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The Pedagogical Missions: An Innovative, Educational and Social Intervention During the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1936)

*Misje pedagogiczne: innowacyjna, edukacyjna i społeczna interwencja
w czasach Drugiej Republiki Hiszpańskiej (1931–1936)*

SUMMARY

In this paper, we will talk about the origin and characteristics of the Pedagogical Missions during the Second Spanish Republic which was founded to help rural teachers with their training and to take progress to the remote areas of the Spanish country. We will appreciate how intellectuals and teachers voluntarily participated in these Missions with a philanthropic and political aim. Then, following Morales Gutierrez's principles on social innovation, we will state that the Pedagogical Missions were an educational and social innovation in Spain before the Civil War (1936–1939). Finally, we will make a comparison between the different social intervention models in history – Charity, Beneficence, Social Justice, and Social Inclusion – and the Pedagogical Missions social intervention model which shared similar characteristics with all of them.

Keywords: Spanish Pedagogical Missions (1931–1936); educational innovation; social intervention models

INTRODUCTION

On April 14, 1931, the Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed and, as a result, King Alfonso XIII fled the country. At the first elections in 1931, the people voted in favor of the Republicans, but the countryside kept on their conservative ideas, voting against it.

Spanish towns and villages were immersed in ancestral and ignorant ways of living totally unaware of the political, economic, and social problems during that time. We

should not forget that at that time peasants were in the hands of the *caciques* (local powerful people) who provided them with badly-paid and exhausting jobs on their lands. In this penurious environment, rural people hardly lived submerged in economic and cultural poverty.

One of the main aims of the Republic was, precisely, to raise the rural people's cultural level, not only with an educational and pedagogical goal, but with a political interest. As Llopis (1933) said, rural people should be woken up and conquered for the Republic, therefore, a formula to take culture to the remote villages should be found. This process should be carried out sensitively, bearing in mind that peasants were strongly attached to their traditions.

The Pedagogical Museum director, Manuel Cossío, founded the Pedagogical Missions in 1931 to create some Travelling Missions to train rural teachers and to provide the population with educational and cultural activities such as conferences on the progress of health, hygiene, and politics. For example, some cultural activities included theater and puppet plays, listening classical music on a gramophone, art exhibitions, and poetic and dancing soirées (Cossío 1934).

Flórez Tristán et al. (2005) explained that the main idea was to take educational and cultural activities to the people in the countryside and to bridge the gap between the cities and the villages. This cultural life was a privilege that not many people could enjoy in the Republican Spain.

The Pedagogical Missions had several objectives. One of the most important ones was to combat ignorance. Cossío and all his pedagogues and teachers team were quite aware of the misery and neglect that surrounded Spanish peasants and they were absolutely determined to change this and to do whatever was necessary to improve the standard of living of that unenlightened society (Otero Urtaza 1982).

Health care, hygiene, culture, and education were objectives of prior importance for the Missions due to the fact they strongly believed that rural people had the same rights than the people from the cities. The Missions wanted to open people's eyes to convince them that they were not slaves of their own work and that a way out of poverty was possible. They wanted to show rural people that progress had arrived in the cities and how it could reach the villages to improve the quality of life.

Although altruism was the most important characteristic of the Pedagogical Missions, we should not forget the political objective they had underneath. As Úcar Martínez (2004) pointed out, education is always political and tries to influence others intentionally. It also pretends to change the individuals by improving themselves and their lives because an educator is never neutral and always acts from a theoretical and ideological model.

Another Republic objective and, therefore, a Missions' objective, was the improvement of schools. During that time, there were more than one million and a half children out of school and a high rate of illiteracy which the government pretended to fight with unified, lay, bilingual, equal and co-educational schools (Flórez Tristán et al. 2005).

Schools began to be built all over the national territory, mostly in the deplorable state. Similarly, the renewal of the facilities and school equipment (furniture) was carried out.

The Second Republic fostered the creation of school libraries. The Pedagogical Missions did an extraordinary work promoting libraries in the rural areas. Schools were given a set of a hundred books each, for children and adults, including other schools materials too.

Teacher training was another fundamental aspect within the educational innovations carried out during the Second Republic. Teacher Training Schools (*Escuelas Normales*) were reformed and so was the Inspection Service (*Inspección de Primera Enseñanza*), establishing a narrow link between the inspectors and the teachers.

At the same time, universities unified teacher training studies and changed the faculty syllabuses.

The Pedagogical Missions also organized several one-week updating courses for teachers in subjects such as literature, Spanish and biology. The teaching system used in these courses was based on meetings and discussions in which opinions and experiences were exchanged instead of following a formal lecturing pattern.

Outdoor visits were also organized to study the natural environment and the historical heritage.

