illes Balears (UIB)

## The 1970 Reform

The General Education Act -Ley General de Educación (LGE)- of 1970 established the present structure of Spanish school system. Its main feature was the creation of a eighth year basic school -Enseñanza General Básica (EGB)- for all children from 6 to 14, from the unification of the former upper primary and lower secondary studies. Both studies gathered children from 10 to 14, but the primary ones took the last four years of primary school, whereas lower secondary studies were conducted at secondary Institutos. Passing a voluntary entrance examination -Ingreso- at 10 was necessary to access to one of the scarce Institutos. The 1970 Act made a single way for all pupils until the age of 14.

From this age three ways opened. Those having passed the eighth levels of the EGB could follow upper secondary general studies -Bachillerato Unificado y Polivalente (BUP)- or vocational training -Formación Profesional (FP)-. Those having failed could only access to FP or remain at the basic school until 16, trying to improve their marks.

Last two decades have seen a great expansion of schooling rates and a general dissatisfaction with the lacking of educational quality. The rates of failure at the end of basic education reached sometimes 40% of eight year pupils; many youngsters left the school at 14 and didn't follow any vocational training -many people have seen vocational studies as a way for lesser able pupils; teachers of Institutos protested against the overcrowded classrooms and the low standards of their pupils... Many voices asked for a deep reform of school system.

## The political "transition" and the decentralisation of public administration

The first democratic government (1977) began to spoke about the need of reforming secondary education and made several papers, but the only real changes affected basic education curricula and system of promotion. By several reasons those changes had no great effect in the schools. The expected educational reform was delayed...

But those years saw important political reforms: the "transition" from Franco's dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy. Here we will refer to the decentralisation of public administration, through the constitution of "autonomous communities" -Comunidades Autónomas-, for its strong incidence on the school system.

By 1983 all the spanish State was divided in seventeen autonomous communities. From their origin they were deeply different: some of them corresponded to regions inhabited historically by non-Castilian nationalities: Galicians (Galiza), Basques (Euzkadi and part of Navarre), Catalans (Catalunya, Valencia and Balearic Islands); all others communities were former Castilian-speaking regions -Asturias, Aragón, Extremadura, Andalucía, Canarias-, provinces -Cantabria, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia- or new merged regions -Castilla-León, Castilla-la Mancha.

### The transfer of educational competences

Some autonomous communities assumed the administration of the school system in their respective statutes, which was delegated by central government:

|           | <sup>1</sup> | <sup>2</sup> |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| Euzkadi   | 18/12/1979   | 26/ 9/1980   |
| Catalunya | 18/12/1979   | 3/10/1980    |
| Galiza    | 5/ 4/1981    | 24/ 7/1982   |
| Andalucía | 30/12/1981   | 29/12/1982   |
| Valencia  | 1/ 7/1982    | 28/ 7/1983   |
| Navarra   | 10/ 8/1982   |              |
| Canarias  | 10/ 8/1982   | 28/ 7/1983   |

Until now the others autonomous communities have not received any educational delegation from central government, remaining under administration of the Ministry of Education and Science, trough its Provincial Directorates (Dirección Provincial). The reasons for those differences among autonomous communities are very heterogeneous, but always political. never educational.

From the beginning, the spanish Constitution opened two ways leading to two kinds of statutes of autonomy. The first way was intended to reach immediately a full autonomy. The second one established a five years period previous to ask for enlarging initial delegations. The former was exclusive for the called "historical nationalities": Euzkadi, Catalunya, Galiza; the latter, for the other regions.

Valencia and Balearic Islands, being lands inhabited historically by non-castilian speaking people -as well as Euzkadi, Catalunya and Galiza-, were not considered "historical nationalities". It seems this qualification was reserved to regions having obtained autonomy statutes by the Second Republic.

"The word nationalities (...) lacks any political meaning. It is

<sup>1</sup>date of statute

<sup>2</sup>date of delegation

basically a recognition of regions with greatest autonomy tradition, putting them, from this point of view, over all other Spanish regions. The generalisation of autonomy system was precisely the reason to get more importance to regions with stronger self-government tradition, by the qualification of nationalities and the exclusive access to the article 151 of the Spanish Constitution as a way to become autonomous."<sup>3</sup>

Now, only nationalist minorities in Valencia and Balearic Islands protest against the consideration of their lands as "regions", but not "nationalities". Neither their autonomist tradition nor their present claims are strong enough to reach the same status as Catalunya.

