



INNOVATIVE METHODOLOGIES BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND Emergent categories from the Geography and History class

Metodologías innovadoras entre la oferta y la demanda.
Categorías emergentes desde la clase de Geografía e Historia

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ABSTRACT

At present, educational discourses on innovative methodologies make up an enthusiastic panorama that is not exempt from criticism. The aim of this paper is to understand the real possibilities of success for new methodological proposals in a case study focused on the Geography and History classes of a teacher-researcher. The results obtained allow us to identify a central category of analysis, "methodological ineffectiveness", and two subcategories, "methodological supply" and "methodological demand". This confirms the importance of exploring the impact of new methodologies based on the factors and voices specific to each educational context.

PALABRAS CLAVE

*Innovaciones en la metodología docente
Innovaciones educativas
Enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales
Enseñanza reflexiva
Estudio de caso
Autoetnografía
Análisis del discurso*

RESUMEN

En la actualidad, los discursos educativos sobre metodologías innovadoras conforman un entusiasta panorama no exento de crítica. El objetivo de este trabajo es comprender las posibilidades reales de éxito de las nuevas propuestas metodológicas en un caso de estudio centrado en las clases de Geografía e Historia de un docente-investigador. Los resultados obtenidos permiten identificar una categoría de análisis central, "ineficacia metodológica", y dos subcategorías, "oferta metodológica" y "demanda metodológica". Todo ello permite confirmar la importancia de explorar el impacto de las nuevas metodologías a partir de los factores y las voces propias de cada contexto educativo.

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1. Introduction

Under the category of “emerging pedagogies” (Adell & Castañeda, 2012; Carbonell, 2015; Gros, 2015), new objectives and content (competences, citizenship, programming, robotics, etc.), resources (3D printing, interactive applications, virtual and augmented reality, etc.) and, of course, methods (project-based learning, flipped classroom, gamification, service-learning, etc.) have been appearing over the last twenty years. With regard to the latter, current educational discourses advocate very comprehensive and varied approaches to improve the effectiveness of teaching and thus the learning outcomes of students.

Among the features attributed to these methods, the following stand out: the emphasis on the development of competences as educational goals, the importance of teamwork, a less directive and predominant role of the teacher and, above all, on the part of the students, “active involvement in the learning process through challenge, exploration, discussion and attention to diversity in different areas” (Montanero Fernández, 2019, pp. 25-26). To all this we should add an eagerness to personalise educational processes, to guarantee the motivational component and, in short, to develop meaningful, complex, functional, interactive and contextualised learning. Montanero Fernández (2019) proposed classifying the new teaching methods into four main groups: 1) experiential and inquiry-based learning; 2) cooperative learning; 3) teaching focused on intelligence and thinking; and 4) teaching focused on emotion and motivation. In the specific case of social science teaching and learning, education laws in particular emphasise the need to work around relevant social problems.

All this forms an enthusiastic picture against which, however, critical research perspectives are scarce. On the contrary, what predominates are propagandistic descriptions of both experiences and what we could call the programmatic components of the discourse of educational innovation (Liesa *et al.*, 2018). Along these lines, there are studies that focus on a mere account of teachers’ impressions or on the poor results of false action research (Mazur *et al.*, 2015). In general, it is particularly striking to note the large number of studies that set out to find the reasons or factors behind why innovative methods do not succeed (Gil *et al.*, 2018; Hale, 2013; Martín-Díaz *et al.*, 2013; McCharen *et al.*, 2011), since, in effect, they all assume that innovation must succeed. Murillo & Krichesky (2012) even dared to propose a guide to innovation, without devoting a single line to questioning the appropriateness of such an undertaking, just as Gulikers *et al.* (2018) focused on how to assess competency-based learning, on the assumption that the necessary conditions exist in schools to work from this approach.

Alongside all this, it is worth noting the existence of a number of works that offer a different perspective (Arroyo, 2016; Boysen *et al.*, 2020; Donovan *et al.*, 2014; Kirschner *et al.*, 2006; Mayer, 2004; Pérez Albo & Gutiérrez Lacalle, 2020; Strayer, 2012; Tricot, 2019). For example, Yeung (2010) called for the analysis of real educational needs and possibilities as opposed to the expectations of innovative methods, as well as, in general, a more humane and realistic approach in pro-innovation policies. Expectations are often set by seductive educational laws that do not take into account the complexity and contradictions within schools (Akin, 2016; Ellis *et al.*, 2019; Moffatt *et al.*, 2016; Simmie, 2014). Hence, there exist different notions of *innovation* used by educational communities (Cascón-Pereira *et al.*, 2019) or, directly, the criticism of the *prefabricated innovations* that teachers must incorporate into their classes today (Altopiedi & Murillo-Estepa, 2010; Cañadel, 2018; Rivas *et al.*, 2019).

Particularly interesting are works such as that of Carrier (2017), for verifying the strong influence exerted by media discourses on educational innovation formulated without any scientific basis, or that of Jolonch (2019), who stressed the importance of “pedagogical leadership” to ensure the success of innovative processes in schools. Alongside these, we should also highlight a series of works that warn of the multiple controversies that cooperative learning can generate (Duk & Murillo, 2017; Kirschner *et al.*, 2009, 2011; Pérez Pueyo & Hortigüela Alcalá, 2020; Romero, 2010; Velázquez, 2013). All these approaches are perfectly consistent with the call for “sustainable innovation” (Fink & Hargreaves, 2006), “responsible” for (Heras & Ruiz-Mallén, 2017; Richter *et al.*, 2019) or at least dependent on an analytical process capable of detecting the excesses and contradictions that teachers may encounter when implementing innovative strategies (Álvarez, 2016; Haerlemans, 2010; Rodríguez, 2011).

As a complement to all of these critical voices, the aim of this study, framed within a broader PhD research topic, is to explore the real possibilities of success for innovative methodologies in a case study focused on social sciences teaching and learning, from a teacher–researcher perspective.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

In order to carry out this project, a case study was chosen as the overall methodological design, where, opting for a verbal discursive approach, the case was made up of all the converging discourses in the Geography and History classes in Spanish Secondary Education of one of the authors of this work. This case study was chosen for several reasons: 1) it was set in a discursive and practical context, in this case, a private school in the city of Seville, whose predominant school culture required in-depth analysis; 2) it was undergoing a strong epistemological crisis as a result of the didactic transformations that have developed in recent years; and 3) it was a professional

environment with plenty of difficulties and contradictions to be understood before they could be subjected to any kind of proposal for improvement.

