

# Critical literacy through Information and Communication Technologies in the primary educational systems of Spain and Switzerland: A comparative study based on the example of WebQuests

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## ABSTRACT

In this present paper, a comparative study between the Spanish and Swiss primary educational systems took place, investigating whether WebQuests are used in the foreign language lesson for the instruction of critical literacy in multilingual environments. The modern learning environment requires student-centred teaching, with new technologies creating ideal learning conditions which, although they carry many risks, have advantages over traditional ones, creating a lively learning and collaborative environment. In the case of WebQuests, searching for information on the internet ceases to be an arduous process, since it is guided. In addition, it enhances and promotes reflection, critical thinking, creativity, discovery and presentation of new information, delving into real-life issues and situations which are key elements of critical literacy.

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## INTRODUCTION

The modern educational environment consists of multilingualism, multimodality and digital reality. For this reason, it needs modern student-centered teaching, where the cultural and linguistic identity of the students will be cultivated. WebQuest is a didactic practice that promotes interculturalism and multilingualism, while teaching both Functional and Critical Literacy.

The educational systems explored in this paper were selected due to the existing, different linguistic reality. In both Spain and Switzerland, the linguistic reality is quite different. On the one hand in Spain bilingualism prevails, having an official state language - Castilian - which is spoken throughout the territory), while there are three other widely spoken, official languages: Catalan, Galician and Basque which are spoken in the homonymous communities and their neighboring ones. Switzerland, on the other hand, is characterized by multilingualism with four official languages: German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanian, with twenty cantons having German, one Italian, one Rhaeto-Romanian (along with French and German) and seven as their official languages, the French. In addition, various researches have revealed that, the General Organic Law of the Educational System (LOGSE), emerged some gaps and deficits and has been through a period of crisis (Alanis, 2003; Merino, 2004; Viñao, 2004). On the other hand, Switzerland has ranked as one of the best educational systems in the world. The two countries to rank higher overall were Norway and

Finland (Finland finishing in first). In the swiss educational system, exist many different ways of learning such as aural and visual and other stimuli, and "learning by doing". Learning in various ways, so as thinking in an original and creative way, provides people a multimodal learning environments of addressing challenges. The above data led the researcher to focus on the educational systems of these countries and specifically on the way in which both Critical Literacy and WebQuest are approached in language teaching. For this purpose, their Curricula were studied extensively through the official websites of the Ministry of Education, as well as the official educational websites for each autonomous community, in the cases of Spain and Switzerland<sup>1</sup>. The exposure to such different linguistic environments, such as the swiss and the spanish, and the emphasis on two very important topics on teaching such as critical literacy and webquests, make this research innovative and notable.

In conclusion, as far as the methodological approach in the present work is concerned, it is qualitative. Specifically, first the educational systems of Spain and Switzerland are discussed, then reference is made to the language teaching of Critical Literacy in primary education based on the Curricula of each country and then reference is made to the integration and utilization of WebQuest in teaching. Finally, there are similarities and differences between the Curricula of Spain and Switzerland regarding the two aforementioned elements.

### ***What Is a Webquest and How It Can Be Connected With Critical Literacy***

According to Jarvis (1999), personal experience has an important role in the process of learning through the experiential approach which seeks to develop and unfold the mental and emotional process through mental and emotional training. At the same time, the experiential approach is also associated with the development of new ways of thinking and chooses reflection and immersion in ideas and concepts, while enriching the psychological processes of each person by paving a personal path to new knowledge. Learning is based on experience, and the learning process begins with the need to respond to that experience through the process of reflection. In this way, experiential education is linked to critical literacy as the type of learning through experience, collaboration, and activity; and, at the same time also promotes critical thinking and develops a sense of social responsibility. In addition, it is related to the ideology of Freire (1970), who argues that through the development of consciousness, a person becomes the creator of culture and history. With the development of digital technologies in modern and postmodern society, literacy practices have changed significantly, resulting in a change in the communicative environment. The teaching process is now carried out through the practices of new literacy. More specifically, the teacher gives the necessary instructions to the students who are searching for information in order to extend the use of language in relation to certain words or grammatical structures. Moreover, they can use the text bodies to make inferences about language use and solve problems by aiming at recognizing linguistic and structural possibilities that distinguish them from the other types of narratives (Michalis, 2020).