But, as seen before, the autonomous community of Valencia obtained in 1983 the delegation of the school system administration, as established in its Statute of Autonomy, reaching by so the same level of competences on education as the "historical nationalities". At present, the Balearic Islands are the only non-Castilian-speaking community without competences on education.

#### Balearic Islands Autonomous Community: the lack of educational competences

We will try to look for the reasons helping to understand this situation.

First of all, the Balearic Islands, as Catalunya and Valencia loosed their rights as former Kingdom of Mallorca, as direct consequence of being defeated in 1714 by the Bourbon party in the Spanish Succession War. The new king, Phillip V, and his successors made of Spain a deeply centralised state, following the French model.

Second, after 1714 the most important partisans of Phillip V became the members of a new nobility, a new leading class always ready to follow the directives of Madrid.

In the XIX century the spirit of Catalan Renaissance (Renaixença) came to the Islands, but only reached clerical and intellectual groups. Instead of Catalunya, the new Majorcan bourgeoisie adopted Castilian language, as a medium of social distinction. Castilian language was assimilated to civil administration, schools, business, modernity; Catalan was considered the oral language of tradition and country-side. It was a important divergency from Catalunya: not only a matter of dissimilarity, but one of a growing anti-Catalanism, in a process not enough studied. As a

<sup>3</sup>ASTARLOA VILLENA, FRANCISCO (1985): La Autonomia como rasgo configurador del Estado español. Universitat de les Illes Balears. Palma de Mallorca. p. 21 (our translation)

result, many people now can feel threatened by a hypothetical cultural and economic "Catalan imperialism", but have nothing to say against real political centralism from Madrid's central government.

The experiences of self-government in Catalunya in the XX century have had no counterpart in the Balearic Islands. Many people have considered and still considers Catalans as "separatists". The fact of being at oposed sides in the Spanish Civil War -the Balearic Islands, except Menorca, took the anti-Republican party, whereas Catalunya, and Valencia, remained at the side of legal government- added a new reason for anti-Catalanism.

If we look at recent years we can see the Balearic people voting mainly Spanish political parties, whereas the nationalist ones only get a small minority. They are often accused of "catalanism", as if they were traitors to their own land. In front of them some try to raise a feeling of "balearism".

In these circumstances, the major parties, both the Popular Party (P.P.) and the Socialist Party (P.S.O.E.), are clearly nationalist, but Spanish nationalist, never Balearic or -it would be the worst!- Catalan nationalists. In fact, Popular Party is always ready to use Balearic regionalism to show and grow differences with regard to Catalans. For exemple, our people hardly accepts their language is Catalan. The same strategy is followed in València: the official name of language spoken there, being a catalan dialect, is "valencià". In our islands the official name is "català", but many people argue they don't speak "Catalan" at all, but "Majorcan", "Minorcan" and so on. The name depends on the island. People never say "Balear", in spite of all government efforts to introduce that name, in an attempt to dissimulate differences of speech among the Islands and, at the same time, to show and reinforce the differences between "balear" and "català". This is certainly a non-official linguistic policy, for Popular Party, lacking absolute majority, have to develop the laws passed by Balear Parliament. As established by the Statute of Autonomy Catalan is the own language of Balearic Islands. The same article states that Catalan and Castilian are both official languages of the autonomous community of Balearic Islands.<sup>4</sup>

The recognition of Catalan as co-official language of our community and the passing of a law of "linguistic normalisation" (Llei de Normalització Lingüística) is seen by many certainly not as a way to spread the use of Catalan, but a concession to nationalist

<sup>4</sup>"La llengua catalana, pròpia de les Illes Balears, tindrà, juntament amb la castellana, el caràcter d'idioma oficial. Tots tenen el dret de conèixer-la i d'usar-la i ningú no podrà ser discriminat per causa de l'idioma." (Llei orgànica 2/1983, de dia 25 de febrer, d'Estatut d'Autonomia per a les Illes Balears. Art. 3.)

minorities, to avoid the raising of a wider nationalist opposition. We could see how the most valuable parliamentary statements are in fact devaluated by government decrees.

Let's go back to the lack of educational competences. Now we can understand the differences between the strong nationalist feeling of Catalans and the anti-separatist attitude of most people of the Islands. Balearics have been surpassed not only by Catalunya, but by other "non-historical communities" -Andalucía, València, Canarias- in the interest to get more competences from central government. This is a reason why these three communities were transferred competences on education. It must be said that the Socialist Party, in office at the central government, was also in office at all three former communities. Balearic Islands lacked both the required interest and the "right" -in this case the "left"- party in office.

