WHAT KIND OF MEDIEVAL HISTORY SHOULD BE TAUGHT AND LEARNED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL?

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Abstract

This study presents a reflection on the teaching of history in secondary education. Specifically, it addresses what topics of the history of the Middle Ages are taught and learned and to what end. We review the "regulated history", that is to say the current curriculum, in order to later examine its interpretations and possible teaching methodology. On the one hand we have the perspective of the major publishers of textbooks, representing the main "taught history". On the other hand, we have the alternative proposal by representatives of innovative teaching as a minor "ideal history" that comes from a critique of the present problems encourages the development of educational competences. Finally, the existing relationships between this new option and educational innovation at university level are discussed.

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This paper is a critical analysis of the current state of the teaching and learning of History, from the perspective of the History of the Middle Ages, in Spain's Compulsory Secondary Education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* or ESO), specifically in the Valencian Community. As a teacher of ESO but also an active researcher in Medieval history and in teaching History, I intend to share my thoughts with the community of medievalists and, in general, with anyone interested in the teaching of Medieval History at different educational levels.

The Middle Ages as an historical period are covered in the second year (*Segundo Curso*) of ESO in the subject area of "Social Science, Geography and History," which is compulsory for the four years of this stage. Until recently, the content of Medieval History overlapped only slightly with Human Geography in this second year of ESO. But since the academic year 2008-2009, after the reorganization following the Fundamental Law of Education (*Ley Orgánica de Educación* or LOE), it overlaps with Geography, the same as Modern History, in a broad perspective of preindustrial societies. The majority of teachers agree that this is an accumulation of excessively dense material for students at this level (13-14 years old), who might be overwhelmed by covering the medieval period in the classroom in only one trimester. But perhaps this is a lesser problem given that it would depend on the interpretation of the curriculum, i.e. the current legal framework, and, as such, on the subsequent selection and organization of material and objectives. In the following pages I intend to critically assess both the curriculum and its possible interpretations, realised through different materials (textbooks, teachers' regulated books, etc), each of which can lead to certain teaching methodologies. On the one hand, I will assess "regulated history" (*Historia regulada)*, that is the content and evaluation criteria that fall under legal guidelines: with this I will discuss to what point the formulation of these items adds to the problems of current tendencies in medieval historiography; and, furthermore, to what degree it is pertinent to investigate the relationship between a discipline (medieval studies today) and curricular content. On the other hand, I will review "taught history" (*Historia enseñada)* as a teaching methodology, defined in good measure by the options available, from the major textbook publishers to groups in support of pedagogical reform and the materials they produce. This latter option represents the minority and alternative "ideal history" (*Historia soñada*).[1] I will examine the content and methodological approaches derived from the majority and minority options. I will focus on the reform model, which begins from a selection and organization of content in response to present problems and problems in the

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1. I owe the concepts of *Historia regulada* (taugth history), established by curricula, *Historia soñada* (ideal history), developed by the pedagogical reform groups, and *Historia enseñada* (regulated history), mainstream teaching methodologies, to the works of Cuesta, Raimundo. *Sociogénesis de una disciplina escolar: la Historia*. Barcelona: Pomares-Corredor, 1997 y *Clío en las aulas. La enseñanza de la Historia en España: entre reformas, ilusiones y rutinas*. Madrid: Akal, 1998. Also, a synthesis on the evolution of the History curricula and secondary level teaching methodologies in which the duality between the proposals of the major textbook publishers and the teaching groups is clearly set out in the works: Valls, Rafael. "El currículum de Historia en la enseñanza secundaria española (1846-2005): una aproximación historiográfica y didáctica". *Íber. Didáctica de las Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia*, 46 (2005): 9-35; Valls, Rafael. *Historiografía escolar española, siglos XIX-XX*. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2007: 47-49.

development of educational aptitude, and its relationship to educational innovations at university level. However, I would like to start with a reflection on the objectives of teaching History.

Why do we teach History in secondary school? Why do adolescents study History? These questions are not easily answered. Neither is that of the reality of the teaching of History in ESO. Now that an air of defeatism has hung over the situation of secondary education for years, with the much-discussed failure of schools, it could seem like a fruitless effort to remember the important social function of History: to teach students to think historically, to help in the formation of critical consciousness for comprehension, and —why not?— the solution of present problems. But can our students truly accomplish this through the study of History? And furthermore, can we make, or better still, do we want all teaching of History in secondary school to work towards this end?

In fact, there is another way to rapidly arrive at the goal of the teaching/learning of History. And this is through the completion of the established curriculum. The teaching of Social Sciences, Geography and History, like any other subject in ESO, should contribute to the development of the general objectives at any stage, providing the students with the knowledge and necessary skills for comprehending the world in which they live, be that for entrance into the workforce or for the pursuit of higher learning. In order to do this, the social sciences, and specifically History, develop their own objectives. Among them are, according to the curriculum, the acquisition of four abilities: the identification of the plurality of causes that explain the evolution of current society through the interrelation of social, political, economic and cultural events; the acquisition of a global perspective of human historical evolution to understand the plurality of social communities to which they belong; an appreciation of cultural diversity manifested through attitudes of tolerance towards the same; and, lastly, knowledge of the functioning of democratic societies and an appreciation of their values. Certainly these are useful and relevant abilities that allow the students the autonomy to comprehend their social environment. It is both possible and legally necessary for adolescents to acquire these abilities, although not all teachers have stopped to consider the necessity and importance of these aspects in relation to their teaching.

