

Professional press for teachers as a source to study schooling practice: «El Magisterio Balear» (1873-1916)¹

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ABSTRACT: Beyond articles and theoretical reflections on highly diverse topics linked to schooling, professional publications for teachers contain testimonials from teachers describing their daily work in the classroom. In this sense, they are potentially useful sources to uncover historical knowledge on daily life in schools. This article analyses the journal «El Magisterio Balear» from the period spanning 1873-1916, with a view to locating articles where teachers describe their work and, in this way, demonstrate the value of professional publications for teachers as a testimonial source for analysing schooling practices.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Education; Pedagogical press; Teaching; School practice; Balearic Islands; XIXth - XXth Century.

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Introduction

In order to uncover what school practice must have been like in the past, studies have traditionally used administrative and legislative texts and sources, as well as theoretical discourses. The importance of this type of resource has provided incomplete and even distorted knowledge on what schooling was really like in the past. The near-exclusive use of these sources has led to a portrayal where both discontinuity and rupture stand out which, at times, could be quite different to everyday reality. Schools have their own timelines and practice too has its own rhythms that differ from those set out in educational policy or in pedagogical approaches. Questions such as, to what extent and at what speed does a law change practices in the classroom, and how does the theoretical expansion of a new method affect changes in schooling, become a conundrum whose response must include a combination of traditional and less frequently used sources so as to help us properly understand what actually occurred in classrooms, the practices used by teachers and the dynamic established in schooling beyond legal provisions or theoretical discourses.

In recent years, the History of Education Studies Group (GEDHE) has attempted to approach the historical study of schooling by combining traditional sources with those that offer more direct information on everyday school activities, such as materials, personal testimonies, photographs, practice or official exam reports, student and teacher workbooks, teacher diaries, etc. The intent is to understand the inherent dynamics at schools alongside their continuity, changes and ruptures, as well as the role of teachers (at times supervised or even imposed, whilst at others independent and free from outside influence) in the historical evolution of teaching and learning processes.

This article focuses specifically on professional publications for teachers from amongst the sources included in the historical analysis of schooling. Teaching journals, as part of the wide selection of pedagogical press, appeared and proliferated during the last third of the 19th century, offering teachers, readers and subscribers hugely valuable information about new ideas and pedagogical methods, debates on school organisation, pioneering schooling experiences, etc. whilst keeping them up-to-date in terms of professional issues (pay, rights, etc.) and educational legislation. In turn, teachers would not only be recipients of this information but rather active participants in certain debates on educational issues affecting them at the time, setting out their own ideas and practical experiences in the journals. The experience of writing about practice – involving descriptions interwoven with both individual and group testimonials from teachers – undoubtedly represents an essential source for historians when looking at everyday schooling practice from the past.

The contributions from the teachers/readers themselves in professional publications thus become a hugely valuable resource for studying school practice, enabling us to uncover to what extent theoretical discourses and

legal provisions were taken onboard by the teaching profession and directly affected daily practice at schools. In this vein, the publications became a type of «sounding board» that amplified the voice of teaching experiences. They became a place to think and debate other ways of being, doing and fashioning schooling, as well as developing the teaching profession: a space for pedagogy in the widest possible sense, opening up broad possibilities by bringing together teaching approaches and habits. Ultimately, the journals show the everyday tensions of active teachers that affected their work as instructors and teaching and learning practices.

This article aims to underscore the value of professional teaching publications as a source to study schooling, using «El Magisterio Balear» as an example. Based on a previous study of the journal² (which was published with several hiatuses between 1873 and 1936), this article focuses on the period comprising 1873 to 1916. The reason for selecting this timeframe is that the publication saw the fewest hiatuses during this period, had a stable editorial policy and all issues have been preserved, which is not the case with later issues. Between 1873 and 1916, «El Magisterio Balear» published nearly 800 articles, many of which came from other journals, with theoretical reflections and information on pedagogical and educational issues in general, as well as on specific topics. Nonetheless, and albeit in lower numbers, some teachers also made contributions to these issues based on their specific schooling practices, contributing their personal experience to professional knowledge and debate. They are articles where teachers in the Balearic Islands explain (with regard to the topics covered on a theoretical level in the journal) what they do at their institutions, how the schools are organised, which materials they use, what activities they undertake, etc. This type of text was not the most common, although we believe – and will attempt to demonstrate in this article – that their existence represents a highly useful resource for the historical analysis of schooling practice.

After a description of «El Magisterio Balear» within the context of professional pedagogical publications in Spain between the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, we move on to an analysis of the main contributions made by teachers from the Balearic Islands to the journal, in the aim of demonstrating the usefulness of these types of texts as historical sources to study schooling practice, as well as how this practice links to pedagogical discourses and debates from the time that were reported on by the journal itself.

² Some results from research into «El Magisterio Balear» that came out before this article can be viewed in: F. Comas Rubí, B. Sureda Garcia, *La premsa pedagògica en la construcció de la identitat professional dels mestres: El Magisterio Balear*, «Educatió i Història», 24, 2014, pp. 51-68; S. González Gómez, F. Comas Rubí, *Experiències pràctiques del magisterio a través de la premsa professional*, in J.M^a. Hernández Díaz (ed.), *La premsa pedagògica de los profesores*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2018, pp. 193-203; F. Comas Rubí, B. Sureda Garcia, *La premsa pedagògica en la construcció de la identitat professional dels mestres: El Magisterio Balear*, «Educatió i Història», n. 24, 2014, pp. 51-68.