The corpus compiled during the fieldwork brought together a total of 12 texts from four different discursive fields: the legislative framework, the school, the Department of Social Sciences, and the classroom (see Table 1). The participants in the research belonged to the last of these contexts: a teacher and researcher, together with 44 ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education) students, forming a convenience sample. All were conceived as educational agents; not passive receivers and reproducers of certain pro-innovation discourses, but also as active and capable of interpreting and generating changes in the way that teaching–learning processes are approached, both directly and indirectly, through the production of their own discourses.

Table 1. Composition and organisation of the research corpus

Sub-corpora	Text
Spanish and Andalusian education policies	1) Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre (LOMCE).
	2) Real Decreto 1105/2014, de 26 de diciembre.
	3) Orden ECD/65/2015, de 21 de enero.
	4) Decreto 111/2016, de 14 de junio.
	5) Orden de 14 de julio de 2016.
School	6) School Educational Project.
	7) School Regulation on Organisation and Operation.
	8) Compilation of materials on the school's methodology.
Department of Social Sciences	9) Geography and History subject guide for students.
	10) Annual reports for the academic years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019.
Geography and History class	11) Interviews with 44 students (11–15 years old).
	12) Teacher–researcher's diary.

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

2.2. Methods, techniques and instruments

To develop this case study, the methods of data collection and analysis chosen were autoethnography and (auto) critical discourse analysis, both applied in line with the parameters of Grounded (Strauss and Corbin, 2002). Autoethnography was conceived, at the same time, as an adequate procedure to overcome some of the theoretical-methodological shortcomings detected in the literature, thanks to its great narrative-reflexive potential (Adams *et al.*, 2015; Ellis, 2016; Mitra, 2010; Starr, 2010; Wamsted, 2012). As a research strategy it was perfectly compatible with the structure of the case study and with the method of critical discourse analysis, and it was also a didactic strategy that would ultimately allow for a pedagogical awareness of a reality for which the autoethnographer himself was partly responsible.

On the other hand, critical discourse analysis depends on several key aspects of the research: an eminently discursive theoretical–methodological positioning, contrary to any attempt to dissociate discourses and practices (Jäger, 2003) or texts and contexts; a predominant interest in the use of verbal language, understood as the main means of interaction and construction of people's reality and their corresponding intentions (Fairclough, 2003; Pini, 2009; Wodak and Meyer, 2003); the deconstructive and *local* perspective of the research, centred on the possibility of understanding the existing regimes of meaning based on a very specific case study; the structure of the overall analytical procedure itself (Pardo Abril, 2013), as will be seen in the following subsection; and, finally, a stance that is not only critical of socio-cultural reality, but also self-critical reality, insofar as part of the critically analysed discourses was produced by one of the researchers himself.

This methodological approach was directly inspired by previous research and teaching experiences. It is worth highlighting the use of techniques applicable to both quantitative and qualitative data, and both deductive and inductive in nature, always taking into account the demands of the object of study and its particular discursive-verbal approach (see Table 2). The combination of all these methodological elements was key to knowing and understanding the way in which the participants experienced the School reality, as well as the interactions that they established among themselves.

Table 2. Relationship between the methods, techniques, and instruments used in this research

Methods	Data collection techniques	Analysis techniques	Instruments
Autoethnography	Participant observation		Teacher–researcher’s diary
	Structured interview		Interview script
(Self)critical discourse analysis		Pre-analysis	
		Lexicometric analysis	MAXQDA and Sketch Engine
		Content analysis	Mixed category system
		Linguistic analysis	

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

2.3. Analysis procedure

The analysis procedure, inspired by the proposals of several authors (Pardo Abril, 2013; Wodak and Meyer, 2003), although specifically designed for this research, comprised four complementary phases:

1. Pre-analysis, where the texts of the corpus were characterised in order to discover their heuristic potential in relation to the research objectives;
2. Lexicometric analysis, using techniques based on textual statistics (word count, identification of key segments, recognition of co-texts, etc.), which made it possible to extract previously unnoticed information on frequencies and associations;
3. Content analysis, materialised in a system combining both deductive categories (identified in the theoretical framework) and inductive categories (from the data analysed);
4. Linguistic analysis, focusing on the identification of the linguistic resources and procedures used.

This paper focuses specifically on the third of these phases, an intermediate moment between the lexicometric exploration and the linguistic–interpretative deconstruction of the different levels of meaning present in the discourses under study. Using Pardo Abril’s terms, we can say that the results of this third analytical moment correspond to the textual material necessary to move from “quantitative salience” to “cultural salience” (2013, p. 122).

In this way, content analysis offered the most appropriate response to the challenge of managing and organising a large and diverse corpus, providing a more complete and elaborated vision of the themes, topics, contexts, and discursive connections than that offered in the pre-analysis phase. To this end, we opted for the construction of a mixed system of categories, defined by the confluence of a series of deductive categories, derived from the theoretical framework of the research and others of an inductive nature; that is to say, inspired by the meanings contained in the texts analysed.

In practice, this strategy involved the progressive transformation of a first version of the system made up of exclusively theoretical categories (T), passing through another derived from the first readings of the corpus texts, until reaching a definitive version where some of the original categories were abandoned or replaced by new emerging categories (E), according to the results from the data (see Table 3). In this way, the maintenance of certain theoretical categories was justified on the basis of the verification, in the case study, of the same assumptions identified in the theoretical framework. On the contrary, the emergence of the categories was due to the appearance of a series of attributes specific to the case study, not previously identified in the existing theory.

Table 3. Section of the general category system on which this work is focused

Category	Code	Subcategory	Code
Methodological ineffectiveness (E)	MEIN	Methodological supply (T)	MESU
		Methodological demand (E)	MEDE

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

As the Table above shows, the system of categories developed contemplates two main dimensions or levels: the categories themselves and their corresponding subcategories. On the one hand, the categories represent large thematic constructions that connect the different discursive topics dealt with in each subcategory. On the other hand, the subcategories find their *raison d’être* in the existence of a set of attributes that, although dispersed in

the texts of the corpus, allow each of these topics to be characterised. When developing these topics, one of the most commonly employed strategies is to contrast the different treatments of the same aspect according to the discursive field from which the analysed text fragment originates.

Following the above logic, the denomination of each category basically responds to the thematic grouping of various subcategories, while the titles of each subcategory attempt to represent, as faithfully as possible, the grouping of the respective attributes that make them up. For this purpose, in some cases, expressions are taken from the theoretical framework; in others, from the terms that exist in the analysed texts themselves; and in others, from neologisms formed by the variation of textual terms.