At present, the Popular Party, in office from 1983, would like to get the control over the school system, certainly not to make a "Catalan school" or even a Majorcan one, but simply to enlarge its powers; on the other hand, Socialist Party, in opposition in the Islands, but in office in Madrid, doesn't have any interest in that transfer.

#### The teaching of Catalan language

As a result of all we have just explained, the Balearic community remains among the communities under the direct control of the Ministry of Education, but it is dissimilar from the other communities by the fact that is the only one having another official language. After the Statute of Autonomy the teaching of Catalan is a exclusive competence of the autonomous community.<sup>5</sup>

Managing Catalan language teaching as a compulsory subject at schools, managed by the Ministry of Education, wouldn't be a easy task for the Balear Government. First of all Catalan language had to be declared a compulsory subject. After that, human and material resources had to be ready to fulfill linguistical policy statements.

<sup>5</sup>"La Comunitat Autònoma té competència exclusiva en harmonia amb els plans d'estudi estatals, per a l'ensenyament de la llengua catalana, pròpia de les Illes Balears, d'acord amb la tradició literària autòctona. La normalització d'aquesta serà un objectiu dels poders públics de la Comunitat Autònoma. Les modalitats insulars del català seran objecte d'estudi i de protecció, sense perjudici de la unitat de l'idioma." (Llei orgànica d'Estatut d'Autonomia per a les Illes Balears. Art. 14)

As a matter of fact, some years before Balearic Islands had their Statute of Autonomy, the royal decree 2193/1978 made Catalan language a compulsory subject for all schools -except for the last year of secondary education, which was "forgotten". Subsequent ministerial orders established five weekly hours for Castilian language and three hours for Catalan.

Seven years after, the Law of Linguistic Normalisation 3/1986 stated that teaching Catalan language et literature was compulsory for all balearic schools. Time for that teaching had to be at least equal to devoted to Castilian language and literature. Because this statement would clearly affect the curricula of schools and the Balear Government had no competences over them, the Ministry of Education had to approve new curricula. A ministerial order in that sense arrived one year and a half later, establishing equality of time for both official languages.

#### The training of Catalan teachers and their allocation

Two other problems were -and still are- training teachers able to teach Catalan language and putting them where they are needed.

Present initial training doesn't fulfill legal requirements to get the Diploma of Teacher of Catalan language. By so, after the completion of their studies at teacher training schools, new teachers have all to follow a evening course lasting two or three years to that Diploma. Only teachers specialised in languages are exempted of this continuation course.

As a result of social and educational environment some students at Teacher Training Schools are not Catalan fluent speakers; most of them have many problems with orthography; of both official languages their proficiency in Catalan is clearly lower. The exigencies of Catalan language professors attempting to rise up the linguistic competences of future teachers provoke in many students a negative attitude towards Catalan language. In a way a similar problem occurs with Music, a subject which is compulsory in the teacher training curriculum, but is usually "forgotten" in primary and secondary education. Nevertheless negative attitude of future teachers towards Catalan language means more than the possibility of banishing or reducing Catalan as a subject in the school curriculum; it's reinforcing the opposition against language normalisation.

In 1986 Balear Government established a Diploma of Teacher of Catalan language and a system called "recycling" to get it. Three years of evening courses following a university degree are necessary to obtain this diploma, required to teach this subject in secondary schools; graduates in Catalan Philology are exempted of this recycling courses. Two years are needed to obtain a "proficiency diploma" to teach Catalan language in pre-primary and primary schools; Primary teachers graduated after 1986 with a specialisation in Philology can obtain directly this diploma of

proficiency. Except for these two groups of teachers, all others have to follow the recycling system, in their free time and at their own expenses. This recycling system can not be called "in-service training", because it is also followed by many teachers waiting for a first post, taken advantage of their unemployment.

Finally, when teachers are ready to teach Catalan language, there is no legal system to put them at the posts where they are needed. In Spanish public school system teachers, being state civil servants, have the right to choose the schools where they would like to go. Basic schools have no way to select the teachers best suited for the posts to be covered. By this way many primary teachers having the Diploma of Catalan remain unemployed, whereas many others with any suited training actually teach Catalan lessons.

When Balear Government is asked about the fulfilment of its policy of linguistic normalisation in schools, they always use the argument of lacking educational competences to explain the inefficiency of measures adopted. On the other hand, Ministry of Education Provincial Directorate answers they have no competences over the teaching of Catalan language...