1. *The origins of professional publications for teachers: «El Magisterio Balear»*

During the 19th century, two events highlight the rapid professionalisation of teaching: the foundation of professional teaching associations and the creation of professional pedagogical publications³. As Checa Godoy explains in *Historia de la prensa pedagógica en España*⁴, the origins of the educational press in Spain can practically be traced back to the start of press publications themselves.

The «Gazeta de los niños» was first published in Madrid in 1798 by José and Bernabé Canga Argüelles, whilst «El Maestro Público» looking into teaching methodology also appeared in the capital around the same time. Both publications had a liberal bent, although «La Gaceta de los niños» was the more restrained and paternalistic of the two. «El Magisterio Español» appeared in 1868, introducing a catholic approach into educational publications. Indeed, there was a wide selection of educational publications in Spain just before the Glorious Revolution of September 1868: «Los Anales, La Educación», «La Enseñanza», «La Idea», «El Magisterio Español», «El Preceptor» and «La Primera Enseñanza», which were distributed to schools and teachers across Spain. «El Clamor del Magisterio», «El Instructor», «El Monitor», «El Profesorado» and «El Protector» were aimed more at university spheres. Most of the journals, except for «La Educación» and «El Magisterio Español» were limited to primary education.

School presses, i.e. school newsletters, began to appear during the six revolutionary years of the *Sexenio Democrático* (1868-1874) (Revolutionary six-year period 1868-1874). There would be no major increase in titles during these six years although certain provincial educational publications did appear. In any event, the Restoration was the key period where a wider selection of specialised publications in education would develop. There was a rise in the number of periodical publications from 1875 to 1900. Most new titles were professional teaching journals, although there was also a considerable increase in the number of Catholic teaching journals. Unlike most professional teaching journals that defended professional interests, as well as introducing and promoting the first educational innovations from those years, Catholic journals defended a much more traditional pedagogical approach. The most representative school publication from this initial period of the Restoration

³ In recent years, several conferences held in Salamanca have brought together the work of a broad group of researchers into pedagogical publications. See, for example, J.M^a. Hernández Díaz (ed.), *La prensa pedagógica de los profesores*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2018. J.M^a. Hernández Díaz (ed.), *Prensa pedagógica y patrimonio histórico educativo. Contribuciones desde la Europa mediterránea e Iberoamérica*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2013.

⁴ A. Checa Godoy, *Historia de la Prensa Pedagógica en España*, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 2002, pp. 181-184.

was undoubtedly the «Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza» which, although not having widespread distribution, did have a decisive impact on innovation in teaching in Spain.

At the end of the 19th century, there were both conservative, Catholic educational publications alongside more liberal journals in many provinces. Nevertheless, the largest number of journals were developed and led by teachers at their professional associations which would, in many instances, enjoy a long life. According to Ezpeleta Aguilar⁵, around 1898 all provinces had specialised journals: «El Monitor de Primera Enseñanza» and «El Clamor», in Barcelona; «El Magisterio Balear» in Palma; «El Riojano» in Logroño; «La Voz del Magisterio» in Zaragoza; «El Profesorado» in Granada; «El Boletín de Primera Enseñanza» in Santander, etc. All these publications followed a similar pattern, usually being published every fortnight, every ten days or weekly, and had a similar extent and format. Moreover, they shared an interest in publishing the difficulties of teachers as a professional group, with complaints about buildings, materials, salaries, etc. None of these journals was openly anti-clerical, likely due to there not being too many openly Catholic journals to protest against.

Whilst it is true that purely pedagogical interests were abundant in these journals, they also contained a wealth of essentially professional content. Some things would change from the 20th century onwards. At government level, the creation of the Ministry for Public Instruction and the state paying teachers' wages meant that certain «classical» professional demands no longer made sense. Furthermore, new trends taken from Marxist-leaning educational experiences were introduced. Rationalist pedagogical publications appeared in Catalonia and Valencia, based on the experience of Ferrer Guardia's Modern School. Lázaro Lorente has made an in-depth analysis of these journals, which usually viewed the liberal state and power as the main enemy⁶. In turn, some innovative Catholic journals appeared, e.g. those serving as a focal point for experiences, such as those from Andrés Manjón, or certain small publications founded by teachers at their own schools – a paradigmatic example of the latter being the publications by Minorcan teacher Juan Benejam.

As the 20th century progressed, a wide number of new journals would appear with, at times, opposing views with regard to basic teaching approaches. According to a study by José Altabella, the first pedagogical journal for teachers in the Balearic Islands was the «Boletín del Magisterio de Primera Enseñanza» from 1868; the journal likely ceased publication shortly afterwards as there is little mention of it in later years⁷. As Checa Godoy points out «[...] Although

⁵ F. Ezpeleta Aguilar, *Literatura y Prensa del Magisterio en el XIX*, «REIFOP», vol. 11, n. 2, 2008, pp. 85-92.

⁶ L.M. Lázaro Lorente, *Prensa racionalista y educación en España*, Valencia, Universidad de Valencia, 1995.

⁷ J. Altabella, *Notas urgentes para una historia de la prensa balear*, «La Estafeta Literaria», n. 226-227-228, Madrid, 1969.

the Balearic region had a wealth of journalism titles from early on, often at the vanguard and of excellent quality, it is true that educational publications in the Balearics have been relatively scant until today, despite the region having one of the highest media densities in Spain»⁸.

Support for this argument is quite clear given that «El Magisterio Balear» would have practically no competition for over fifty years.