1. "Regulated History" to "Taught History": the Middle Ages in the curriculum of mainstream text books

We begin by assessing how current the standard curriculum is through an examination of the content and evaluation criteria it establishes and by discussing the relavance of this question.

In the second year of "Social Sciences, Geography and History" the Medieval History content is part of a block of material dedicated to preindustrial societies. This content, specifically in accordance with the regulations of the Autonomous

Community of Valencia, can be found in Table 1.[2] As can be seen, the guidelines are a list of very generic and traditional statements. These intend to be a manual of sorts, although the result is more a list of epigraphs along the lines of a thematic index, covering the entire medieval period and its evolution in the Iberian Peninsula. In conclusion, as it is reflected in the evaluation criteria, the student is intended to achieve the following four objectives:[3] a) understanding the significance of the end of Mediterranean unity and the configuration of three diverse models of medieval civilization: Western Christianity, Byzantium and Islam; b) identifying and describing the socio-economic, political and ideological elements of feudal Europe and its evolution; c) differentiating between the various political units that coexisted in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages and being able to correctly locate them in time and space, analyzing their similarities and differences; d) understanding the cultural aspects of the medieval period and its different artistic styles.

There is no doubt that a specification of objectives and content of this style priorizes the conceptual above all else and segments history in a perspective that combines chronology (early, high and late Middle Ages) with some structural criteria (the functioning of medieval societies) and divides the changes that occured in Europe from those of the Iberian Peninsula (from Al-Andalus to the Christian Kingdoms). This "regulated history" seems to be pushing conceptual content organized in units or themes that the teams of writers for the leading publishers of textbooks have conveniently chosen. One can say that such a "regulated history" imposes themes on the "taught history" or on teaching. That content does not include some of the more recent problems in current medieval studies, as is clearly demonstrated in a recent and meritorious collective work coordinated by Ana Echevarría and directed specifically at secondary school teachers with an interest in updating the historiography.[4] In this study, in order to judge the present content of Medieval History at the secondary level we turn, to be precise, not so much to the essence of the curricula but to the interpretation chosen by the major publishers.[5] And their

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2. I refer to the appendix at the end of this paper. Those guidelines appear in Decree 112/20 July 2007 where secondary level curriculum is collected, published in the *Diario Oficial de la Generalitat Valenciana*, (DOGV) nº 5562, 24 July 2007, p. 3479. At the state level, Medieval History content for secondary school is collected in the Royal Decree 1631/29 December 2006 which establishes the Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO) curriculum, published in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* –BOE-, nº 5 from 5 January 2007, p. 706. A general outline is given as such: "Medieval society. Origin and expansion of Islam. Society, economy and power in feudal Europe. The resurgence of the city and commercial exchange. Culture and medieval art, the role of the Church. The Iberian peninsula in the Middle Ages. Al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms. The way of life in Christian and Muslim cities".

3. Diario Oficial de la Generalitat Valenciana, nº 5562, del 24 de julio de 2007, p. 3480.

4. Echevarría Arsuaga, Ana, coord. *La Historia Medieval en la Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria: un balance*. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2008.

5. Note the analysis of content in the following sections of these works: Barquero Goñi, Carlos. "Los pueblos germánicos, visigodos y bizancio", *La historia medieval en la Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria: un balance*, Ana Echevarría Arsuaga, coord. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2008: 39-62; Rius, Mónica. "Historia del Islam y de Al-Andalus", *La historia medieval en la Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria: un balance*, Ana Echevarría Arsuaga, coord. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2008: 63-81; Luis Corral, Fernando. "Europa y la Península Ibérica de los siglos IX al XII. El

textbooks reproduce in extended form the same epigraphs from the legal guidelines. We can test this, for example, if we take four textbooks[6] and observe their similarities, as is shown in Table 2: they coincide, almost point by point, in the sections of the curriculum although they differ in whether they address the material on Europe and the Mediterranean world together with that of the Iberian Peninsula.