WebQuest is an educational activity that involves finding all or most of the information needed to compose a module or solve a problem on the Internet. In short, it is a holistic teaching activity whose aim is to familiarize students with the use and knowledge that the Internet offers through online information management, processing, and evaluation. WebQuests are structured exploration activities based on targeted searches that gather and organize information and ask students to solve a problem. A key feature of WebQuests is that they have a problem-based organization that requires a solution and that usually accepts more than one possible solution. the collaborative communication activities with digital media help to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/las-tic-en-educacion-primaria/educacion-infantil-y-primaria-ensenanza-tecnologias-de-la-informacion-y-de-las-comunicaciones/15633>

cultivate not only digital, but also both functional and critical literacy by achieving more qualitative teaching through authentic text choices, where students have a more active role as they are the creators of knowledge (Michalis, 2020).

Finally, it should be mentioned that WebQuests can be used at any level and in the teaching of any subject, as it is an extremely useful tool in the hands of teachers who use modern techniques to create original, creative, and attractive lessons. Regarding the use of WebQuests in a second language, the teachers should encourage specific language use and should be proportional to the students' language level. The original texts of WebQuests should also promote the use of the target language. The goals should be clearly stated at the beginning of each activity. The result and process must involve a communicative use of language, as well as being based on a section of the textbook, to practice the skills they need to improve (Pérez Torres, 2007).

### ***Webquest and Critical Literacy in the Spanish Education System***

The last three decades there has been a progressive development in technology and education. In the early 1980s, several governments in the so-called "western world" introduced the need for computers into schools for the first time in their education policy. In Spain in the '90s, the General Organizational Law of the education system (LOGSE) appears, whose official documents showed that technology was timidly used as a teaching tool in the classroom, occupying an important part in teaching.

The new educational structure and organization at the non-university level in Spain took place in 2006. The Organic Education Law (Ley Orgánica de Educación) reorganized the education system with the aim of improving education, promoting innovation, evaluation and equality. Opportunities in education, leading more and more students to secondary and tertiary education, promoting interculturalism and lifelong learning, while creating a curriculum that seems to converge with that of other EU member states. (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2013).

The overall state administration is exercised by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, while the educational administration is exercised by the local education councils or local education bodies in each autonomous community, as each region has its own administrative autonomy and this has application in its educational system as well. The local educational organizations develop the general educational directions of the central state administration, as well as evaluate the training centers, thus participating in their operation and organization (Eurydice, n.d).

With regard to primary education, the educational level around which the research is conducted, it is free and compulsory and is completed in six school years. Students are introduced to primary education at their age six years old and complete primary education at the age of twelve. These six school years are divided into three two-year cycles.

In primary education, language activities focus on comprehension and reading skills written in the official language, Castilian (español castellano) or the official language of each Autonomous Community (eg Catalan, Galician), and proper knowledge of the language as well as the social and cultural environment. In addition, emphasis is placed on learning and using new technologies, individual work and collaboration, thus cultivating critical perception and thinking as well as respect for diversity and the creation of equal opportunities.

New technologies are a key tool of education as they focus on active participation and collaboration. According to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, the MS in primary education explicitly provide for the training of students in the use of ICT, which they consider both useful and necessary. However, according to research in recent years (Del Moral y Villalustre, 2012; Ortega, 2015) there is insufficient training of teachers to acquire skills, methodologies and use of these tools so that they can apply them in teaching.

However, according to Cozar et otros (2015), university programs want to make teaching related to new technologies in education sciences compulsory, stressing that this absence from the curriculum leads to

alarming results. In order to improve the teaching and learning process at this level, it is considered necessary to integrate the teaching of new technologies in the academic curricula of Education Sciences (Roblizo y Cózar, 2015). In addition, as is evident from recent studies devoted to the analysis of ICT knowledge, perceptions and uses by Social Science teachers, it was deemed necessary to implement a specific program for acquisition of digital teaching capacity of teachers in primary education (Trigueros, Sánchez y Vera 2012).