The most immediate precursor to «El Magisterio Balear» was the newspaper «El Fomento Balear»; likely to have been published every ten days or every fortnight, it would disappear in December 1872 after three years in print. One of the last issues on 3rd December 1872 published the regulations for a Balearic Teaching Association founded in August 1872, whose mouthpiece would be «El Magisterio Balear». In this sense, the new journal was a successor to «El Fomento Balear» and would release its first issue in January 1873⁹. Although initially released every ten days, it would become a weekly at the end of its first year until its final issue, and although having a modest print-run never surpassing 500 issues, it had a huge influence on public school teaching¹⁰.

«El Magisterio Balear» began publication on 10th January 1873 and the final issues were released at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. After a brief hiatus, a new period began in 1900 with another printing house – the Imprenta del Comercio run by Francisco Soler. The journal was published every ten days during its first nine months to then switch to weekly release from 27th September 1873. It would always be known as «El Magisterio Balear», although a changing subtitle would be added to the generic masthead. Initially, the journal went by «El Magisterio Balear: periódico de primera enseñanza» [primary education journal]. This subtitle would remain until 3rd September 1892, when it changed to «El Magisterio Balear: periódico semanal de primera enseñanza, órgano de la Asociación de Maestros de esta Provincia» [weekly primary education journal from the Association of Teachers of this Province].

⁸ Checa Godoy, *Historia de la Prensa Pedagógica en España*, cit., p. 181.

⁹ «El Magisterio Balear», n. 1, 1873, p. 1.

¹⁰ Very few pedagogical journals would appear in the Balearic Islands from the foundation of «El Magisterio Balear» to well into the 20th century. The «Boletín de la Escuela Mercantil» came out in 1880, which changed to the «Boletín de la Institución Mallorquina de Enseñanza» – a mouthpiece of the decidedly institutional school created by Alejandro Rosselló and Mateu Obrador in 1880. «El Eco del Magisterio» would be published during a brief two-year hiatus of «El Magisterio Balear», between 1898 and 1900. Juan Benejam, a teacher from Ciutadella, would also set up a journal on education in 1883, known as «La Escuela Educativa». «El Magisterio Asociado» would be published in Manacor from 1884, although its distribution was highly limited. Moreover, only two monthly journals would take an interest in educational issues, amongst other topics: «El Ateneo» (1890-1892) and «Los Libros» (1890-1898).

At the start of the 20th century, rationalism would mainly develop in Minorca in line with the model followed by Ferrer Guardia's Modern School. The «Libre Concurso» journal was founded on the island in 1902, supported by the teacher Sebastián Suñé. The journal's distribution was very limited. Years later, and also coming out of rationalist education circles, «Escuela Moderna» would be published in Alayor (Minorca).

The first issue in 1909 would replace *periódico semanal* to *seminario* [weekly] and initially remove the reference to the Balearic Association of Teachers, to then re-insert it at the start of 1916. Over the decades, several people would serve as editors, including Antonio Umbert, Juan Vadell, Matías Bosch, Dionisio Vidal, Jerónimo Castaño and Bartolomé Terrades, each of whom added nuances that in no way altered the essence of the liberal, measured and receptive journal.

Between 1873 and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, «El Magisterio Balear» seemed to suffer hiatuses in its print-run, although this cannot be completely confirmed as there is no full collection of the journal in local or state libraries or archives, nor has any complete set been located in private hands. The first consistent publication period runs from its creation in 1873 to 1916. Printing was only interrupted during this period from late August 1898 to October 1900, when it was restarted with a reset numeration. During the interval, «El Eco del Magisterio» was founded which, despite attempts to differentiate itself, largely resembled «El Magisterio Balear». «El Eco del Magisterio» only managed a brief run since it was unable to attract advertisers or financial contributions from teachers in the Balearics. We believe that between 1916 and 1923, «El Magisterio Balear» likely suspended publication as no issue of the journal has been found from that period and no references are made to it in other articles published at that time. It would seem that in its place, during this presumed interruption, the «Boletín del Museo Pedagógico Provincial de Baleares» became the teaching journal in the Balearic Islands. After 1924, and until its final disappearance in 1936¹¹, random issues of the journal have been unearthed.

«El Magisterio Balear» covered highly diverse topics. Most articles are theoretical reflections on issues such as education for health, physical exercise at schools (physical education, gym, games and sports), walks and excursions, and school camps. There are also many articles on school organisation, class grades in schools and teaching systems such as the cyclical/spiral method, school spaces and materials, discipline, prizes and punishments, manual work, art education, civic education, comparative education, school libraries, school building societies and mutual societies, social education and childhood protection, special education, infants, women's education, psychological studies of childhood and topics related to didactic methodology. In addition to all this, there are articles that have a constant presence throughout the life of the journal dealing with complaints and demands from professionals.

Below is a look at how, in the context of articles on theoretical reflections and regarding different pedagogical issues at the time, teachers make their own contributions setting out their experiences and opinions based on their own practice.

¹¹ About the later years of the journal, please see: A.J. Colom Cañellas, *La renovació educativa a El Magisterio Balear en temps de la Segona República*, «Educació i Cultura», vol. 21, 2010, pp. 61-80.

2. *The practice of teachers as reflected in «El Magisterio Balear»*

One of the first areas selected for this article due to its spotlight in the journal concerns school organisation. The first attempts to separate schools into grades or the introduction of the spiral curriculum comprise some of the experiences detailed by teachers in the Balearic Islands in the pages of the journal. Before going any further, it would be wise to provide a brief overview: public grade schools were legally established in Spain in 1898. Royal Decree of 23rd September 1898 and its implementing regulations of 29th August 1899 attempted to set up trials for an organisational model that would only temporarily apply to practical teacher training schools [escuelas anejas] annexed to the Teacher Training Schools [Escuelas Normales]¹² for teacher training. At a formal level, the grading system in teaching comprises grouping pupils in terms of age or knowledge level to form more standardised groups (sections, in the terminology used at the time) where teachers could provide better didactic attention. The outcome is schools organised into several classrooms, each containing a group or section led by a teacher. These schools were known as *graduadas* or grade schools to differentiate them from those with all grades being taught in the same classroom (*unitarias* or unitary schools)¹³.