The curriculum and its extension in mainstream textbooks evidences absolutely no historiographical updates. They seem to have become stuck in the history manuals from the end of the 80s. As such, questions present in recent investigations in medieval history are either absent or insufficiently addressed. A few examples include, considering feudalism as a social system, the issue of the feudal revolution, issues of urban and rural social history (minor peasant exploitation, relationships between city and country, credit and debt, urban oligarchies, social organization of industrial work, forms of religiosity, the practice of science and medicine, etc.) or of the social history of power and war (the development of taxation, the strengthening of the state, political society and its clients, military structure, etc). However, to improve the teaching and learning of Medieval History in secondary school, would a rigorous update of the content of the curriculum truly be sufficient? The presence of a few topics in accordance with the innovations in current medieval research does not guarantee in itself an improvement in the learning of History. It could please those of us who are concerned about this topic, but it does not bring with it an automatic improvement in our teaching. In fact, to think that merely refreshing the content would help the teaching and learning of Medieval History derives from a distorted image of what really occurs in the learning process. In a nutshell, it comes from an incomplete reflection on the process of *didactic transposition* in the framework of the Social Sciences and specifically in History: in (medieval) history, scientific knowledge is not transformed directly into teachable knowledge given that there are numerous interferences. Students do not receive scholarly knowledge directly via teachers who have converted it into teachable knowledge, adapted to their mental framework. The students construct their own academic knowledge. Because of this, the elements of common knowledge that a student is familiar with, diffused throughout their familiar and social environment (a plural image of the medieval period strongly influenced by audiovisual culture),[7] interact with the adapted scholarly knowledge that they receive from their teachers. There is, for this

Feudalismo", *La historia medieval en la Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria: un balance*, Ana Echevarría Arsuaga, coord. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2008: 83-114; Echevarría Arsuaga, Ana. "La Baja Edad Media en Europa y la Península Ibérica (siglos XIII-XV)", *La historia medieval en la Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria: un balance*, Ana Echevarría Arsuaga, coord. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2008: 115-139.

6. These are the texts from the following publishers: Anaya, Ecir, Santillana and Vicens Vives. They can well represent the majority of the textbook market, Valls, Rafael. *Historiografía escolar española*...: 206.

7. The analysis of the aspects and stereotypes of the Middle Ages that exist in popular culture, that students recognizes and perceives, would be the work of another study. It is sufficient to point out that a rich medieval landscape (populated with knights, ladies, castles, dragons, peasants, monks, gothic elements, etc) is very present in contemporary audiovisual culture (cinematography, TV series, video games, etc).

reason, a complex process of construction of academic knowledge.[8] And this process is influenced by the interferences of the disciplinary code of History, understood as a grouping of subconscious academic routines and practices that come from the idea of what it is to teach and learn History: elements that are still very present and that are responsible for a stereotypical vision of the process of teaching/learning History involving the mere transmission and later reproduction of summarized information, teachable historical content, to be transmitted to the student.[9] It is clear then that the ever-present need to update content is insufficient in itself if we do not reestablish what it is to teach and learn (medieval) History. Along the same lines, one must always be aware of the fact that the concretion of material in the curricula is susceptible to interpretation from set viewpoints, which leads to a set selection of those materials. In mainstream academic manuals there is no discussion of what kind of Medieval History it is socially relevant to teach, departing from one of the most relevant objectives established by the legal guidelines: to assist students in their critical understanding of their social environment. In fact, leaving this objective aside, the statements of the curricula are open to interpretation. Student learning is greatly enriched when we consider what kind of Medieval History we wish to teach from this perspective. The easiest way to accomplish such a goal is to organize and present the material of the curricula according to relevant social issues of the present: what can interest us today in the medieval past is a question that helps us to critically comprehend current issues, as I will discuss later. This is what is not set out in mainstream textbooks.

We have seen that the most widely distributed manuals share the same legally established standard content. But how else are they similar? Do textbooks allow for the improvement of the teaching and learning of Medieval History in secondary school?[10] In the first place, it must be said that mainstream textbooks are useful tools for the transmission of a teaching/learning model adapted to the legal requirements, although it is the manner in which they are used that will or will not allow for the improvement of pedagogy and incorporate the inclusion of educative skills. In theory,

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8. For more on the interrelationship between common knowledge (*saber cotidiano*), scientific knowledge *(saber científico o disciplinar)* and academic knowledge *(saber escolar),* the concept of didactic transposition, and, in general, regarding the need for an alternative epistemology for academic knowledge, see: García Pérez, Francisco F. "El conocimiento escolar en una didáctica crítica. Reflexiones generales y planteamiento de algunos debates", *Discursos y prácticas para una didáctica crítica de las Ciencias Sociales*, Juan Mainer, coord. Sevilla: Diada, 2001: 119-139.

9. Regarding the disciplinary code of History, I refer to Cuesta, Raimundo. *Clio en las aulas*...: 8-10. He defends the thesis that in spite of the curricular reforms and pedagogical advances of the last thirty years in Spain, which have been incorporated in good measure into the curricula and teacher training, the weight of this disciplinary code, born in the 19th century when History appeared as a scholarly discipline, is still very relevant to present-day teaching methodology.