3. Findings: Methodological ineffectiveness

If I had to describe my general methodology, I would say that it is the sum of several factors: 1) the innovative methods that the management asks me to apply (flipped classroom, gamification and cooperative projects, mainly); 2) the participatory explanation of conceptual content; and 3) the weekly questions in class, both oral and written, to check that they do not leave studying for the days before the exam. To a lesser extent, and depending a lot on the course, I also work with thinking routines, dramatisation, simulation, batteries of questions made up by the students themselves, essays and certain activities to work on procedures (the latter to a lesser extent, due to lack of time). Then there are the cultural outings, one of my favourite activities, although their educational effectiveness depends on many factors (travel time to the place, time of visit, season of the year, aesthetic appeal for the students, etc.). [MEIN-T12]

The analytical category on which this paper focuses brings together all those topics that allow us to characterise the didactic methodology present in the classes taken as the object of study. As already indicated, these topics come from a set of varied discourses, produced by different educational agents (legislators, school management team, Department of Social Sciences, students and teachers), although all of them influence the way of working in the subject of Geography and History. The name of the category, “methodological ineffectiveness”, responds specifically to the identification of certain factors that reveal a lack of correspondence between the claims, recommendations and demands present in some discourses, and that which can finally be carried out in the reality of the classroom.

On the one hand, the normative discourses argue that: “Teaching methods must be chosen on the basis of what is known to be optimal for achieving the proposed goals and on the basis of the conditions in which teaching takes place” [MEIN-T3]. Among these “conditioning factors”, the following stand out: “The nature of the subject matter, socio-cultural conditions, the availability of resources and the characteristics of the pupils, (...)” [MEIN-T3]. In any case, it is stated that: “Simple copying of ideas, models or designs will be rejected and interest, creativity and curiosity to learn and innovate will be encouraged” [MEIN-T5]. In contrast to these theoretical assumptions, the following fragments (Table 4) reflect other factors that are not taken into account in the regulations when planning the teaching methodology in the classroom:

Table 4. Selected excerpts on the topic conditioning factors of teaching methodology

Excerpt	Code
“(…) there have often been many difficulties in following both the timing of the teaching units, set by the Social Sciences Department of the ANONIMIZADO, and the school’s methodological line, due to factors external to the subject (specifically the celebration of numerous events, parties and outings that have forced classes to be suspended frequently). This circumstance has had negative repercussions on the rhythm and the way of working on the contents, having had to opt, for example, for the reduction of the deadlines and of the time dedicated to revision (...), if not directly for the suppression of some planned projects, even sometimes already begun (...)”.	MEIN-T10
“On a negative note, it must be recognised that the lack of time to prepare materials has prevented the creation of their own games, when many of the tools imported from various Internet sites do not include certain references to be studied by the students, limiting their success”.	MEIN-T10
“I reproduce, from the notes I took at yesterday’s meeting, a sample of the changes that we are forced to make in our programmes, from the Department management, at any time during the course: ‘In 5th and 6th EPO, subjects 4 and 5 are changed. In 2nd grade: 8 is given as subject 4, and 4 becomes 5, 6 becomes 7 and 7 becomes 8”.	MEIN-T12
“The flipped classroom does not convince me. Despite being another of the requirements of the management team, neither my students nor I find the point of it. For me it requires more work, as it obliges me to look for material, generally video, (...) and to dedicate the following day’s class, almost entirely, to asking questions about the videos, orally or by means of a test, to make sure they have seen them and to resolve any doubts that may have arisen”.	MEIN-T12
“(…) the absolute priority is the transmission of knowledge, especially conceptual knowledge, through memorisation. This does not mean that some of us teachers are not explicitly concerned with encouraging critical analysis of reality; but it is all absorbed by the other”.	MEIN-T12

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

Connecting with the last idea in the previous Table, it should come as no surprise that one of the most frequently used teaching strategies in our case study is the preparation and study of “respondoes”: “a battery of questions and short answers in which any topic in any subject can be summarised, and which the pupils must progressively memorise” [MEIN-T12]. Alongside this, another strategy symptomatic of the predominant type of knowledge is the study of Geography maps: “The pupil should have a personal folder of silent maps of Physical Spain, Political Spain, Physical World and Political World, to work on in class and at home. The order of study of these maps appears in the timetable (...) [MEIN-T9]. Among the proposals for improvement included in the annual reports, we find the following: “Reflect on the evaluation system of the maps in order to develop new strategies to deal successfully with this problem” [MEIN-T10].

The consequences of the confluence of all the factors outlined in Table 4 are described in fragments such as the following: “everything that happens in class must focus on the content to be taught, as there is no time for more” [MEIN-T12]; in fact, “I rarely inquire into students’ prior knowledge beyond asking three or four very general questions to the whole class, as an excuse to introduce a topic” [MEIN-T12]. In the same way, the development of skills which enable pupils to cope successfully with tests in accordance with the type of content being worked on is also considered a priority. Thus, the reports call for: “devoting more time in class to, for example, how to do a written exam correctly or how to articulate a commentary on a historical source” [MEIN-T10]; or, “as opposed to the revision topics which carry so much weight in the approach to the subject, and in which, nevertheless, there is much failure: more time in class to revise by means of quizzes or other activities” [MEIN-T10].

On the other hand, the solution proposed in the annual reports to the lack of time is none other than: “To continue to develop active methodologies (development of our own videos, more games designed around the content and the use of a greater number of cooperative learning techniques) and assessment by competences” [MEIN-T10]. This idea, expressed in an official school document, contrasts significantly with the following reflections from the diary: “when innovation becomes routine, when there is no surprise factor, it becomes more of the same. I see it in the pupils, whose attitudes are less and less receptive” [MEIN-T12]; “the main problem is that they try to push everything forward at the same time, imposing from above the application of the same strategies on all teachers, in all courses and in all subjects” [MEIN-T12]; or “there is no reflection whatsoever on what can be improved and the most appropriate way of doing it” [MEIN-T12].