In Majorca, grading in education began in the final 25 years of the 19th century. Both the Guillem Cifre de Colonya School and the called *Escuela Mercantil* [Commercial School] in Palma followed the guidelines set by the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* [Free Institution of Education], providing graded education. The initial experiences of grading in public schools came from Miquel Porcel i Riera (1869-1933)¹⁴, who was one of the most representative proponents of contemporary pedagogy in the Balearic Islands and organised the practical teacher training school annexed to the Normal School into grades, as per government stipulations approved between 1898¹⁵ and 1899. Although the general status of Balearic schools mostly followed the unitary model, some

¹² A. Viñao Frago, *Innovación pedagógica y racionalidad científica: la escuela graduada pública en España (1898-1936)*, Madrid, Akal Universitaria, 1990, p. 13.

¹³ A.D. Galera Pérez, *Escuela pública durante la I Restauración (1875-1931): Aspectos administrativos y curriculares*, «Cabás», n. 19, 2018, p. 20.

¹⁴ For more on Miquel Porcel i Riera, see, A.J. Colom, *D. Miquel Porcel Riera i els inicis de l'activisme escolar a Mallorca*, Palma, Centre d'estudis socialistes Gabriel Alomar, Gràfiques Miramar, 1984; P. Payeras, *Miguel Porcel y Riera (1869-1933). Manuales escolares cíclicos y activismo escolar*, Doctoral Thesis, Department of History of Education and Comparative Education, (Supervisors: A. Tiana and B. Sureda), Madrid, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2008; F. Comas, *Introducción y primeras aplicaciones del slöjd – trabajos manuales según el sistema de Nääs (Suecia) – en España*, «Historia de la Educación. Revista Interuniversitaria», n. 20, 2001, pp. 261-282.

¹⁵ Taking advantage of the reform in Normal Schools for Teacher Training where the annexed practical schools were split into grades, it was solely stated that students would be divided into three or four sections, depending on the age and education level of each (Royal Decree of 23rd September 1898, Art. 2 and 3).

teachers such as Porcel attempted to organise education into grades. This was true for Gabriel Comas (1864-1942)¹⁶, a renowned professional who actively took part in the most important demonstrations for educational reform in the Balearic Islands between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1894, this teacher had already separated the unitary school in Alayor (Minorca) into three grades and applied the cyclical model, as shall be detailed below¹⁷. In turn, Porcel ran the Teacher Training School and also organised it into educational grades at around the same time as Comas was working in Minorca. In 1895, he published a book on how to organise education in line with the cyclical model based on his experience in separating his school into four grades¹⁸. Although Comas and Porcel's contributions are pioneering both in grading education and applying the cyclical model, further experiences from subsequent years will be looked at that demonstrate an attempt to establish grades in public schools.

In 1901, Porcel himself insisted in the pages of «El Magisterio Balear» that it was possible to grade large schools in Palma without having to change buildings or invest large sums of municipal money. He believed that by using auxiliaries, the largest schools could be organised into grades and thus offer higher quality teaching¹⁹. His article had widespread impact, as demonstrated by the response from some teachers in later articles who supported Porcel's proposal. This was the case with the teacher in the Majorcan village of S'Arracó, B. Esteva Salvà, who stated that grades represented the modern system for school organisation. According to Esteva, the mixed system – derived from the Lancastiran system – used in Balearic schools throughout the 19th century was now outdated and relegated by a system of the future: the grade system. Moreover, Esteva stated that teaching by grades also meant using the cyclical method for learning as grading would not only be a way to organise schools but also a true methodological reform²⁰. There are further testimonials from teachers who, on their own initiative, organised their schools into grades. For example, in 1903 Juan Llarena explained the following:

My rural school has been split into grades. [...] I found pupils split into 6, 7 or 8 sections and lessons from 1857. I have separated the 80 pupils into four Schools, yes, four Schools: it is my grade school... my faux grade school, as there is only one teacher. They are not

¹⁶ R. Bosch Contestí, *Gabriel Comas i Ribas. Un mestre del seu temps*, Palma, Ajuntament d'Esporles, 1991.

¹⁷ G. Comas, *Posibilidad de dar en nuestras escuelas la enseñanza enciclopédica y cíclica*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 29, 1894, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ M. Porcel Riera, *Curso completo de enseñanza primaria con arreglo al método cíclico*, Palma de Mallorca, Imprenta Rotger, 1895.

¹⁹ M. Porcel, *Auxiliares*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 25, 1901, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ B. Esteva Salvà, *Organización de las escuelas públicas. Sistema moderno*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 38, 1901, pp. 358-360 and B. Esteva Salvà, *Organización de las escuelas públicas. Sistema moderno*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 39, 1901, pp. 373-375.

sections but something else: Schools without a Teacher, headless bodies; in reality, it is highly unfortunate²¹.