10. Some useful reflections on school history books from the leading publishers and their common features can be found in: Valls, Rafael. "La història en els manuals: entre textos i contextos". *L'Espill,* 6 (2000): 61-74. In general, regarding the criteria for the configuration of textbooks for the teaching of history and the lack of attention these are given, I refer to Rüsen, Jörg. "El libro de texto ideal. Reflexiones entorno a los medios de guiar las clases de historia". *Íber. Didáctica de las Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia*, 12 (1997): 79-83; Valls, Rafael. *La enseñanza de la Historia y textos escolares*. Buenos Aires: Zorzal, 2008: 17-38.

it seems that the leading textbooks are made more with the aim of simplifying the task of teaching than to improve the quality of student learning. As they are books which seem to be aimed more at teachers than students, they share innovations that facilitate daily teaching. On the one hand, although written information continues to dominate, they are notably enriched by iconographic material, charts and graphs. On the other hand, they include the highest possible number of units with conceptual content, which are closed, very simplified, and are even marked to indicate what is considered essential or relevant (in different ways —in bold or italics— or by including outlines or guides), allowing teachers the choice to follow them or choose a selection; the units of content are derived directly from an extension of the statements in the curriculum. And finally, they are accompanied by teaching guides that provide a detailed explanation of each and every one of the possible activities that exist in the manual, accompanied by a few proposals for different levels of work and even their own exams. As such they permit teaching to occur almost on auto-pilot, if you will pardon the expression. However, there are inconveniences. They do not merely reduce the creative autonomy of the teacher, they can also limit the possible pedagogical approaches to, and therefore the quality of, student learning. In fact, conceptual information presented in closed form in various formats (text, images, graphs, charts) is far more quantitatively prevalent in textbooks than activities or other tasks that work with the content. Furthermore, the vast majority of exercises or homework proposed in these books are superficial: many are "cut and paste" activities, selecting part of the previous material and remembering or reproducing it, and do not allow for work that requires the student to reason or question effectively the phenomena or historical events presented. More complex and creative activities that guide the student toward forming their own thoughts on the social occurrences of the time, involving significant learning through developing their own knowledge, are scarce. Activities such as setting down their previous thoughts about the issues, recapitulation of knowledge, reports based on different sources of information (texts, images, charts, graphs, etc), case studies, debates, role plays, identification with people and situations —i.e. empathy, small guided research projects, etc. Existing exercises of this type are scarce in good measure as a product of demand: they are not utilized by teachers and since their initial arrival in the first school books of the 1990s they have been avoided if not suppressed. Only the current legal requirement to develop *basic educative competences*, as a common and essential element in all learning materials at a secondary school level[11] has begun to resuscitate this type of activity, for which reason they maintain a minority presence. In fact those more constructive suggested activi-

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11. Basic competences are those learning skills (abilities, knowledge and attitudes) that are considered essential and that all students should acquire through schooling in the various subject areas. Namely, they are the following: civic and social competency, linguistic competency, competency in knowledge and interaction with the physical world, competency in cultural and artistic expression, digital competency and competency in the use of information, mathematical competency, competency in learning to learn, and competency in autonomy and personal initiative. They are legally regulated in the new curriculum for ESO established in the LOE. On the competencies in general, see Arnau, Laia; Zabala, Antoni. *11 Ideas clave. Como enseñar y aprender competencias*. Barcelona: Graó, 2007.

ties are included either in isolated sections or at the end of textbook units, or perhaps in the margin, in the teacher's guide, or as a "competence development workbook".

In short, mainstream textbooks indirectly prioritize a teaching method for history based on the mere transfer of information: through the predominance of content synthesis that follows a faithful interpretation of the statements in the curriculum over learning activities and projects, they position themselves within a predetermined conception of what it is to teach History. A method based on the simple transmission of knowledge, which evokes a positivist conception of the material as a complete and closed knowledge set whose diffussion, reception and later reproduction is the limited conception of History learning that it derives. In short, this is the traditional "received history".[12]

2. "Ideal History": the other Medieval History from pedagogical reform groups and its relationship with innovation in the university

However, the teaching of History is not limited solely to the options put forward by the leading textbook publishers. Another way of interpreting the curriculum exists, and as such, another way of teaching and learning (medieval) History. Although this option is in the minority, an "ideal history" put forth by various groups and projects for pedagogical reform offered different materials that the traditional school text. The essential element among these groups was the nature of the curricular materials that presuppose an alternative model of interpretation of the objectives, content and evaluation criteria established by the legal guidelines. The above-mentioned materials initially appeared as unit notebooks, although with time they took on the format of a book although with a completely different organization from the standard texts, as they favoured the active and constructive dimension of teaching and learning over the informative and transmissive dimension.[13] Those pedagogical reform groups were born of the final years of the Franco dictatorship and the period of the Transition, the 1960s and 70s (the Germanía y Garbí Groups). They therefore preceded the educational reform, at the end of the 80s and early 90s (fruit of the Fundamental Law of the General Organization of the Educational System or LOGSE, *Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativa*), but collaborated closely with it, encouraged by the reform thanks to the open and flexible curriculum put forward in 1991. Although they proposed different paths for renewal (investigative and receptive-meaningful methodological models), the groups from the 90s (the 13-

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12. Regarding the diametric opposites of the new methods of teaching, "researched history" and "constructed history", I refer to the useful synthesis of: Maestro, Pilar. "Epistemología histórica y enseñanza". *Ayer*, 12 (1993): 135-181.