THE PEDAGOGICAL MISSIONS AS A SOCIAL INNOVATIVE PHENOMENON

Social Innovation is a process through which an idea is transformed into a service that satisfies specific citizen necessities. It can also be an original initiative which improves public action effectiveness (Morales Gutiérrez 2009). Attending to this statement, we can say that the Pedagogical Missions were a social innovative phenomenon during that period.

Considering the Pedagogical Missions as a social innovative phenomenon, we are going to present some characteristics that this initiative had been following the opinion of Morales Gutiérrez.

Related to the organization, one of the social innovation characteristics is that their teams are made up of professionals which collaborate as volunteers. That was also the case of the Pedagogical Missions who were taught and organized by pedagogues and teacher training professors and several teachers, writers, artists, musicians, and doctors, who collaborated with them voluntarily.

The Missions were original and new. Their contribution to the sociological, pedagogical, and social field work were completely new. There is no information on any other phenomenon of this type in Spain. The Missions were also original in terms of pragmatism because they had the ability to solve the problems they were finding in the

places they were visiting. The Missions' leaders tried to find solutions to the problems analyzing them and looking for a simple and quick solution.

As Morales Gutiérrez (2009) said, innovation includes initiatives, projects and instruments which improve social welfare. At the same time, they are against exclusion, famine and poverty which happened in the Pedagogical Missions. An idea is transformed either into a policy, a new public service, an institution, or a new social process that satisfies citizens' necessities at any level. Moulart and Ailenei (2005) considered that social innovation is linked to the satisfaction of the basic human necessities and the Pedagogical Missions were involved in taking culture to the country people and improving their living conditions.

Fostering healthy leisure was another aim of *Patronato de Misiones*, the board which ruled the Pedagogical Missions. Country people worked restless and many of them lived in penurious conditions. They had resigned to their fate, accepted their destiny and they did not consider any other options.

Innovations are imitable and their ideas are exportable, in fact, the Pedagogical Missions idea could have been carried out in any other territory in which rural areas were in the same abandoned and deprived situation than the countryside areas in Spain. In terms of education, the Missions kept in mind people's necessities for their lives and did not only care for children's education.

As we stated above, the Missions organized cultural activities for adults such as, theatre plays, puppet plays, film projections, painting exhibitions (using copies of *Museo del Prado* masterpieces) or listening to music (on gramophones) or choirs singing alive. At the same time, adults received lectures and conferences about the progress, healthy leisure, hygiene, basic medicine notions, agriculture, and farming. There were also specific lectures for women. The goal for all these conferences was to raise awareness about the rural people's necessities and denouncing the impoverished situation in which these people lived. Besides there were talks with a political objective which informed the population on democratic principles, the State structure or the improvements that the Second Republic was accomplishing all over the national territory.

The Missions made an extraordinary effort and its presence was of great importance. Their members were committed to the Republican ideas and had altruistic motives. This team of collaborators were very valuable not only for the people themselves but for the social influence. We should not forget that most of the Missions volunteers were intellectual committed artists, teachers, writers, and doctors who had strong convictions about the Missions' labor.

Social innovation has cleared and defined characteristic related to social development and social welfare would be one of them and the Missions chased the same objective and fostered the cultural and social improvement of the depressed rural areas.

A social intervention could be endogenous if it was started by the people who needed help, or exogenous if it was started by the people who wanted to help. In this

case, the Pedagogical Missions developed an exogenous social intervention because help came from the people who wanted to help improve the situation of rural Spain at that time.

Every innovation entails a change and produces a different situation. In the field of education, the Missions meant a change. The educational Republican and Missions model produced a different and new situation because they proposed an educational method based on games and entertainment, far from the traditional and rigid methods used then, which were based on memorizing contents. Another change produced in this sense was that the Missions were a different educational option far from the institutional or formal education, but they were a modern and unconventional model far away from primary, secondary and higher education.

Another novelty was the age of the Missions participants. Missions touched all ages and organized activities for all: elderly people, adults, youngsters, and children.

Going on with social innovation characteristics, some authors think that these can be tangible or intangible depending on the service they pay to the society. In the Pedagogical Missions there were tangible innovations such as the introduction of classrooms libraries and the distribution of gramophones at schools, and theatre plays performed in the villages.

Among the intangible innovations we can highlight the fostering of culture, the search of harmony between modern times and traditions, and the endeavor to dignify the rural culture. In order to carry out these tangible and intangible innovations, they used the latest inventions of that time, namely the cinematographer and the gramophone, which, undoubtedly, give an indication of the Missions' modernity.

In terms of personal treatment, the Missions organizers were in direct contact with the people and kept a narrow communication and warm manner with them.

Talking about the results, we could say that although the Missions lasted for a very short time (1931–1936), they did an extraordinary work in favor of the popular culture and the experience was a very enriching one, not only for the members of *Patronato de Misiones* but also for the people who benefited from the Missions' arrival in their villages or the ones who participated in specific training courses.