These experiences are hugely interesting but remain rudimentary in their nature. The very teachers implementing the grading acknowledge, as evidenced by the previous paragraph, the precarious nature of their initiatives meaning that despite highlighting their work, they demand political commitment to grade schools, as well as the means to fully take advantage of this new system for school organisation. They rightly sense that legal reforms need to be supported by other interventions that impact what one could call school culture, helping teachers to assimilate not only what is legally stipulated but also the underlying pedagogical foundations. The legal recognition demanded by teachers for grading in schools would not arrive until the 1910s. At that time in the Balearic Islands, the first municipal grade school was being built. Beforehand, Palma city council sent two teachers from public primary schools – Bartomeu Terrades and Gabriel Comas – overseas to analyse how grade schools operated in other countries, as well as the material used. This pedagogical exchange in France, Belgium and Switzerland was essential to the *Escuela Graduada* [Grade School] finally opening in Palma on 17th July 1913²². Once the school was opened, «El Magisterio Balear» continued to publish articles on the pros and cons of grade schools compared to unitary schools.

Directly linked to the issue of grade schools is the cyclical method, whereby knowledge is organised by year so that each course worked on the same knowledge area and progressively expanded its complexity. The aforementioned teacher, Gabriel Comas, was the first in the Balearic Islands to publish an article on cyclical learning. In 1894, this Majorcan teacher working in the town of Alayor (Minorca) published an article in «El Magisterio Balear» entitled *Posibilidad de dar en nuestras escuelas la enseñanza enciclopédica y cíclica* [The possibility of providing encyclopaedic and cyclical education in our schools]. At the time, Comas was working in a unitary school that he described in the following manner: «The premises are a 4½ m wide x 13 m long x 3 m high room without a patio, with little light or ventilation [...] I have had average attendance of 65 pupils (from a register of 75) this year, with the youngest being five years old, the oldest being 11½ years old and only six being older than 12»²³.

In these circumstances, Comas implemented the cyclical method by splitting his pupils into three groups, with each having a full programme for every subject. Comas's article dates from 1894, although he may well have spent

²¹ J. Llarena, *Organización graduada*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 21, 1903, p. 182.

²² F. Comas Rubí, *Reforma urbanística i renovació pedagògica en la Mallorca d'inicis del segle XX*, «Educació i Cultura. Revista Mallorquina de Pedagogia», n. 11, 2002, pp. 31-41; F. Comas Rubí, *L'escola Graduada de Palma. Cent anys aprenent (1912-2012)*, Palma de Mallorca, Leonard Muntaner Editor, 2012.

²³ Comas, *Posibilidad de dar en nuestras escuelas la enseñanza enciclopédica y cíclica*, cit., p. 4.

several years implementing the system before publishing the initial results. His experience published in «El Magisterio Balear» represents a hugely valuable source to discover schooling practice from the period. As Comas himself states:

I propose demonstrating the possibility of providing encyclopaedic and cyclical education in our schools, not through reasons but through facts, in order to further oblige non-believers, since reasons can be contested by others, whereas it is difficult to deny the facts [...] These are the facts: in yesterday's exam, my pupils demonstrated that despite having implemented encyclopaedic learning, none of the regulatory subjects was overlooked, and by teaching cyclically, there is no confusion between the sections; indeed, quite the opposite, this helps enormously both my own work and that of my pupils²⁴.

This distinguished teacher also wrote the first texts so as to be able to apply the cyclical system at his school, producing the corresponding books in three levels (those for the first and second grade were published, although the third remained in manuscript form and, due to financial troubles, was never published) and demonstrated, at the very least, that it was possible to apply cyclical learning at all schools and attain true comprehensive education. In parallel, as mentioned earlier, another teacher was also experimenting with grade separation and applying the cyclical method in his schooling: Miquel Porcel i Riera, director of the teacher training school annex at the Normal Boy's School in the Balearic Islands. Porcel published his first work on this topic in 1895, a year after Comas, although he had likely spent several years putting his grade system into practice. For different reasons, Porcel attained wider distribution than Comas. In fact, his famous collection of books called *Grades* would be known not only around the islands but also in the rest of Spain and even in Latin America²⁵. Porcel divided his school into four grades (preparatory, elementary, middle and higher) each comprising two school years, except the higher grade that only lasted for one year. The programmes for each grade contained all subjects, with only the intensity and depth of the different topics changing as per the level. The implementation of this system not only represented a major methodological overhaul – involving the adaptation of content and explanations, as well as suitably adapting the exercises – but also a radical change in how education was organised.

A further revealing aspect to the practice of teachers can also be traced through «El Magisterio Balear»: school material. Some ancillary material for teaching started to appear and be debated in the pages of the journal under the prism of new pedagogy. One of the most interesting examples, thanks to it being a pioneering experience in producing intuitive learning material, was the famous *Didascosmos* created by Minorcan teacher Joan Benejam (1846-

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁵ Porcel Riera, *Curso completo de enseñanza primaria con arreglo al método cíclico*, cit.

1922)²⁶. This Balearic teacher was one of the most prolific contributors in terms of reflecting on methodological innovation. Proof of the impact of his articles can be seen in the many replies received by the journal from other teachers thanking him for his contributions and congratulating him on their quality. In the aim of replacing books as the sole teaching material for geography, Benejam created an ingenious device to intuitively teach children about geographical features. He created a board that showed the irregular features of the earth's surface in *papier mâché*, sketching out mountains, rivers, crop fields, tunnels, cities, etc. The aim, according an anonymous article about it, was to

[...] partly replace dry and, at times, objectionable learning from books with an object that vividly caught the attention and whose details could be thoroughly assimilated by the mind; this object awakened all the senses, supplying a treasure trove of knowledge and providing teachers, every step of the way, with motivation for fun object lessons²⁷.