13. For more on those groups for pedagogical research and renovation and their proposals, see: Cuesta, Raimundo. *Clío en las aulas*...: 125-166; Valls, Rafael. "El currículum de Historia...": 27-28; Valls, Rafael. *Historiografía escolar española*...: 210-214.

16, Asclepios, Insula Barataria, Kronos, Aula Sete, Kairós, and Gea-Clío Groups) offered other types of materials for use in the classroom. Those alternative manuals (in the form of unit-based notebooks or books that offered a compilation of units) gave a breath of fresh air to the teaching practices of the 90s, both through their use and through their enormous training potential in the area of teaching, although they later fell into disuse due to exhaustion, lack of re-printing, or the dissolution of the groups themselves. Today a few examples of these textbooks survive although they are rarely used. Altogether, all these materials have a few common features that we can synthesize into three basic elements. First, continual "educational innovation," creating new curricular materials to be tested in the classroom for their improvement. Second, a rejection of reported or expository history that favors concepts accompanied by chronological continuity and rejects a continuous future history that legitimizes the present and is not questioned. In place of this, they support a *critical and reflexive history* that organizes the content and goals of the curriculum, and therefore interprets them, from a very different perspective. They begin with *present issues*, in a sort of didactic genealogy of current social problems, whose consideration, although occasionally compromised, allows this reorganization and selection. The content presented in this manner does not presuppose a mere extension of the statements of the curriculum, nor does it always have to follow a chronological order. Content can be presented in an open problem —based approach addressing its full complexity and progressing according to the thread of questions and issues upon which it is structured. This allows for the mere scholarly and cultural consideration natural to the predominant model of taught history to be surpassed. Third and lastly, content is approached through a constructivist conception in student learning: the starting point is not a teachable fact but rather the ideas that the student body holds about the topic or issue that allows for its elaboration or interaction with a teaching plan based on the completion of activities and work with documentation of all types (texts, images, charts and graphs), including selections of adapted historic or historiographical texts. In this way an introduction to the work of the historian (and the geographer) and their sources is also present in the planned activities: assignments that continually challenge the student to formulate and communicate their knowledge until the arrival at a final synthesis which reviews from an open perspective the present issue or issues set out at the beginning.[14] This methodology prioritizes procedural content, especially linguistic and communicative abilities and competencies and the ability to reason. It is therefore easy to frequently address the various educative competences (social, civic, linguistic, digital or treatment of information competence, etc) which this metodology anticipated before they were legally established.

But these proposals do not only enrich pedagogy and therefore improve the quality of student learning. They also allow for the curricular content to be updated, introducing new themes and issues that are relevant to current medieval historiography

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14. A complete synthesis of the theory of the teaching/learning sequence along the lines of those groups for pedagogical renewal can be found, although applied to the sphere of Geography, in the study by Souto, Xosé Manuel. *Didáctica de la Geografía. Problemas sociales y conocimiento del medio*. Barcelona: Serbal, 1998: 125-167.

not as a pre-made unit, but through adapted materials (historical and historiographical documents) and even study guides, diagrams or concept mapping. The act of updating the historiography does not come from adding new adapted teachable content, but rather from working with the information already within the framework of the methodology mentioned above: historical or historiographical documents from which the student develops assignments outlined in a study guide. The Medieval History units developed by two renewal groups (Kairós and Gea-Clío) function as such and can be seen in Table 3.[15] The proposal from the Gea-Clío group, in which I have collaborated, in contrast to the content of mainstream texts, does include some of the recent themes in medieval studies: the feudal revolution, the relationship between war, the state and taxation, themes and issues related to rural and urban social history, etc. And for this reason the proposal begins with a consideration on what themes from the medieval past help establish a better critical understanding of current problems. The selection of content that leads to an updating of historiography is not arbitrary. It develops from the consideration of the Middle Ages as a mirror of the present: what we have inherited from the medieval past that brings us closer to socially relevant issues today. First, it presents the medieval period, especially from the high middle ages, as the site of the construction of European plurality and cultural mixing. Secondly, along the same lines, the medieval period is a space where cultural and socio-religious diversity co-existed but were also in continual conflict. Thirdly, the Middle Ages are seen as the origin of identities and institutional models on the scale of Europe, Spain and Valencia. Lastly, the Middle Ages are seen as a period of unequal relationship and exchange between city and country, with political and economic control of rural spaces held by the emergent urban nuclei. These considerations are those that have lead us to organize the interpretation of the curriculum content, proposing problems and material to be addressed in the teaching unit.[16]

The proposed teaching innovations at the secondary level intertwine with the educational renewal in the university through their goal of changing old habits and traditions in the teaching and learning of History. A pedagogical renovation in higher education in the area of history that looks to overcome the traditional model based in the transmission of scientific content and in guided assignments and exercises rooted predominantly in material from lectures accompanied periodically by selected bibliographic readings and a final exam. This model directs the student, in the words of Ken Bain, to a "bulimic" or "superficial learning" based on the memorization and

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15. Curricular materials from the Kairós group have been developed by the professors José Ignacio Madalena, Pilar Maestro and Enric Pedro: Maestro, Pilar. "La enseñanza de la Historia en secundaria: el modelo didáctico del proyecto Kairós". *Didáctica de las ciencias experimentales y sociales*, 8 (1994): 53-96. Those from the Gea-Clío group were coordinated by professors Xosé Manuel Souto and Santos Ramírez: Souto, Xosé Manuel. "Los proyectos de innovación didáctica. El caso del proyecto Gea-Clío y la didáctica de la Geografía e Historia". *Didáctica de las Ciencias experimentales y sociales*, 13 (1999): 55-80.