We should bear in mind that innovations are produced through a net system and the *Patronato* was made up of a group of well-organised pedagogues and intellectuals who achieved their objectives thanks to the help of some volunteers.

There are some factors which favor or facilitate social innovation. These are creativity, holistic vision, courage, tolerance, openness, risk, empathy, cross-curricularity, diversity, integration, importance of territory, network, and new technologies. And all of these are presented in the Pedagogical Missions' interventions in some rural areas of Spain. Due to all these factors as well as those we have already stated in this paper, we can explain that the Pedagogical Missions had many of the important elements that every innovation should have and they were a clear example of the long-awaited modernity that the Second Republic tried to spread all over Spain.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT SOCIAL
INTERVENTION MODELS IN HISTORY: CHARITY, BENEFICENCE,
SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

In order to clarify the importance of the Pedagogical Missions, we are going to present a comparison among the social intervention models carried out in Europe since the Middle Ages. All through history we can distinguish among four social intervention models based on helping or assisting others: Charity, Beneficence, Social Justice, and Social Inclusion. These four models have some characteristics that are present in the Pedagogical Missions that we will briefly present by outlining the relationship which we found among them and the Pedagogical Missions' interventions.

Charity, as an intervention model, establishes a relationship between two groups of people: the powerful and the disadvantaged ones. On the one hand, well-off people having the highest social status (clergy and nobility) and on the other hand, the disadvantaged ones: poor, ill, disabled, orphans, and neglected people.

In this model, powerful people are the active group leading the intervention. They are the group who help and sympathize with the disadvantaged ones. However, their intention is not to enhance their economic status, but help them to mitigate some of their problems. The disadvantaged people are passive in this process, they do not participate, they only accept the charity. This relation between the powerful and disadvantaged is physical and it happens face-to-face but there is an enormous psychological distance between those who give and those who receive.

This intervention is a voluntary contribution and it is carried out for different motives. These motives can be sentimental, especially when someone feels compassionate towards the people in need. The motives can also be social due to the fact that charity provides a social prestige to those who give. Other people are moved by religious motives in which they provide charity in order to achieve divine salvation.

If we compare the social intervention carried out by the Pedagogical Missions we can find coincidences with the charity model such as voluntary work or the relationship between the two groups of people and their social class differences.

In the case of the Missions, the group who performs the intervention, is a group of intellectuals coming from the cities. The interventions are implemented on socially, culturally, and economically disadvantaged people who are being helped to improve their situation.

However, the difference between the charity model of intervention and the Pedagogical Missions is that in the case of the Missions, the people who were helped were neither active nor passive, instead they participated in the activities, got trained, and contributed to the success of the Missions with their knowledge. The Missions looked for a change in the rural Spanish society. As Úcar Martínez (2004) says, social intervention is defined as an irruption into a reality with the aim of modifying it.

The motives to demonstrate that *Patronato de Misiones* had to start this intervention were completely different from the previous ones we have just mentioned.

On the one hand, they were pedagogical motives which were to focus on the improvement of education; cultural motives – based on the promotion of culture in the rural areas, and political motives which prompted citizens' education that was the fundamental aim of the Spanish Second Republic's leaders.

The Beneficence or Philanthropy intervention model was developed in the pre-capitalist society in the 17th and 18th century, during the Enlightenment.

While in the previous model (the Charity) the aim was to help the poor people, in this one, the main objective is social regeneration and helpless people's reintegration in society. Pauperism is an urban phenomenon and it is considered a threat for society. The poor people were divided into two groups: useful poor people, who were sent to the army or navy, and non-useful poor people, who were sent to asylums.

The Enlightenment had a capitalist philanthropic model that looked for an economic benefit of poverty and for this reason, charity was prohibited. In terms of education, the people who were at hospices were taught how to read and write and most of the times they learned a profession.

This was not a question of charity but a question of becoming useful for the society. At that time, the pedagogical optimism prevailed, considering education as something necessary for the development of the people and the society, also it was against traditionalism and fatalism. If we compare the idea of education in both periods, the Enlightenment and the Second Spanish Republic, we could say that education was one of the basic pillars for both, focusing on fighting illiteracy and ignorance, and promoting the modernization of the country. For this reason, the state was assigned responsibility for social progress and economic improvement.

The interest for teaching training was a common characteristic of both interventions. During the reign of Charles III of Spain, the *Colegio Académico del Noble Arte de Primeras Letras* was founded and its main aim was to improve primary teaching and organize teachers, not as a guild but as a group that can be controlled by authorities.

Although the Enlightenment social intervention model was a preventive one, the Pedagogical Missions model was educational and protective.