Alongside the presentation of materials, there were also teaching techniques and methods put forward by teachers themselves and countered by practice. These are mostly published in a new section of the journal that premiered in 1901 under the title *Ocurrencias Pedagógicas* (pedagogical considerations). The main aim of this highly interesting section would be for it to serve as an arena to distribute essentially practical content, experiences, trials and ideas from real everyday practice described by the authors themselves: teachers. The then editor of the journal, the teacher Jerónimo Castaño, explained in the first edition of the section:

We understand that one of the things to most contribute to making progress in education in general and to obtaining good results from primary education would be for all teachers to take note of any considerations, if they can be called that, which their talent draws out in the practice of teaching²⁸.

The main aim was to collect everyday techniques or procedures that formed part of daily teaching and which provided positive outcomes. For Jerónimo Castaño, there was no doubt that «we are well aware that we all have special ways to teach the many topics on our school syllabi, something we each apply suitably and which always provides a good outcome»²⁹. In the words of the distinguished teacher Rufino Carpena – a unique individual influenced by Regenerationist ideas, the Institución Libre de Enseñanza and the educational

²⁶ I. Vilafranca Manguan, *Mestre Joan Benejam Vives: antologia d'un compromís pedagògic*, Mahón, Institut Menorquí d'Estudis, 2002; X. Motilla Salas, *Mestre Joan Benejam i Vives: 1846-1922*, «Revista de Menorca», n. 87, 2006, pp. 141-147; A.J. Colom Canyelles, *Les idees pedagògiques de Joan Benejam a través dels seus escrits «mallorquins» (segle XIX)*, «Revista de Menorca», 1996, pp. 29-42.

²⁷ Anonymous, *El Didascomos*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 40, 1893, p. 4.

²⁸ J. Castaño, *Ocurrencias pedagógicas*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 10, 1901, p. 88.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

innovations from the start of the century³⁰ –, «every teacher has and practices something special at their school; something that easily and satisfactorily resolves cases and issues that for others are difficult or which they find overwhelming»³¹. These considerations are like «little sparks overlooked in the heart of schools» or «sparks of genius that ignite from time to time»³² in daily instruction and teaching and, according to the supporter of this idea, were ripe for distribution to progressively improve schooling.

The idea of an essentially practical pedagogy section in all professional primary education journals underscored the proposal from the then editor of the journal. He believed there was an abundance of material for it to work and encouraged all primary teachers in the Balearics to describe or explain in the form of a lesson all the «extremely special procedures» that led to positive outcomes:

In this way, we will learn new things, apply them at our schools and be highly satisfied with the sure results we will see in the future thanks to the influx of inspiration from even the most modest of our fellow teachers. Who would doubt the simplest method shown to possibly be a seed that after germinating, growing and developing becomes a robust, leafy tree?³³

The original idea of this teacher was to initially get these experiences as «loose ideas» to the journal to then move onto a level of «correlation between them» and one day, perhaps, to be able to create a network of interlinked and interrelated ideas so that teachers could have a broad catalogue of techniques to use. For Rufino Carpena, they are

[...] those little scattered lights it would be useful to collect for ease of use and satisfaction of teachers and for the good of learning [...] with the result that we could form a torch to guide us through the shadows (of which there are) of regenerative popular learning and education³⁴.

In this way, the pages of the journal began to collect these different pedagogical considerations that came out of teachers' everyday practice. The first consideration was proposed by Rufino Carpena himself: the so-called «bividual» reading exercise. The first thing that draws our attention is the teacher's coining of a special term for the proposed system. This practice was

³⁰ B. Sureda Garcia, S. González Gómez, *Discurso pedagógico y defensa del magisterio en Rufino Carpena Montesinos*, «História da Educação», vol. 21, n. 51, 2017, pp. 229-251; B. Sureda Garcia, S. González Gómez, «Educacionista», *una publicación escolar pionera (1912-13)*, in Hernández Díaz (ed.), *La prensa de los escolares y estudiantes: su contribución al patrimonio histórico educativo*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2015, pp. 221-231.

³¹ R. Carpena, *Ocurrencias pedagógicas*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 15, 1901, p. 142.

³² J. Castaño, *Ocurrencias pedagógicas*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 10, 1901, p. 88.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ R. Carpena, *Ocurrencias pedagógicas*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 15, 1901, p. 142.

fairly common in several submissions by teachers in the early years of the 20th century who were inclined to invent their own terminology, likely as a way to differentiate and show innovation in their proposals. The technique was focused on resolving the problem of large class sizes – an aspect that often prohibited involving all pupils in the exercises proposed by the teacher. Readers were to assume a school instructing 40 children. The teacher would initially request the most advanced student read several pages of a book out loud and after this, the same child would listen and direct the reading of another. Meanwhile, the teacher would make another pupil read or monitor and examine what the others were doing. After the second child finished reading, both would then supervise the reading of a further two; when these finished, there would be four students able to supervise the reading of a further four, becoming eight able to supervise a further eight, and so on. Following this technique, and regardless of the class size in a school, the teacher (who stated he did not learn this from another colleague) would ensure that in a short time all children got to practise their reading and, in addition, «he who watches and supervises also reads and learns something»³⁵. Despite the suitability of the proposed method for the teacher, he suggested that from time to time the system be paused to make children read by sections, explaining what had been read.

Dictation was also proposed by the same teacher, who suggested a vertical line be drawn leaving a blank margin of about a third of the page in the children's notebooks. This margin would be used for conventional signs similar to those used to correct page proofs after the dictation, stating the errors made in it. Once the corrections were indicated, the notebooks would be returned to pupils who would correct their errors by writing the incorrect words they spot themselves in the space in the margin, following the signs placed by the teacher, assistant or pupil corrector on the corresponding line. For Carpena, this technique was based on the procedure whereby «he who corrects himself, learns». Our attention is drawn again to the fact that this was learnt not in the Normal School but rather from teaching practice which he states faces «the daily aim of overcoming children's problems and obstacles that are often in opposition to pedagogical theories and ideals»³⁶.