16. I have had the good fortune to participate and be included in the Gea-Clío group, collaborating with professors Santos Ramírez y Carmel Ferragud, in the 2005 reworking of the Medieval History unit in the book for the second year of ESO.

use of information for concrete tasks.[17] It is less enriching than "active learning" or "natural critical learning" derived from the development of skills and the use of information to complete assignments;[18] in the case of History, the meaningful comprehension of historical phenomena and the learning of historical research methods, the knowledge and use of sources, more in line with the proposals of the groups for pedagogical renewal at the secondary level. The relationship between educational innovation at secondary and university level is confirmed if we look at the published experiments in pedagogical renewal in History degree programs. For example, one from the University of Valencia contains a detailed teaching guide for Medieval History put together by professors involved in renewal efforts.[19] Or, there is the better organized experiment in the University of Barcelona by the innovative teaching and historical research group *(contra) Taedium* lead by Professor Teresa Vinyoles.[20] In these experiments, which theoretically should become more generalized with the new university plan, priority is placed not on the transmission of information but rather on the participatory and active method that combines the learning of basic content with the acquisition of the skills of the historian (use of historical terminology, work with sources). All of this derives from an enrichment of pedagogy: the presence of well-organized lecture classes is not predominant, but rather combines with theory application classes and time to work on individual or group assignments based on the use of primary and secondary sources.

However, unfortunately, today we still find ourselves in a situation in which the student body arrives at their first History course with the collection of information transmitted by teachers (as notes, summaries, lectures) as nearly their only learning experience both in and out of the classroom. This is the result of the poor dissemination of alternative teaching practices in secondary education as well as the weight of History's disciplinary code. For these reasons, it can be said that currently there are still changes to be made in the teaching/learning of History. The evident historiographical transition in Spain's universities over the last thirty years, through a thematic and methodological modernization to arrive at European standards, does not seem to have been accompanied by a parallel *pedagogical transition*, by a complete modernization of teaching practices. This is due to the fact —not always acknowledged— that traditonal teaching methods —based on the transmission of contents to be memorized, through textbooks or lecture syntheses— both in the university and in secondary school, are still present.

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17. Bain, Ken. *Lo que hacen los mejores profesores universitarios*. Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2007: 52-53.

18. Bain, Ken. *Lo que hacen...*: 58-59, 73-74.

19. See: Català, Jorge; Cruselles, Enrique; Tabanera, Nuria; Cruselles, José María; Grau, Elena. *Innovación educativa en la Universidad: Historia*. Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València: 41-57.

20. See the interesting work and references cited in Vinyoles, Teresa. "Enseñar Historia, aprender Historia. Un diálogo a tres voces". *Imago Temporis. Medio Aevum*, 1 (2007): 189-201, 307-316. Professor Vinyoles has also shared her interest in pedagogical innovation at the university level with those interested in teaching in secondary schools through her participation in a theoretical reflection with the support of sources in: Vinyoles, Teresa; Cantarell, Elena; Comas, Mireia; Blanco, Ángel. "Dossier. La vida cotidiana en la Edad Media". *Aula. Historia Social*, 11 (2000): 16-48.

Table 1. Content of Medieval History as Regulated by the Curriculum (Community of Valencia). *Diario Oficial de la Generalitat Valenciana,* **nº 5562, 24 July 2007, p. 3479**

Byzantium. Islam and the expansion of the Islamic world. Charlemagne's empire. The birth of Europe. Art and culture.
Society, economy and power in feudal Europe: clergy, lords, and peasants. The reesurgence of trade and the city. Guilds and the middle class. The role of the Church.
Europe from the 11th to 15th centuries. Expansion (11th - 13th century). Crisis (14th – 15th century). Medieval thought: monasteries and universities. Romanesque and Gothic art.
The Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages: Al-Andalus. Political, economic and social development: Emirate, Caliphate and Taifa kingdoms. Taifa kingdoms in the area of the current Community of Valencia. Culture and art. Way of life in Muslim cities.
The Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages. The rise of Christian kingdoms: general overview and territorial evolution. Reconquest and repopulation. Political institutions. James I and James II. The Kingdom of Valencia. Pre-Romanesque Spanish art. Romanesque and Gothic art in Spain. Valencian Gothic. The way of life in Christian cities. The art of the Mudejars. The three cultures: Christians, Muslims, Jews.