Paradoxical as it may seem, this type of thinking led to the formulation of proposals for improvement that were quite far removed from those set out in the Department’s reports: “sometimes, I have the feeling that what they most want, enjoy and take advantage of is a class where I explain each point in detail” [MEIN-T12]. Indeed, the defence of traditional class formats in the face of pro-innovation discourses seems to be the main consequence of the methodological ineffectiveness detected in our category of analysis:

In the end, I end up using the explanatory lesson more often than it seems. The students themselves ask me to do so, and I think they do it for very different reasons: because it’s a lesson concept that they don’t have to work hard at (they just have to listen to me); because their families still defend a traditional school culture at home (in my head, I can imagine questions like: have you behaved well while the teacher was explaining?); or because, being more comfortable and relaxed, they really enjoy listening to the explanations and the truth is that I think they retain a lot of things for the exams. To make sure of the latter, I am more and more in favour of what I call participatory explanation (I suppose this concept exists in didactic manuals). I try to do as much as possible with a ppt, include a short video, make simple diagrams on the blackboard as I go along and, above all, ask questions at every moment to capture their attention and, at the same time, make sure that they understand everything (...). [MEIN-T12]

3.1. Methodological supply

In recent decades we have been enriched by a range of innovative teaching methods which develop organisational skills and responsibility and which emphasise analysis and investigation of solutions to real problems, project management, cooperative work, etc., and which develop organisational skills. [MESU-T8]

Our first subcategory addresses the question of teaching methodology from the perspective of the wide range of strategies and resources available today, according to educational discourses. Specifically, we will deal, on the one hand, with the general characterisation of the methodology which, according to the school’s regulatory, informative and organisational texts, should be applied in the classroom; and, on the other hand, the methods, techniques and resources recommended in the same texts to work specifically in the Social Sciences. Regarding the first question, the following Table (5) shows the requirements demanded for the new methodological designs:

Table 5. Selected excerpts on the topic current requirements for teaching methodologies

Excerpt	Code
“(…) interactive strategies are the most appropriate, as they allow knowledge to be shared and constructed and make the class session more dynamic through the verbal and collective exchange of ideas”.	MESU-T3
“Methodologies that contextualise learning and allow for project-based learning, centres of interest, case studies or problem-based learning favour active participation, experimentation and functional learning that will facilitate the development of competences, as well as the motivation of students by contributing decisively to the transferability of learning”.	MESU-T3
“The methods must be based on the teacher’s perspective as a guide, promoter and facilitator of students’ competence development (…)”.	MESU-T3
“(…) should focus on the performance of tasks or problem-situations, posed with a specific objective, which students must solve by making appropriate use of different types of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (…)”.	MESU-T3
“(…) should take into account attention to diversity and respect for different paces and learning styles through individual and cooperative work practices”.	MESU-T3
“It is necessary to favour interactive methodologies, which facilitate the processes of knowledge construction and verbalisation and exchange of ideas; (…)”.	MESU-T5
“(…) dynamic, allowing for the combination of a variety of resources and didactic scenarios; (…)”.	MESU-T5
“(…) motivating, which incorporate students into the teaching-learning process, making them the protagonists of the process and through the presentation of topics close to their interests and experiences and resolute, focused on the analysis and study of cases linked to relevant social problems and the search for mechanisms of prevention and solutions for those problems”.	MESU-T5

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

The way in which our School echoes all of the above is best reflected in its Educational Project, where it advocates “a student-centred model, so that research and presentations are the basis of the new paradigm” [MESU-T6]. In order to develop this model, the following is also established:

All this is done through a cooperative/collaborative work structure where both individual development and teamwork are encouraged; that learning is entirely inductive and individualised; that the use of the iPad allows for sources of information other than the teacher and a change in methodology (Flipped classroom), in the distribution of spaces and roles in the classroom transforming the learning process. [MESU-T6]

This is confirmed in the annual reports of the Geography and History course: “The flipped classroom has been carried out mainly through the elaboration of materials by the teacher and the selection of videos adapted to the contents and the educational level of the students” [MESU-T10]; “in 2nd ESO, an eminently active and participative methodology has been applied, whose central pillars have been made up of cooperative learning and the flipped classroom” [MESU-T10].

Complementing the methodological pillars mentioned above, the compendium of materials on methodology includes a list of the pedagogical theories, methods and resources adopted as the School’s methodological principles:

- Significant learning.
- Bloom’s taxonomy.
- Learning to think: dialogue and thinking techniques.
- Individualised learning.
- Inductive methodology.
- Cooperative learning: individual and team work.
- Multiple intelligences.
- Case method.
- Problem-based learning: PBL.
- Flipped classroom.
- Self-correction.
- Use of attractive teaching materials (games, iPads, classroom boxes).
- Use of visual resources (digital whiteboard, videos, etc.).
- Motivational activities (skits, group games and competitions).

- Encouragement of self-esteem and effort (congratulations, prizes for work done, etc.). [MESU-T8]

With specific reference to the subject of Geography and History, the following extract from one of the normative texts in the corpus demonstrates the existence of a large methodological repertoire at the disposal of the teachers:

We will have a wide and varied range of strategies, lines and methodological elements promoting, among many other options, project-based learning as well as case studies on problems close to the students' areas of interest or issues of relevance to today's society; role-playing and simulation games in which students become aware of the elements and mechanisms involved in a given process or situation, as well as the different points of view of each of the protagonists; debates, in which they learn the basic principles of compiling, organising and presenting information for the construction of argumentative schemes, alternating the analysis of the opinions of others with the presentation of their own conclusions reached; oral presentations and dissertations as an opportunity to assimilate the rules of construction of a discourse based on research and analysis in accordance with the methodological principles of work in the social sciences; research work to manage the basic skills of collecting, organising, analysing and presenting information; the combination of computer applications together with analogue media for the elaboration of scientific communication documents (guides, posters, etc.) in digital and other media.) in digital and other media; the use of the portfolio, consolidating the habits of continuous assessment, self-assessment and communication of learning outcomes; the creation and development of campaigns and organisations related to volunteering and citizen empowerment to learn the fundamentals of the exercise of citizenship and the rule of law or the recreation, by means of dramatisation or other media (including video games), of situations linked to the historical development or current concerns of present-day social formations. [MESU-T5]

As we can see, the subject of Geography and History has a "very broad and outstanding horizon of possibilities to achieve a dynamic and effective teaching-learning process, incorporating as outstanding features the transversality and the integrating approach around problems common to the social sciences" [MESU-T5]. This last concept represents the core element of the methodological apparatus desirable for the correct development of the subject. In one way or another, many of the didactic measures or strategies proposed in the educational discourses are related to the work on social problems:

Carry out case studies and research work, individually or in groups, on outstanding problems of the current world, on the historical evolution of human social formations and on the most relevant characteristics and challenges of the natural environment both in Andalusia and in the rest of the world, by means of the compilation of information of diverse nature, verbal, graphic, iconic, statistical, cartographic from a plurality of sources, which must then be organised, edited and presented by means of the use of information and communication technologies and following the basic rules of work and research in the social sciences. [MESU-T5]

One of the main contents of the compendium of materials on the School's methodology is problem-based learning (PBL), presented as one of the pedagogical standards of our educational context. The following is a selection of some of the characteristics of this method, according to the aforementioned material.