Another interesting proposal by Carpena appears in issue 51 (1901) of «El Magisterio Balear». It puts forward a class procedure to teach children the sense and meaning of a secret vote, taking advantage of an election being run in the town over the previous days. To do this, the teacher placed a glass urn in the school, which quickly caught the attention of the pupils who began to ask: «Teacher, what is this? What is it for? And what is voting?», questions that the teacher gradually answered. Each child had to secretly choose the candidate to vote for, either because they simply liked them or in accordance to whether they

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

believed he could do a better job. With the results of the vote, the procedure was repeated to elect a student who would act as the supervisor and be known as the rules inspector. Carpena listed the voting results, stating in turn that the process had been performed «after notification of the rules to ensure no coercion and after presentation of the candidates (the names of the three or four youngsters who usually help in the teacher to keep order and teach)»³⁷:

Piña: 9 votes; Mateo: 5 votes; Picó: 2 votes. Piña was proclaimed as the candidate and named rules inspector – a position usually held for several weeks. His classmates would respect and obey him and he would strive to maintain their support. However, the position revolved from time to time and during these weeks of school work, he would have to follow the lead of another youngster, to whom he would show respect and also recognise certain representative authority³⁸.

The teacher explained in the following lines that the ballots were burnt after the count to demonstrate to the youngsters that elections should always be secret and it was up to the voters to seek out the candidates, not the other way around. Through this completely practical exercise, Carpena taught his pupils a process that they would have to perform in their future adult lives. It is an example of Dewey's learning-by-doing theory based on learning about the real world through direct application and practice of the theory.

Rufino Carpena is one of the teachers who submitted the most texts for this new section. As we have seen, he would explain different techniques, methodologies and procedures in a clear attempt to pass on his own practical experiences in the classroom to other colleagues. In issue 29 (1901) of the journal, he set out a series of examples of conversations between teacher and pupil that aimed to be a guide to correct unsuitable behaviour amongst children, both at home and at school. One of these referred to the normal habit of children writing on walls for fun, as a «poor-taste game that can even be seen amongst certain adults with limited education»³⁹. When catching *in fraganti* a new pupil at the school doing this, Carpena explained how he tried to correct it. In front of his classmates, he dirtied the cheeks of the child with the same charcoal he had used to write on the wall and asked the other children questions such as: What do you think? Does he look good or ugly? Who has dirtied this boy? Who should clean him up? This procedure was an attempt to make the boys understand that it was not the right thing to do and he who had done it should clean it up. Nonetheless, he warns at the end of the text:

The practice of correcting this procedure in similar cases is not advisable for new teachers or for those who have not gained the trust of families and authority over the children. Used appropriately and in moderation, it shows results and has lasting impact on the

³⁷ R. Carpena, *Ocurrencias pedagógicas*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 51, 1901, p. 481.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ R. Carpena, *Ocurrencias pedagógicas*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 29, 1901, p. 272.

child, educating him, disciplining him and those who see and hear the warnings from such exemplary education⁴⁰.

In the same issue, the teacher Antonio Busquets Arbona put forward a technique that intended to improve the scant practical results obtained by pupils in numeracy taught at school. In response to complaints from parents regarding their children's lack of ability after several years at the school, the teacher decided to «break away from the time and work distribution tables done and to be done, and dedicate three quarters of an hour every day to solving problems in workbooks. After correcting and explaining them, each child would note them down in their own school book»⁴¹. After the work and writing in the school books, children would take them home and build up a small practical library for numeracy that they could always consult. The teacher proposed the work on the blackboard for those who did not have workbooks and for higher level classes, as they finished their problems, some pupils would help the teacher to draft problems for lower level classes the next day, whilst others would help «make the youngest pupils reason»⁴². In this way, Busquets believed he firstly achieved a review of what had been learnt and, secondly, that pupils acquired new knowledge in writing problems. Lastly, they became familiar with common uses from daily life.

Other teachers used this section not to present an explanation of specific teaching methods or procedures, but rather to demonstrate what they called civic and moral education systems. One example of this comes from J. Banús. This teacher reported a frequent situation of rivalry and hatred between boys from different, nearby towns, different neighbourhoods in a town and even different streets in the same area who came together at nearby schools. For this professional, the possible reasons for this dislike amongst the boys were due to three essential elements: 1) their lack of a wider perspective given their young age, 2) the poor examples set by adults, and 3) the lack of contact between children from different towns. Despite believing that schools could not do everything in this sense if no support was received from authorities and, especially, from parents, Banús proposed his own «consideration» to encourage a moral sense amongst the boys and high esteem amongst peers, as well as providing cross-cutting support for aspects linked to physical and intellectual education:

It comprises proposing that just as some schools normally go on outings, walks or picnics separately, they should all do it together from time to time, however many the better, to the point that boys from different schools meet and get to know one another. In this way, they would connect, make new friends, strengthen those bonds they already have and a sense of friendliness would be established that would soon spread to other children, i.e. those that do not go to school. Thus, when a boy went to a town or nearby neighbourhood, they would

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ A. Busquets, *Ocurrencias pedagógicas*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 29, 1901, p. 272.

⁴² *Ibid.*

be seen as a peer and not as a stranger, which is what often sadly and tiresomely happens today⁴³.