Table 2. Content for Medieval History in four Mainstream Textbooks.

A) *Geografía e Historia 2 ESO.* **Valencia: Voramar-Santillana, 2007. Two sections and seven units on Medieval History**

Section I. The Middle Ages
Unit 1. The Beginning of the Middle Ages. 1. The end of the Roman Empire. 2. The Germanic kingdoms. 3. The Byzantine Empire. 4. Islam in the Middle Ages. 5. The Carolingian Empire.
Unit 2. Feudal Society 1. The later invasions. 2. A few weak kings. 3. A classed society. 4. The nobility. 5. The clergy. 6. The peasants.
Unit 3. The Romanesque Period. 1. Christianity. 2. Religious Art. 3. Romanesque architecture. 4. Romanesque sculpture. 5. Romanesque painting.

Unit 4. The Rebirth of the City. 1. Economic prosperity in the 13th century. 2. The rebirth of the city. 3. The height of craftsmanship. 4. The strengthening of the monarchy.

Unit 5. The Gothic Period. 1. An urban culture. 2. The birth of the university. 3. Gothic architecture. 4. Gothic sculpture. 5. Gothic painting.

Section II. Spanish Lands in the Middle Ages

Unit 6. Al-Andalus. 1. The history of al-Andalus. 2. A prosperous economy. 3. An unequal society. 4. An urban world. 5. Cultural legacy. 6. Architecture. 7. *Sharq al-Andalus*. 8. The economic splendor of *Sharq al-Andalus*. 9. Medieval cities in Valencia.

Unit 7. The Hispanic Christian Kingdoms. 1. The centers of Christian resistance. 2. The formation of the kingdom of Astoria-Leon. 3. The birth of Castile. 4. From the Spanish March to the Pyrenean kingdoms and counties. 5. The rise of the Christian kingdoms. 6. The advance of the Christian kingdoms. 7. The three cultures. 8. The Crown of Castile. 9. The Crown of Aragon. 10. The Kingdom of Valencia. 11. Three cultures in the lands of Valencia. 12. Economic prosperity in the kingdom of Valencia. 13. Cultural and artistic splendor in the kingdom of Valencia.

B) *Demos. Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia, 2. Comunitat Valenciana.*
Barcelona: Vicens Vives, 2008. Six units on Medieval History

Unit 1. Islam and Al-Andalus. 1. The appearance of Islam. 2. Islam. 3. The expansion of Islam. 4. Islam and the Iberian Peninsula. 5. From the Caliphate of Cordoba to the Taifa kingdoms. 6. Andalusian society and economy. 7. Islamic culture and art.

Unit 2. Feudal Europe. 1. The birth of feudal Europe. 2. Feudal nobility. 3. Peasants in the feudal world. 4. The Christian church: the clergy. 5. Medieval monasteries. 6. Romanesque art and architecture. 7. Romanesque painting and sculpture.

Unit 3. The Medieval City. 1. The revival of urban life. 2. Urban activities. 3. Urban society. 4. The financing of royal power. 5. The crisis of the Late Middle Ages (14th and 15th centuries). 6. Gothic art and architecture. 7. Gothic sculpture and painting.

Unit 4. The Formation and Expansion of Peninsular Kingdoms. 1. The origin of the Cantabrian kingdoms. 2. The first Pyrenean counties and kingdoms. 3. Territorial expansion in the 11th and 12th centuries. 4. The repopulation of conquered territories. 5. The Iberian Peninsula: a cultural crossroads. 6. The Romanesque Period in the Iberian Peninsula.

Unit 5. The Major Peninsular Kingdoms. 1. The consolidation of Spanish kingdoms. 2. The great expansion of the 13th century. 3. Government institutions. 4. The Kingdom of Castile: economy and society. 5. The Crown of Aragon: economy and society. 6. Social and political conflict in the Late Middle Ages. 7. The Gothic Period in the Iberian Peninsula.

Unit 6. The Kingdom of Valencia in the Middle Ages. 1. The Islamic Period (8th - 13th century). 2. Christian occupation (13th century). 3. The Kingdom of Valencia in the Crown of Aragon. 4. Society in the Kingdom of Valencia. 5. Economic expansion in the Kingdom of Valencia. 6. Gothic art in the Kingdom of Valencia.

C) *2. Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia. C. Valenciana*. **Madrid: Anaya, 2008. Six units on Medieval History**

Unit 6. Byzantium and the Carolingian Empire. 1. The unity of the Roman Empire breaks apart. 2. The Byzantine Empire. 2. The Germanic kingdoms. 3. The Franks and the Carolingian Empire.

Unit 7. The Origin and Expansion of Islam. 1. The birth of Islam. 2. The expansion of Islam 3. The organization of an empire. 4. Society and daily life. 5. Artistic legacy. 6. Islamic culture.

Unit 8. Feudal Europe from the 9th Century to the 11th Century. 1. Medieval Europe. 2. Power, Economy, Society. 3. The nobility. 4. The clergy. 5. The peasants. 6. Romanesque art.