Table 6. Selected excerpts on the topic problem-based learning (PBL)

Excerpt	Code
"In this methodology, the protagonists of learning are the students themselves, who take responsibility for being an active part of the process".	MESU-T8
"Generally, in the educational process, the teacher explains part of the subject matter and then offers the students an activity to apply this content. However, PBL is proposed as a means for students to acquire this knowledge and apply it to solve a real or fictitious problem, without the teacher using the lecture or any other method to transmit the subject matter".	MESU-T8
"PBL helps the student to develop and work on various competences (...): problem solving; decision making; team work; communication skills (argumentation and presentation of information); development of attitudes and values: accuracy, revision, tolerance...".	MESU-T8
"PBL involves active, cooperative, student-centred, active learning associated with highly motivated independent learning".	MESU-T8
"(...) favours the possibility of interrelating different subjects or academic disciplines. To try to solve a problem, students may (and it is advisable) need to draw on knowledge from different subjects already acquired. This helps students to integrate their learning into a coherent 'whole'".	MESU-T8

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

Finally, the School's discourse emphasises a particularly interesting teaching strategy for the area of social sciences, namely teaching and learning outside the classroom: "We are committed to a methodology that facilitates outdoor teaching for pupils, in direct contact with their urban and rural school environment, which will favour their health and the direct observation of what they will later theoretically have to assimilate" [MESU-T6]. This is expressed in the ROF: "The outings are compulsory, as they are programmed activities in relation to the programme being carried out at that time, therefore, a series of activities are carried out before and after the outing, this being just another activity" [MESU-T7], an approach that would also be continued "through work, cultural and voluntary work experiences" [MESU-T6]. According to the School's Educational Project, "we must bring pupils closer to the real world, so that they can experience in situ and put into practice what they have learnt, and on the basis of these, pupils will go on educational outings as a complement to the classroom, where they will get to know in situ everything they learn [MESU-T6]. The Geography and History subject guide specifies all this in the following way:

There will be an average of three cultural outings per month, one of which will be a full day trip, always taking place on a Wednesday. Each visit, conceived as a chance to experience an alternative educational environment, will be related to the topic of study being worked on at the time, and is therefore an excellent opportunity for students to put their knowledge into practice, as well as to nurture their interest in our rich cultural environment. [MESU-T9]

3.2. Methodological demand

Here, we delve into the methodology applied in the Geography and History classes in our case study. To begin with, the main and perhaps the only coincidence between the methodological parameters promoted by the discourses analysed so far and the reality of the classroom is the responsibility attributed to the teaching staff when it comes to planning the work processes: "I try to maintain a balance between my theoretical presentations and the autonomous learning processes of the students, although I am definitely the one who designs and controls the sequence of activities we follow" [MEDE-T12]. However, a fundamental aspect of what goes on in the classroom seems to be the strong influence exerted by the school's top management when it comes to establishing the methodological criteria that should govern the functioning of any subject. Thus, for example, in the compendium of materials on the school's methodology, we find that:

The unit's activities should include one activity per week that can be carried out according to the different multiple intelligences. Activities based on the multiple intelligences will be carried out: four activities will be presented per topic that will be worked on by tables according to the multiple intelligences: they can be solved by using musical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, etc. and four activities per topic that each student will solve according to the intelligence that is most developed in them. [MEDE-T8]

The best source for understanding how all the above strategies and activities are organised is undoubtedly the Geography and History subject guide. This text identifies "their importance, the skills we will bring into play, the contents, the timing and the basic planning of each unit, as well as the different activities, tools and tests to be carried out (both individual and collective)" [MEDE-T9]. Specifically, the so-called "work plan", corresponding to a didactic unit, is developed over four weeks, as shown in the following Table.

Table 7. Basic work plan for the subject of Geography and History in Secondary Education

Week	Activities
1 st	"Examination of the previous topic. Test of previous knowledge on the new topic. Presentation and resolution of doubts by the teacher on the videos of the topic. Activities with thinking routines. Work with maps. Work with the press" [MEDE-T9].
2 nd	"Weekly study follow-up (15 respondents). Activities with thinking routines. Start of group projects. Afternoon cultural outing. Work with maps. Work with the press" [MEDE-T9].
3 rd	"Follow-up of the weekly study (30 responses). Submission of the individual essay on paper. Continuation of group projects. Full day cultural outing. Work with maps. Work with the press" [MEDE-T9].
4 th	"Monitoring of the weekly study (50 respondents). Completion and presentation of group projects. Final delivery of the blog with all the activities carried out. Cultural outing in the afternoon. Examination of maps. Work with the press. Self-assessment using rubrics" [MEDE-T9].

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

Of all these strategies, the most noteworthy is perhaps that of project-based learning. After all, its application is required by the ROF itself: "Cooperative work techniques must be worked on and applied" [MEDE-T7]. This is assumed in the subject of Geography and History: "(...) the second part of the development of the unit has as its main objective the realisation of a group project, reflecting a process of cooperative research and learning (independently of other possible cooperative dynamics carried out in class)" [MEDE-T9]. More specifically, students are told that the phases of this project are as follows:

1. 1. The design of the project, search for information and organisation of the group, determining the role of each member.
2. 2. Development of the project, i.e., the materialisation of the agreed design, for example, by recording the different scenes and selecting the necessary materials for the final editing. The format of the work, according to the teacher's indications, will be either video or live explanation supported by a keynote presentation.
3. 3. The assembly of the project and preparation of the presentation. A post-production phase in which all the materials are coherently integrated into a single work and the way of presenting it in public is rehearsed. [MEDE-T9]

The interesting thing about this methodological strategy, as it is conceived and practised at the school, is its hybrid nature, constituting a sort of fusion between problem-based learning, cooperative learning and project-based learning. According to Orden ECD/65/2015, de 21 de enero: "Active methodologies must be supported by cooperative learning structures so that, through the joint resolution of tasks, the members of the group are aware of the strategies used by their peers and can apply them to similar situations" [MEDE-T3]; and "project work (...) aims to help pupils to work on projects (...), aims to help students to organise their thinking by encouraging them to reflect, criticise, develop hypotheses and carry out research through a process in which each student

takes responsibility for their own learning, applying their knowledge and skills to real projects” [MEDE-T3]. In the annual reports of our subject, projects are also associated, or rather juxtaposed, with the use of various teaching strategies: “In addition to the use of techniques such as shared reading, cooperative concept mapping, construction of statements or team competitions, project-based learning has normally been the main focus of the subjects (...)” [MEDE-T10].