Finally, the Ministry of Education of Spain is committed to a permanent education, in which there is a critical analysis of ICT and their integration into the educational process. For this reason, on its official website<sup>2</sup> it has created educational material which refers to them and is available, for a fee for teachers and not only.

### **Spanish Educational Curriculum and Critical Literacy**

Critical Literacy (literacidad crítica) appears in the curriculum of primary education, with the Organic Law for the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE) of 2013. Initially, in the first article of the first chapter, it is mentioned that the general goal of the school curriculum is preparing students to become active citizens and participate in the community with a critical attitude and responsibility towards socio-cultural situations (LOMCE, 12/2013: 80). The second chapter, which refers to primary education and specifically to Article 17, refers to critical thinking, cooperation and personal initiative, elements that are directly related to Critical Literacy (LOMCE, 12/2013: 87).

In 2020, the Code for Infant and Primary Education was issued, which contains all the Organic Laws and the Royal Decrees that concern them. It states in more detail, the expectations and the contents of the school education. Specifically, it refers to the empowerment of learning skills, which is integrated into the elements of the curriculum to promote the renewal of teaching practice and the learning process. It also proposes new approaches to learning and assessment. In order to be able to transfer to these different contexts, it is necessary to understand the knowledge and connect it with the practical skills or the skills that incorporate them (Código de Educación Infantil y Primaria, 2020: 348-349).

It also states that teaching in the classroom consists in the development of a curriculum that aims at understanding, offers knowledge organization that allows students to develop their autonomy with a variety of resources and increase the desire to learn, to research, to discuss, confront, support, create, experiment and engage in dialogue. In addition, it emphasizes the development of activities that develop collaborative and supportive problem-solving skills, so that they learn to think, choose and improve through their choices. It also states that school knowledge is a new cultural product that has other purposes, functions as well as other logic. It also emphasizes the fact that teaching is based on interaction and dialogue between teachers and students (Código de Educación Infantil y Primaria, 2020: 349-350). Finally, he states that this interaction, in turn, allows reflection, questioning the objects of knowledge, which favors reflection, while emphasizing that this way of capturing knowledge implies that students understand that a text has multiple readings in which each field of knowledge brings different perspectives. Teaching must reflect the complexity of reality and its knowledge based on its interaction with it (Código de Educación Infantil y Primaria, 2020: 350).

As the Ministry of Education refers superficially to Critical Literacy, without delving into its positive sign as well as the way it can be used in the language course, something similar happens on the official websites of the education of the autonomous regions. With the exception of the provinces of Valencia and Andalusia, there are references to Critical Literacy as well as its use in language teaching, citing examples<sup>34</sup>. Also, the

<sup>2</sup> <https://sede.educacion.gob.es/portada.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://mestreacasa.gva.es/web/guest/inicio?p\\_p\\_id=3&p\\_p\\_action=0&p\\_p\\_state=maximized&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=2&3.struts.action=%2Fsearch%2Fsearch](https://mestreacasa.gva.es/web/guest/inicio?p_p_id=3&p_p_action=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_count=2&3.struts.action=%2Fsearch%2Fsearch)

curriculum of primary education refers in more detail to the need for the existence of critical literacy, which will be taught in the next period of time as mentioned on the respective website, through a variety of topics for analysis, discussion and elaboration.

In conclusion, it is understood that critical literacy is referred into the educational curriculum, but nowhere there is no clear reference on how it should be taught and what teachers should do on their behalf, with the exception of the provinces of Valencia and Andalusia where critical literacy takes place from an early stage. The reason may be because it may still be quite early. It is worth also worth mentioning that the Spanish Government has placed more emphasis on the responsibilities of each educational institution and each autonomous region has focused on maintaining language identity, focusing mainly on literacy and functional literacy, through the teaching of the dominant language in each region and not so much on critical literacy.

### ***ICT and WebQuest in the Spanish Educational Curriculum***

According to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, their curriculum in Children and Primary Education explicitly provides for the professional training of teachers in the use of ICT.