#### Catalan language as a medium of instruction

This is another aspect of school language normalisation. We will refer to it briefly<sup>6</sup>. As a result of complex conditions, the decision of developing some programs in Catalan language lies in the hands of teachers. The decisive fact is having or not a majority of teachers supporters of that idea in the school council. It we think that every year staff can change its composition, majorities can also change every year. So it is a matter of chance to find out a school teaching by the medium of Catalan language. Nor pupil parents neither local communities can do in fact anything to get or to assure Catalan medium education for their children, despite the right they have to choose the language of education of their children, as established by the Law of Linguistic Normalisation.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>See TOMEU QUETGLÉS (1989): The situation of the Catalan language at the Balearic schools. (Paper presented to the VII<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Comparative Education, Montreal).

<sup>7</sup>"Pupils have the right to be taught in their own language, Catalan or Castilian. Government has to take convenient measures to make effective this right. Anyway, parents or tutors can exert it on behalf of their children, by requiring responsible authorities to apply it conveniently." (Translation of Art. 18 of the Law of Linguistic Normalisation).



We can see again how important is the control of teachers allocation. The present system is out of control of schools, Balear Government and, even, Ministry of Education Provincial Directorate. In a previous paper I displayed the main lines for a agreement between both institutions permitting allocation of teachers with the Diploma of Catalan at the schools where they are needed to fulfil the requirements of parents, avoiding any interference with civil servant rights. This paper was submitted to General Directorate of Education of Balear Government almost one year ago; I'm always waiting for some answer...

### Expecting the new educational reform

It is very hard to admit that most people and the Government of Balearic Islands are not really interested in normalisation of their own language. We have seen how introduction of Catalan as a compulsory subject dates from 1979, some years before the constitution of Balearic Islands Autonomous Community; in that field the only merit of Balear Government was the agreement with Ministry of Education to equate the weekly time devoted to both official languages. Popular Party, being at the same time a populist and a right wing party, is not interested in changing people attitudes against "Catalan separatism". Spanish school system contributed to shape those attitudes: most parents think Castilian is the only language suited for school education. For many of them, learning English would be more useful for their children than spending the time learning to write Catalan..., as it both languages were incompatible! Many voters of Popular Party think like that, so the problem for Balear Government is how to meet at the same time the requirements of laws and the wishes of its voters.

The main party at opposition, Socialist Party, gathers many voters among south of Spain immigrants, Castilian speakers; by so it can hardly develop a strong nationalist policy. Socialists control Ministry of Education Provincial Directorate: they don't have any interest in transferring educational competences to a regional government in hands of a opposed party.

Provincial Directorate of Education, being a delegation of the Ministry, conducts studies and experiments for educational reform; Balear government is excluded from this task, having no educational competences. By so the question of Catalan language in education remains out of the reform projects. For many years Ministry of Education and educational councils of autonomous communities with competences have been working on a design for basic curricula. Ministry don't seems too much sensitive to problems of language medium of instruction in our region.

In fact, some people of the Provincial Directorate now say the experimentation and reform of Catalan language curriculum is the matter of Balear Government. They are waiting for the results of

a experimentation never conducted. It seems in the Balear government people are not really interested in this matter; they would prefer first to have all the educational competences and then to develop the experimentations previous to the educational reform. No matter the reasons of this new dispute: the victime, one more time, is the catalan language, the balear people.

All educational authorities are continuously talking about the need of developping a global curriculum adapted to each environment, but they seem forgetting that language is a main aspect of cultural environment and the main way to understand and recreate it. One more time decisions concerning important aspects of our culture will be taken out of the Islands.

The process of decentralisation seems to be stopped, at least until Spanish Parliament had passed the law of educational reform. Perhaps when the most important things have been decided in Madrid, our regional government will be transfered the right and the duty to implement them.

But the worst is this situation doesn't mean nothing for Balear people, they are so adapted to be subject of decisions taken abroad. Very few seem do not accept that our autonomous (?) community have less competences than others. We must agree that Balear nationalists are a minority in Balearic Islands.

Balear nationalists on principle ask for the devolution of educational (and all others) competences, but mistrust of Spanish nationalists educational purposes, coming from Madrid or from our own islands. It would be a great mistake expect all from the devolution of educational competences or of educational reform leaded by the Ministry of Education. It's not a matter of expecting, but of requiring present educational authorities to guarantee the legal rights of all citizens, even of those which are in minority in their own land. If we can not act as a majority, we can at least react as a minority fighting for its rights. The most urgent is that people wanting to be taught in Catalan can find a positive answer. If that minority begins, perhaps others will follow...

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Tomeu Quetgles Pons

Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres  
Universitat de les Illes Balears  
07071 Palma de Mallorca  
Spain