One of the keys to understanding the effectiveness of the projects lies in the students’ answers to the fourth question in the interview: “Do you think that working on projects helps you to learn? Why? And, in terms of how they are carried out, are there usually discrepancies between classmates? Do you all work together? How do you come to an agreement?”. The statistical results about the student’s view on project-based learning that can be extracted from the answers to these questions show that, among our students: 11% thought projects were not useful; 23% believed the opposite; and, finally, 66% affirmed the usefulness depended on concrete circumstances of each task. In this respect, some of the most illustrative responses are as follows:

Table 8. Selected student responses on the usefulness of projects in learning

Sense of the response	Excerpt	Code
Yes.	“Through the projects, I personally believe that you learn a lot, as the research and the elaboration of texts in the presentations help you to memorise and retain the important data that you need to get to understand the subject”.	MEDE-T11
	“For me, the truth is that it is much more comfortable when learning a subject to have done a project on it, because thanks to this project I already have more or less a clearer idea of what I have to learn and so on”.	MEDE-T11
No.	“No, because it’s a lot of work for nothing and you learn more with a scheme”.	MEDE-T11
	“For me, the projects are not really that useful, as there is not much time for the lectures to explain and focus on all the topics, because in the end you only learn a part of the whole subject”.	MEDE-T11
Depends.	“I believe that working in a group is good as long as all members do their part to make it work and get a good result”.	MEDE-T11
	“It depends because if you are a person who works on projects then you will learn something, but if you are a person who does nothing then you don’t learn”.	MEDE-T11

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

With regard to the possible problems in understanding each other in the same group, the specific results are as follows: 32% of our students thought there were always problems; while 34% believed there were not; and the other 34% recognised the existence of problems depended, once again, on several factors. In this case, some of the most representative responses are as follows:

Table 9. Selected student responses on the existence of problems of understanding in projects

Sense of the response	Excerpt	Code
Yes.	“When it comes to making them, there are a few annoyances. The two girls in front of us always do most of the work and we do the least. At the end when we finish we ask them what we can do now and they tell us we have already finished, one class later... What can we do now and they answer the same thing, time to present the projects, they say that we two have done everything and they have done nothing and the two of us are left with a face of how?”.	MEDE-T11
	“It is difficult to do group work because half of the time you can’t agree with the rest of your colleagues or they ignore your ideas and just tell you what you have to do and that’s it”.	MEDE-T11
No.	“There are usually no problems because we each choose a theme and more or less everyone is happy with what they get”.	MEDE-T11
	“In our group there are no discrepancies because normally the person who is looking for what the project can be divided into asks which part each of us would like to do and we usually don’t care which part we get. Afterwards, everyone does their part individually”.	MEDE-T11

	“It depends on the people. There is one who proclaims herself the boss”.	MEDE-T11
Depends.	“It depends on the people you are working with. If you work with three or four people who do nothing, you do everything and you learn. If you are working with hard-working people, maybe you just focus on the part you have to do. I’m not against it because if you get good people with whom you can get a good project you have fun and you get a good grade, but if you get people who do nothing you get bitter”.	MEDE-T11

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

Regarding this same topic, the diary offers some other excerpts which allow us to get a better understanding of the projects’ impact. The most critical comments point out that “we [the teachers] have never received a workshop to learn how to apply this approach. This means that half of my workmates don’t do it and that I do it in a very intuitive way, perhaps too closely linked to the few group projects I did during my time at school (...) [MEDE-12]. Other comments represent the consequence of this lack of specific teacher training: “When one of the more responsible pupils tells me that she has not understood something, it is very likely that most of them have not understood it either (...)” [MEDE-12]. Another problem is directly related to the way in which learning by projects was organised at school level: “The working groups are the same for all subjects and are maintained for months, until the Head of Studies changes his mind and reconfigures them. This seems to me to be a limitation, since the same composition does not necessarily work for all subjects (...)” [MEDE-12]. In response to all these obstacles derived from the projects, our teacher proposed the following solution: “(...) I try to combine them with many other strategies to reduce their weight and enrich the learning process” [MEDE-12].

Beyond the question of projects, the annual reports of the Department mention the application of many other teaching strategies in the subject of Geography and History.

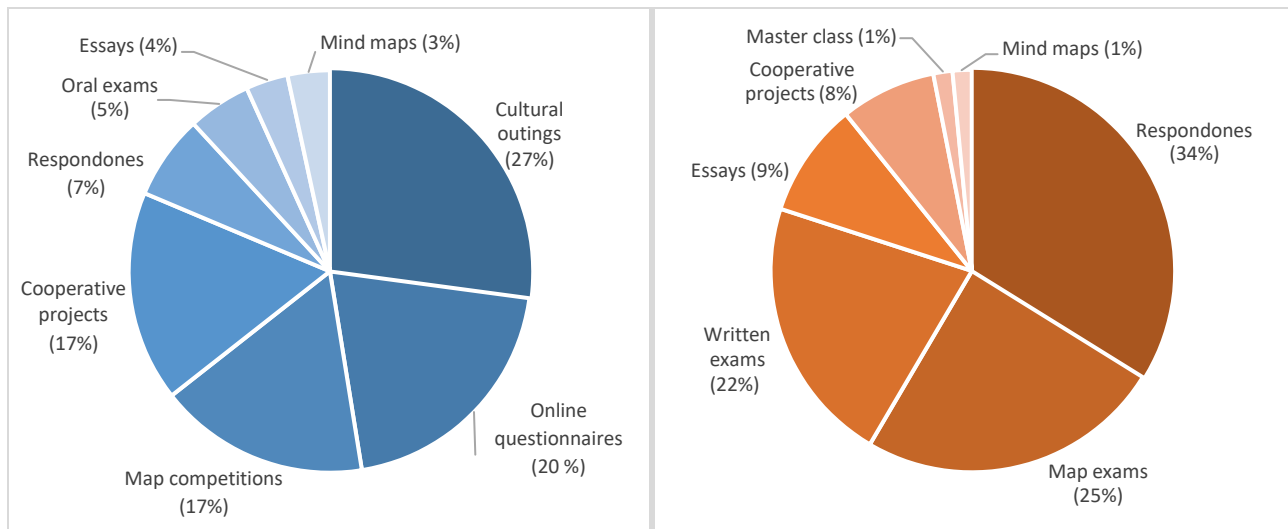
Table 10. Selection of extracts on the topic teaching strategies in the subject of Geography and History