As evidenced by the results of research presented in a scientific journal on new technologies, regarding the use of WebQuest as an educational tool (Ramos, 2009), webquests are an excellent choice for acquiring management and information processing skills, as well as pedagogical and technological skills, around problem solving through research and learning based methodologies. Although, according to the above research, there is a high acceptance regarding the suitability of these tools in the teaching and learning processes, nevertheless the results of the surveys show relatively low values in terms of knowledge of webquests and access to the web platforms that host them. Indicators show the poor application of ICT in inadequate teacher training (Ramos, 2009). At the same time, research has been conducted that shows the insufficient training of future teachers in the management of technological tools from the point of view of teaching (Cózar et al., 2015). These conclusions are in line with the results presented in the research of Ortega & Trigueros (2017). The study, conducted on a sample of 105 future teachers, shows the urgent need to adapt the current curriculum of primary education to the new requirements of today's society, as it is pointed out, these are future teachers who will have to work with technological resources to develop and develop their professional work.

Despite the fact that, according to the aforementioned research and studies, there is no training of teachers on new technologies and consequently with the use of WebQuests in the language course, the Ministry of Education of Spain is quite organized as on its official website has created an email address that is part of its official website<sup>4</sup>, whose ownership, management and administration belongs to the Undersecretariat of the department, as well as responsibility for the content and services available to citizens. The information is provided free of charge as well as some services, but there are some for which you have to pay an indicative fee. Regarding WebQuest, a freely accessible file is available, which provides indicative information about their use, as well as includes web pages for further training, including examples of WebQuest for the course of literature and technology. In addition, it provides guidelines for teaching intervention and school use of the internet. Its ultimate goal is to enable trainees to develop a WebQuest model, to reflect on the standards of school internet use and to become familiar with its methodology. In addition it provides a CD-ROM with more detailed information and videos.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/portals/delegate/content/5f4f888a-605e-482f-adc1-2413adfa0deb/ComunicA%20Debate>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sede.educacion.gob.es/portada.html>

Surveying the educational websites of the autonomous regions regarding the integration of explorations in teaching, we found that in the region of Murcia (Región de Murcia) the educational administration on its official website has made a special section that refers to them, where it gives general information and instructions on with their creation, as well as relevant examples related to primary, secondary and even for infant education, with the ultimate goal of actively integrating into the school curriculum<sup>6</sup>. Regarding the primary, the website is organized in student units such as Language and Literature, Environmental Studies, Foreign Languages (English, French), Mathematics, Art and Physical Education. Focusing on the Foreign Language and especially on English, a WebQuest has been created which is addressed to the 6th grade (corresponding to the 6th grade) and has as its central theme travel. The activities are related to Liturgical Literacy and the ultimate goal is to create a travel booklet (written writing production).

In the Autonomous Administration of the Balearic Islands (Islas Baleares)<sup>7</sup>, on the website of education, WebQuest is mentioned as an activity of strengthening writing and reading as well as group activities and consequently cooperation and there are several examples with different themes. A similar situation is observed in the corresponding website of Galicia (Galicia)<sup>8</sup>, with references to the use of WebQuest and similar examples in the community of Valencia (Comunidad Valenciana)<sup>9</sup>, the community of Castilla y León<sup>10</sup>, Cataluña<sup>11</sup> and Cantabria<sup>12</sup>. Finally, in the community of the Canary Islands (Canarias)<sup>13</sup>, something similar happens in the community of Murcia, where there is an organized website with similar examples per educational level.

### **Webquest and Critical Literacy in The Swiss Education System**

Switzerland is a federal and multilingual country with a decentralized education system. The primary responsibility for education lies with the 26 cantons, which are responsible for compulsory education. The Confederation and the cantons have a common obligation to ensure a high degree of quality in the education system, which is systematically monitored, key challenges identified and the achievement of policy objectives evaluated on a regular basis. The Swiss Education Report, published every four years, is a result of this monitoring process. (Eurydice, n.d.).