From a religious point of view, during the Enlightenment, being a useful man was a duty towards God and for that reason idle people and criminals would not get into the kingdom of heaven. During the Second Republic, the state became laic and the religious matters were not the same as before.

The social intervention model called "Social Justice" was developed in the middle of the 19th century in Spain, but in some industrialized countries in Europe it started at the beginning of the 19th century. The model changed substantially in relation to the previous models, such as Charity and Philanthropy. As Úcar Martínez (2004) stated, helping others is not a question of Charity but a question of Social Justice. Charity depended on beneficence and individual initiatives, however, the Social Jus-

tice model comes from state organizations, trade unions, and private people. In the industrialized European societies, workers unions and trade unions appeared, which started spreading all over Europe at the same time as Marx's ideas did. If we compare the social intervention carried out by the Social Justice model and the Pedagogical Missions, we can say they have different aspects in common. The State and the wealthy classes (technicians, professionals, civil servants, volunteers, etc.) accomplished this intervention in case of the lower and discouraged people (workers, poor people, illiterate or misfit). As for the Pedagogical Missions, its intervention was targeted at the disadvantaged people but in the rural areas. The objectives of both were to reach personal autonomy and to improve people's way of living, and they fought for equality of rights and opportunities in education and professional or labour training. Social Justice is a pioneering model in promoting activities that the Missions promoted one century later. Both have the same objective of educating or re-educating the population and the interventions are carried through institutions and community fields. In both cases the intervention is direct and face-to-face. These interventions share a eugenic perspective that looks for the improvement of the race. For these reasons, hygiene was promoted not only in the school but also in other spheres. Thus, as Terrón Bañuelos (2000) explained, from 1875 to 1931 when the Borbón dynasty reigned again, the state was involved in efforts to prevent rickets, or to promote family planning, maternity care, vaccination and revaccination.

Finally, we compare the last intervention model – the Social Inclusion model – with the Pedagogical Missions. This intervention model was developed in the 1970s. At that time, society was changing and the post-industrial era was developing into the information and communication one. This model, as Úcar Martínez (2004) points out, tries to provide the necessary resources to link the people, excluded or not, to the different social life structures. This society is divided into two major groups: three quarters of the population is busy managing and keeping their own identities, and the rest are just invisible. Social life has become more and more complex and this can be appreciated in the wide variety of social workers that exist nowadays, whose work goes beyond the simple assistance. The people who contribute to this model are volunteers, technicians, and professionals who are employed by governments or institutions. There is in line with the Pedagogical Missions because professionals from different fields put their knowledge into the service of the people in need. The relationship established among the social workers or volunteers and the invisible people is close and warm (sometimes it can be virtual). It was also the case with the Missions, where volunteers had a close relationship with the people they helped. The inclusion model tries to help people in need or not, by including them in the society and providing the tools to do it. This model also agrees with the Pedagogical Missions in the ample ways of giving coverage to the people's necessity and the cultural management and community programs offered to workers.

CONCLUSIONS

All throughout this paper, we have explained the origin and characteristics of the Pedagogical Missions during the Second Spanish Republic which were founded to help rural teachers with their training and to take progress to the remote areas of the Spanish country. We have appreciated how intellectuals and teachers voluntarily participated in these Missions with a philanthropic and political aim. Then, following Morales Gutiérrez's principles on social innovation, we have been able to state that the Pedagogical Missions were an educational and social innovation in Spain before the Civil War (1936–1939). Finally, we have made a comparison between the different social intervention models in history – Charity, Beneficence, Social Justice, and Social Inclusion – and the Pedagogical Missions social intervention model which shared similar characteristics with all of them.

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STRESZCZENIE

W artykule zostały omówione geneza i charakter misji pedagogicznych z czasów Drugiej Republiki Hiszpańskiej, ustanowionych w celu niesienia pomocy wiejskim nauczycielom w procesie ich kształcenia oraz wprowadzania zmian w odległych obszarach kraju hiszpańskiego. Autorka przybliżyła, w jaki sposób intelektualiści i nauczyciele dobrowolnie uczestniczyli we wspomnianych misjach, realizując cele dobroczynne oraz polityczne. Następnie, zgodnie z poglądami M. Gutierrez na temat innowacji społecznych, stwierdzono, że misje pedagogiczne z okresu poprzedzającego w Hiszpanii wojnę domową (1936–1939) stanowiły przykład edukacyjnej i społecznej innowacji.

Na koniec dokonano porównania między różnymi historycznymi modelami społecznej interwencji, takimi jak: wolontariat, dobroczynność, sprawiedliwość społeczna i integracja społeczna oraz model interwencji społecznej w ramach misji pedagogicznych, który prezentuje podobne cechy ze wszystkimi wymienionymi.

Słowa kluczowe: hiszpańskie misje pedagogiczne (1931–1936); innowacje edukacyjne; modele społecznej interwencji