Answer	Code
“In order to improve the students’ reading comprehension and to guide their weekly study, the students were required to prepare and memorise fifty monthly answer sheets (to be done in stages in the three weeks prior to the exam). The fact of asking aloud these questionnaires in class has served not only to evaluate the weekly study by means of obtaining positives and negatives, but also as a method of learning and group revision”.	MEDE-T10
“Faced with the lack of grammatical expression demonstrated in the exams during the previous year, we have opted to train writing skills through the production of a monthly essay on one of the contents of the subject”.	MEDE-T10
“This year we have implemented a series of playful dynamics to work on maps in class that have been quite successful among the students. Although it has not always been possible to dedicate the weekly module to working on maps, it is true that this has stimulated the students’ interest in these contents compared to last year”.	MEDE-T10
“Numerous quizzes have been created and practised in class, both in teams and individually, as well as a multitude of web tools have been searched and selected and have been hosted in the digital book, within a specific topic of maps (another of the novelties of this course), so that students could study in an alternative way”.	MEDE-T10

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

What is interesting is to compare these teaching criteria with the students’ views on the methodology finally used, expressed through their answers, in this case, to the second question of the interview, with its different parts: “What are your favourite activities and why? And what do you like least about the way we work on the subject? Why?” The results obtained are shown graphically below. The number of times each of the strategies (methods, activities, etc.) is mentioned is taken into account, as well as the total number of aspects mentioned in order to calculate the respective percentages.

Figure 1. Best (left) and worst (right) teaching strategies as rated by students



Source: own elaboration, 2022.

Special attention should be paid to the only strategy around which the discourses of the school, the Department and the subjects who put it into practice are aligned: cultural outings. The following excerpt from the diary reflects the teacher’s opinion of it: “(...) this is probably the thing I like the most of everything we do. I love spending the day out with a small group of pupils (...). There is a lot of preparation behind each outing (booking at museums, ordering buses, designing and timing the routes, etc.), but I think it’s worth it” [MEDE-T12]. On the pupils’ side, as we have just seen (Figure 3), the reasons why the outings are so highly valued are, among others: “seeing relics and places” [MEDE-T11], “you get to know things more closely” [MEDE-T11]; “we learn in a different environment and it is very enjoyable” [MEDE-T11]; “they are fun and you learn a lot” [MEDE-T11] (...); or “they help us to understand History from a point of reference and they are also easier to learn” [MEDE-T11].

The general positive reception of the cultural visits is finally noticeable in the reviews contained in the annual reports of the subject Geography and History. Here, we present just one of them: “The Columbian sites: an essential outing, closely linked to the syllabus and the dates of the celebrations, the pupils really enjoy visiting the replicas of the caravels and the Monastery of La Rábida, as well as the interpretation centre” [MEDE-T10].

To complete our overview of the real methodological demands in our case study, we propose below a selection of fragments from the diary describing three examples of didactic strategies or activities:

Table 11. Selected excerpts on the topic examples of effective teaching strategies from a teacher’s perspective

Excerpt	Code
“(…) Before leaving for the Christmas holidays, I thought I would do a special activity with the 3rd ESO students. I asked them to write down, individually and anonymously, on a piece of paper, the question that worries them most, in general. Whatever it is. I told them that we would then put the questions in order and talk about the main issues that came up. As expected, they came up: death and the afterlife, extraterrestrial life, God, evil, and so on. I think they quite enjoyed the experience, judging by how attentive they were. I plan to repeat it”.	MEDE-T12
“Presentation by a student on Andy Warhol. Very well done, the students begin to get to grips with the methodology and the level required. Explanation of mass culture and the relationship between media and consumption. Explanation of Political Advertisement by Muntadas as an introduction to an activity. Each group produces an improvised poster selling a candidate for the Presidency of the Government. The activity is quite successful and the class flies by despite being the last one of the week”.	MEDE-T12
“Modestly, I think that the ‘historical word search’ has once again become the highlight of the activities for History Week. It occurred to me some time ago and I started to consider it in my classes, but by last year’s edition, it was clear to me that it also had to be part of the Department’s big week. Following the same way as the television programme, in our ‘Pasapalabra’ we have candidates, donuts, questions and an audience to cheer on (...). The truth is that they have a great time cheering on the candidates. The winner took away an official Pasapalabra TV game, which we had previously asked them to buy”.	MEDE-T12

Source: own elaboration, 2022.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Our case study presents a series of illustrative characteristics of how innovative methodologies are having an impact today in certain school contexts. The following syllogism helps to synthesise the conclusions of the study: 1) there is currently a wide catalogue of innovative teaching strategies, fed by normative, informative and organisational discourses in schools; 2) however, the objectives, contents, routines, organisation and assessment systems are still very traditional; and 3) the above determines a significant lack of correspondence between the methodologies offered or recommended in educational discourses outside the classroom and those still needed by the agents involved in these contexts.

The category upon which this paper focuses (“methodological ineffectiveness”), which emerged from the information gathered, represents the existence of certain mismatches between the educational discourses that condition the Geography and History classes that were taken as the object of analysis. First of all, we are able to verify that many of the conditioning factors identified in the teacher–researcher’s diary are completely disregarded in the regulatory framework: planning difficulties due to the school calendar, lack of time to prepare their own materials, changes imposed by the Department management, increased teaching workload or the prominence of conceptual knowledge.

The last of these factors determines the predominance of didactic strategies such as the “respondoes”, a battery of fifty questions and short answers to memorise each topic, or the numerous exams on geographical maps. The quantity of concepts that students must assimilate forces the teacher to focus on working on this type of content and to forget other procedural or attitudinal content. Faced with the ineffectiveness of methods such as flipped classroom or cooperative learning to respond to this didactic and pedagogical model, we find two disparate responses: in the diary of the teacher–researcher, the need to reflect on what needs to be improved is pointed out; in the reports of the Department, it is simply proposed to continue to deepen active methodologies, thus forgetting the real demands of the didactic model, traditional and standardised, which the school continues to maintain despite its discourse in defence of innovation.

Against the background of this contradictory diagnosis, the first subcategory, “methodological supply”, allowed us to find exactly what teaching strategies teachers have at their disposal today. On the other hand, the second subcategory, “methodological demand”, showed which strategies were really necessary in our case study. A comparison of the information in each of these subcategories reveals numerous inaccuracies, inconsistencies and even discordances between what is advocated in educational discourse and what is observed in classroom practice. In methodological terms, this would confirm the suitability of autoethnography as a method to guarantee the necessary development of (self-)critical didactics by teachers.