In compulsory education, 95% of all children attend public schools in their local municipality and there is no free choice of school at this level. It is also worth noting that public schools play an important role in their integration into society. Children who have different social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds all attend the same school. Compulsory public schools are free and each canton is responsible for the curriculum. It is worth noting that there is no national curriculum, however the Federal Constitution obliges cantons to coordinate and harmonize their education systems in terms of structure and objectives. (Eurydice,

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<http://servicios.educarm.es/admin/webForm.phpaplicacion=WEBQUEST&mode=visualizaAplicacionWeb&web=2&ar=1088&liferay=1&zona=EDUCARM>

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<http://www.caib.es/govern/cercadorAv.do?cercadorText=webquest&aplicacion=TODO&coduo=&lang=es&fini=&ffin=&cercar=true&cercar=true>

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<https://www.edu.xunta.gal/espazoAbalar/es/espazos/recursos?page=1&buscar=webquest&Descrici%C3%B3n=&idioma=All&ensinanza=All&nivel=All&materia=All&tipo=All&licenza=All>

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[https://mestreacasa.gva.es/web/guest/inicio?p\\_p\\_id=3&p\\_p\\_action=0&p\\_p\\_state=maximized&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=2&\\_3\\_struts\\_action=%2Fsearch%2Fsearch](https://mestreacasa.gva.es/web/guest/inicio?p_p_id=3&p_p_action=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_count=2&_3_struts_action=%2Fsearch%2Fsearch)

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<https://www.educa.jcyl.es/fomentolectura/es/informacion-especifica/publicaciones/publicaciones-comunidad-castilla-leon/cuadernos-profesor/cuadernos-profesor-4/webquest>

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[http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/cercador/?q=webquest&as\\_sitesearch=xtec.gencat.cat&as\\_filetype=htm](http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/cercador/?q=webquest&as_sitesearch=xtec.gencat.cat&as_filetype=htm)

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[https://www.google.com/search?q=webquest&hl=es&as\\_sitesearch=www.educantabria.es&btnG=Buscar](https://www.google.com/search?q=webquest&hl=es&as_sitesearch=www.educantabria.es&btnG=Buscar)

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<http://www3.gobiernodecanarias.org/medusa/ecoescuela/recursosdigitales/tipo/webquest/>

n.d.). For this reason, the cantons, according to the language that prevails in them, follow the corresponding curriculum. The language of instruction is German, French, Italian or Rhaeto-Romanic, depending on the language area. Traditionally, language learning is important in Switzerland as students are required to learn a second official Swiss language as well as English during compulsory education. This ability of the Swiss to speak more than one language fluently is vital as only in this way will they be able to communicate with citizens of the same country residing in different geographical areas. Compulsory education begins at the age of four and lasts for eleven years. It includes two years of kindergarten or a first cycle, which is completed in eight years and the second cycle lasts three years in most cantons (Eurydice, n.d.). In addition, in the whole range of compulsory education -primary and secondary- the regulatory powers belong to the cantons.

This fact implies that each canton draws up its own curriculum, this implies that there will be many differences between the cantons and especially those that have a different L1. According to a recent report by the European Education Information Network (2020), primary school students in Switzerland are developing and improving their intellectual and creative skills. At the same time, they develop basic skills and cultural identity, as well as a sense of responsibility towards themselves, the environment, their fellow human beings and society, thus preparing them not only for the next stage, that of secondary education but also for lifelong learning. Taking into account the above, we conclude that critical literacy in Swiss schools starts very early, from the very first grade.

### **Critical Literacy in the Swiss education system**

In Switzerland, the term literacy on the Swiss online platform<sup>14</sup>, according to the researcher's translation, refers to the following: Literacy describes the ability to develop and understand a variety of texts in order to use them in a targeted and creative way and to develop critical thinking. In fact, the expectations of our society in relation to the general education of each individual have changed. At present they extend far beyond basic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic. They range from handling everyday texts (eg applications, operating instructions) to the ability to understand and produce multimodal texts. Education promotes active participation in the private, academic, professional and public sectors of the modern information and knowledge society<sup>15</sup>. It therefore becomes clear according to the above values, that the goal is to "open" and reorganize the text of the language course. Initially, as far as the body of texts is concerned, it should be extended to various social contexts, also at the level of reading, emphasis should be placed on the socio-cultural context of the text and not only on decoding techniques, objectives that should cover both school as well as social capacity, so as to create critical thinking and perception as well as personal development of future citizens. In 2006, the vast majority of Swiss voters voted in favor of Article 62 (4) of the Federal Constitution, which obliges cantons to harmonize the objectives of individual levels of education. For this reason, the cantons throughout Switzerland have started implementing a massive revision of the curriculum. As part of a wider program of speech-ethnographic work, curriculums in Switzerland seem to provide the skills and competencies needed for students to participate critically in their social environment.