Unit 9. The Iberian Peninsula and Muslim Rule. 1. Al-Andalus. 2. The organization of al-Andalus. 3. The culture and art of al-Andalus. 4. Christian centers. 5. The organization of the Christian centers. 6. The culture and art of Christian centers. 6. The Community of Valencia and Islam.

Unit 10. Feudal Europe from the 11th Century to the 15th Century. 1. European territory and its governments. 2. Agrarian expansion. 3. Urban expansion. 4. Medieval religiosity. 5. The crisis of the 14th century. 6. Culture and art of the period.

Unit 11. The Iberian Peninsula and Christian Rule. 1. Al-Andalus from the 11th to 15th century. 2. The Christian states from the 11th to 15th century. 3. The rise of the Christian Kingdoms. 4. Repopulation. 5. Economy and society in the Christian Kingdoms. 6. Gothic and Mudejar art and culture. 7. The Community of Valencia in the High Middle Ages.

D) *2 ESO, Geografía e Historia*. **Valencia: Ecir, 2008. Seven units of Medieval History**

Unit 6. The Breaking of Mediterranean Unity. 1. Germanic settlements: the loss of unity. 2. The birth of Western Europe. 3. The Carolingian Empire (I). 4. The Carolingian Empire (II). 5. The Byzantine Empire (I). 6. The Byzantine Empire (II).

Unit 7. Islam. 1. The birth of Islam. 2. Islamic religion. 3. The expansion of Islam. 4. The Umayyad Caliphate and the Abbasids. 5. Economy and society. 6. Islamic art and culture.

Unit 8. Feudalism. 1. Feudal society. 2. Lords and vassals. 3. The feudal castle. 4. The fief: lords and peasants. 5. Culture in the feudal world. 6. Romanesque art.

Unit 9. Medieval Society: The Late Middle Ages. 1. The resurgence of medieval cities. 2. Economic activity. 3. The exercising of political power. 4. The crisis of the Late Middle Ages. 5. Late Medieval culture and architecture. 6. Gothic sculpture and painting.

Unit 10. Al-Andalus. 1. Islam's conquest of *Hispania.* 2. The splendor of the Cordoban Caliphate. 3. The end of Muslim Spain. 4. Economy, society and daily life. 5. Art and culture in Muslim Spain.

Unit 11. The Medieval Christian Kingdoms. 1. The first Christian kingdoms and counties. 2. Southward expansion in the 11th century. 3. The height of the Christian Kingdoms (11th and 13th centuries). 4. The Kingdom of Valencia. 5. Political and administrative organization. 6. Economy and society.

Unit 12. Art and Culture in Medieval Christian Spain. 1. Culture in Medieval Christian Spain. 2. Art in Asturias and Mozarabic art. 3. The peninsular Romanesque Period. 4. Cistercian art. 5. Gothic art.

Table 3. Medieval History Content in the Alternative Teaching Proposals

A) Proyecto Gea-Clio: *Segundo Eso. Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia.*
**Valencia: Nau Llibres, 2005. Two teaching units: one
on Medieval History and the other on Medieval Art**

From the Country to the City: Europe in the Middle Ages
1. On the Middle Ages and its geographic boundaries.
2. From the feudal revolution of the year 1000 to the crisis of the 14th century: the protagonists.
3. Written, archaeological and iconographic sources.
4. A peasant world: medieval agrarian spaces.
5. The rebirth of the urban world: merchants, artisans and independent professions.
6. Al-Andalus and the Hispanic kingdoms.
7. The institutions: the State, municipal organization, taxation.
8. *Universitas Christiana*: religion, culture and society.
9. Light and shadow in the *convivencia* of three culture: Muslims, Christians and Jews.

10. Final overview: the legacy of the medieval world.
The Mediterranean in the Middle Ages: a focal point of art and culture
1. Our ideas on artists and artisans.
2. Islamic art.
3. Monasteries and Romanesque art.
4. The reemergence of the cities of the West: the height of artisanship and Gothic art.
5. Now it is your turn: cultural and historical patrimony.

B) Proyecto Kairós: *Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia. 2º ESO.* **Barcelona: Rialla-Octaedro, 2003. Two sections and five units on Medieval History**

Section I. Medieval societies
Unit 1. The formation of medieval society. 1. The fall of the Roman Empire and the invasions. 2. Heirs of the old empires. 3. The foundation of feudal Europe.
Unit 2. The consolidation of the European feudal world. 1. The process of feudalization. 2. The hierarchy of feudal power. 3. The crisis of the 14th century.
Unit 3. Medieval Christian art: Romanesque and Gothic. 1. Creators of images. 2. Creators of spaces.
Section II. Medieval societies in Spain
Unit 4. The rise of al-Andalus. 1. Muslim conquest. 2. Society of al-Andalus. 3. The transformation of space.
Unit 5. The consolidation of the Christian Kingdoms. 1. The rise of feudalism in Spain. 2. The spaces of power. 3. The conflicts of the Late Middle Ages.