Another innovative resource that appears on several occasions in this new section is school outings. Indeed, the first articles on field trips and school tours were published in the 1890s, there were not huge numbers of articles about this topic over the following two decades, although they were representative pieces on the interest in this type of school activity, a demand for them to be legally established and defences of their health and pedagogical advantages. There are texts that set out specific experiences both in the Balearic Islands and in other provinces, as well as overseas. Specifically in the Balearics, special attention was given to the school outing to Bellver Woods in Palma organised by the provincial council in 1897. The aim was to bring together over 1,500 pupils from public and private schools in Palma on a well-planned school trip that would serve as a pedagogical model for this type of school practice. The walk – the first of its kind in Palma – took place on 14th October 1897, with processions around the city holding flags and singing songs especially composed for the occasion. The council paid for snacks and, in thanks, the flags were handed to the council after the walk⁴⁴.

Returning our focus to the pedagogical considerations section, Melchor Serra – a teacher at a school in Palma’s La Vileta neighbourhood – also offered his own contribution. He wrote about his experience over two years with this type of outing initiative, seeing it as «not only as a real joy and delight for the children, but also for the teacher, who saw his pupils use – in practice – the foundations of theoretical knowledge they had been taught»⁴⁵. In his practice, the teacher went even further by linking it to pupils then having to write a composition about it. In this sense, he intended for the children to develop their writing skills and express the emotions they had experienced, as well as describe what they had seen and done. As an incentive for the composition, he proposed awarding a certain number of prizes to the best texts. The compositions from two pupils – Antonio Salleras and Jaime Sabater – are presented as examples in issue 21 (1901) of the journal.

School camps are another topic about which teachers describe their practical experience. Run for the first time in Spain in 1887 thanks to the National Pedagogy Museum initiative, they are a further example of institutional practice introduced to Majorca through the work of Miquel Porcel i Riera. The first camps were subsidised by the provincial council and ran in the Port of Sóller in the summers of 1893 and 1894, with Porcel being responsible for their organisation and management. «El Magisterio Balear» wrote about this and in July 1893 announced the intention to extend them to the schools in Palma

⁴³ J. Banús, *Ocurrències pedagògiques*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 20, 1901, p. 187.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Excursión escolar*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 40, 1890, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ M. Serra, *Ocurrències pedagògiques*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 21, 1901, p. 195.

for the benefit «of the most needy, sick and weakest children»⁴⁶. A detailed description of how the camp worked was published in later editions, based on the diaries of the pupils themselves. This represents a huge source of interest for historians⁴⁷. The children described their daily routines, including walks around the port and outlying areas, lessons in the classroom, reading, games, lunch breaks and outings. Joaquín Bernard i Porcel described how one evening, after dinner and reading letters, bedtime arrived but a group of children became mesmerised alongside Porcel at the stargazing vantage point:

Mr. Miguel focused on several stars in the spyglass, giving their name and position. He showed us there were single, binary and triple stars that twinkled like a single one and in different colours. The second of the Great Bear is a binary. The Dog Star is triple but we couldn't see it. [...] I would never get tired of looking and learning, and although it was very late, the conversation turned to the formation of the earth⁴⁸.

The camp and its benefits are shown on several occasions in the journal. In September 1893, the provincial section dedicated two full pages to presenting it to readers. The section stated:

Surely some of our local readers, on seeing a group of strange boys in a town, walking around the streets, gardens and olive groves led by a teacher, and seeing exemplary behaviour and discipline, will have asked themselves the following question: Who are these boys and why are they wandering around? [...] They are children from poor families at several public schools in Palma under the supervision of Mr Miguel Porcel [...] and are part of a School Camp⁴⁹.

This article has presented some illustrating examples of cases under study. We have seen several of the formats with which teachers made contributions to educational publications in the period with articles describing their real experiences and opinions, based on their practice, regarding different issues of pedagogical interest at the time: techniques, materials, ways to organise schooling, activities, etc.

By way of conclusion

The educational press is part of a selection of research resources often used by education historians due to their huge potential in studying pedagogical approaches, the introduction of new ideas, new methods, etc. Nevertheless,

⁴⁶ Anonymous, *Colonia Escolar Mallorquina*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 30, 1893, p. 6.

⁴⁷ J. Bernard Pujol, *Colonia escolar del Puerto de Soller*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 33, 1893, p. 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Anonymous, *La colonia escolar de Santa Catalina del Puerto*, «El Magisterio Balear», n. 36, 1893, p. 7.

scant attention has been paid until now to descriptions of specific, everyday schooling practices that teachers themselves describe in this type of publication, always based on real experiences. It is true that these teacher contributions in educational publications from the time, narrating their own practical experiences, do not represent the largest amount of content to be found in these types of publications. Theoretical lectures are greater in number, for example. Nonetheless, as we have shown in this article, it is possible to trace several examples of daily ordinary practice that enable researchers to go beyond theoretical or legislative discourse.

The reflections made by teachers in «El Magisterio Balear», showcasing different methods and with different emphases, refer to life at school as it developed, the essence of teaching practice, direct experience of teaching and, in the end, were used as innovative approaches to practical-based thinking about pedagogy. The description of techniques, methods and materials, or the reasoned explanation of new ways to organise schooling enable us, as researchers, to gain entry to school spaces by way of a virtual breakthrough into classrooms to discover, in the teachers' own words and from a different perspective, what actually went on in these classrooms. This is why we began this study by taking publications as a type of «sounding board» through which it is possible to amplify the echo of teaching experience. As we have seen with the specific example of «El Magisterio Balear» they can be a tool to enable us to see other ways of thinking and debating, other ways of being, doing and constructing schooling, whilst also showing us different approaches to professional teaching practice.