In general terms, the number of attributes with which normative discourses characterise innovative strategies (interactivity, contextualisation, attention to diversity, combination of resources, motivation, etc.) is striking. In principle, such discourses seemed to be integrated into the pedagogical philosophy of the framework of the research school, which advocated a “turn in methodology” [MESU-T6] based mainly on the promotion of active, cooperative, competency-based, inductive and individualised learning, with a regular use of the iPad as a working tool. All of this seems to fit perfectly with the methodology demanded for the subject of Geography and History, based, to a large extent, on working on social problems.

According to our subject guide, the most important activity in the monthly work plan was the carrying out of a cooperative project on some of the contents of each unit. Due to the lack of specific teacher training on the cooperative method (Velázquez, 2013), this type of work confused this method with problem-based learning and project-based learning. What might at first appear to be a fairly comprehensive learning strategy that favours critical reflection, as advocated in the School’s methodology materials, ended up becoming, judging by some of the opinions of the students, a group project in which everyone played their own part without worrying about what the others were doing. This is in line with Romero (2010), who stated that group and project-based experiences are particularly prone to difficulties in learning together, in organising and coordinating, in communicating among participants or in using technological resources.

As Pérez Pueyo & Hortigüela Alcalá pointed out, cooperative learning does not work without “a previous climate of tolerance, respect and empathy” (2020, p. 642). This is one of the preconditions that teachers must take into account when implementing this type of method. The combination of “positive interdependence” with the heterogeneity required in group formation is key for cooperative learning to work as a weapon against segregation (Duk & Murillo, 2017). The problem arises when the lack of cooperation within a group of students denaturalises this type of strategy, complicating a given problem that could often be easily solved individually (Kirschner *et al.*, 2009, 2011). Some of the consequences of this type of strategy for students would be the lack of content knowledge other than of that worked on in the assigned project, or progressive demotivation due to the maintenance of the same working groups throughout the course. Strayer (2012) detected a similar dissatisfaction in a group of students who experienced the flipped classroom, compared with another group that followed a traditional classroom scheme.

Against this basic approach, it is worth mentioning the controversial work of Kirschner *et al.* (2006), where the authors basically asked why discovery learning does not work. The hypothesis was quite simple: the overexertion of learners in trying to learn by themselves may be such that, in the end, they do not learn anything at all. In support of this position, they referred to a paper by Mayer (2004), which showed that empirical studies consistently advocated other, more conventional ways of teaching. According to the author, it was a question of “optimising” learning, which can only happen when, thanks to teacher’s guidance, a certain outcome is reached through an awareness of the process leading to it.

In this respect, it is worth noting the tension between our School, which imposed cooperative projects as a methodological pillar in all subjects, and the teacher–researcher, who, based on his own experience and the opinions of his students, paradoxically tried to play down this strategy in his assessment system in order to “enrich learning” [MEDE-T12]. This is just one example of how the autonomy that normative discourses offer teachers to renew their teaching is completely conditioned, at least in our case study, by the power exercised by the school management. On this point, we agree with Herrero Nebot when he expressed that, although management teams should be responsible for leading methodological change, “this should be consensual and not imposed” (2019, p. 360). Indeed, for more than two decades now, both research and reports from different educational organisations have been insisting on the importance of promoting the so-called “pedagogical leadership of the school”, “since this acts at the core of educational innovation processes and is revealed as one of the most decisive aspects when implementing change and educational improvement” (Jolonch, 2019, p. 218).

As observed in our case study, the main effect of an authoritarian type of leadership is the conversion of the teacher into a mere instrument to implement canned innovations in the classroom. As reported by Rivas *et al.*, “educational authorities choose to subject teachers to the dictates of the apparently neutral technique. This decision highlights the depersonalising function of the technique”, as they make the teacher “a specialist who applies innovations designed from epistemological and methodological frameworks that are alien to the school” (2019, p. 140). In this sense, we could say that current innovation generates a process of the loss of creativity and the impoverishment of didactic strategies that transforms teachers into “passive consumers of ‘pre-cooked’ knowledge” (Altopiedi & Murillo-Esteba, 2010, p. 51), or into “‘task performers’ that others have designed” (Cañadel, 2018, p. 111). Along with this, another of the most controversial topics of our research, which will have to be further explored, is undoubtedly that of the real protagonism of the students within the learning processes.

Finally, some of the most interesting results of the research show that some of the strategies employed (e.g., exhibitions, games or map competitions), although they do not directly respond to the parameters of any of the innovative methodologies of recent times, are effective in motivating students and capturing their attention. In fact, this is demonstrated by the testimonies of both teachers and students themselves. Within the group of the most popular activities, the most outstanding by far is that of cultural outings, which is valued positively by all educational agents. As it is considered a suitable activity for both teaching and learning, we can confirm the relevance of certain strategies that do not require any of the technological elements that nowadays usually accompany certain innovative methods. In fact, to the extent that these types of proposals recover pedagogical principles from historical movements and renovating figures, such as Giner de los Ríos, many of the innovative strategies constitute “‘pedagogical innovations’ that we forget, perhaps sometimes in order to rediscover them” (Tricot, 2019, p. 73). According to Montanero Fernández, who found numerous parallels between current renovating measures and those that we could already consider classic, “to a large extent, it could be said that they update pedagogical ideas from the last century, adorned with the attractive ‘clothing’ of neurosciences and ICT” (2019, p. 25).

All this leads us to conclude that the incorporation of new teaching and learning methodologies into the classroom is far from a straight road, but rather a winding one, with quite steep slopes, unexplored routes and others closed to traffic (Pérez Albo & Gutiérrez Lacalle, 2020). The cause of this is the clash between, on the one hand, overly optimistic discourses blinded by change and, on the other, a school culture that is reluctant to abandon its old conceptions and practices. The juxtaposition, rather than fusion, of one tendency and the other, as in the case studied, does not necessarily improve teaching and learning, but often ends up reducing the motivation of teachers and pupils, both of whom are overwhelmed by all kinds of demands. The circumstances and objectives that define a private school context are not the same as those that characterise a public school, although the pro-innovation discourses (regulatory, informative, organisational, etc.) seem to affect both models. In this sense, the challenge we now set ourselves is to compare the results obtained here with the impact that the new educational methodologies are having in other types of school environments.

5. Note

This text is part of a broader PhD research entitled “The impact of innovative trends in Secondary education. Analysis of the Geography and History class”, defended at the University of Seville in 2022.

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