In addition, it is noteworthy that curriculums give priority to "social skills". The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) often uses the word "skills" in its description of educational documents of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It also

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.forumlecture.ch/sysModules/obxLeseforum/Artikel/614/2017\\_3\\_Soussi\\_Ronveaux.pdf](https://www.forumlecture.ch/sysModules/obxLeseforum/Artikel/614/2017_3_Soussi_Ronveaux.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> *«La littératie décrit les capacités d'élaborer et de comprendre divers textes ou productions des médias, de les utiliser de façon ciblée et créative, de développer une réflexion critique. En effet, les attentes de notre société envers la formation générale de chacun se sont diversifiées. Elles s'étendent actuellement bien au-delà des capacités élémentaires de lire, d'écrire et de compter. Elles vont du maniement de textes quotidiens (p. ex. des formulaires, des notices d'utilisation) aux capacités de réception et de production des textes multimédias et d'Internet. La littératie favorise une implication active dans le domaine privé, scolaire, professionnel et public de notre société contemporaine de l'information et de la connaissance».*

defines three categories of key competencies: interaction in socially heterogeneous groups, autonomous action and the use of tools of interaction and interaction, which, according to the Organization, are all the prerequisites for a successful life (OECD, 2005: 5). In addition, it is also emphasized that these skills need to be developed, activated and utilized effectively (OECD, 2013: 46). Each core competency must meet the following: contribute to valuable outcomes for both society and individuals and help individuals meet important requirements in a wide variety of contexts (OECD, 2005: 4). In addition, 21st Century Skills to meet the ever-increasing demands of an ever-changing society (OECD, 2005: 8).

One of the key factors influencing MS today throughout the German-speaking part of Switzerland is the Lehrplan 21 introductory curriculum. 21 may symbolize 21st century skills or a 21st century curriculum, but in reality, the number 21 represents the number of German-speaking cantons that will implement the new curriculum. As Switzerland is a federal country, where until recently each canton had the power to develop its own separate curriculum, the new curriculum is intended to unite these 21 cantons of education (D-EDK, 2014a: 4).

The Lehrplan21 curriculum describes skills that are clearly defined and linked, where appropriate, to other topics and / or further skills. Interdisciplinary, personal, methodological and social skills such as critical thinking and reflection, are some of the special skills, which according to this should be taught through school subjects such as language. Also, with the introduction of the new curriculum, a holistic and interdisciplinary education is promoted which enables the student public to form a global opinion and perception, leading it to take responsible decisions and actions, for a just society for current and future generations. with respect for cultural diversity (D-EDK, 2014b: 13–16).

In addition, regarding Critical Literacy education, a special step has been taken to include Problem / Project Based Learning, which is an integral method of academic training of future teachers in University Pedagogical Departments. such as that of the Canton of Schwyz, thus encouraging autonomous learning. Based on this approach, teaching takes the form of self-organized learning, where students are given time to search, ask and research. The methodology is taught in the form of do-reflect-transfer, so that students can have the necessary experience and reflection to use it in their own classroom in primary education (Arnet-Clark & others, 2015: 94-95).

In the French-speaking cantons and in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino (Repubblica e Cantone Ticino) in recent years the curriculum has moved in turn, from the logic of knowledge to the logic of skills. More specifically, it states that the public school ensures the acquisition and development of general skills and abilities. In particular, it teaches students: a) reflectivity, with the ultimate goal of developing in the student public its ability to analyze, manage and improve its learning processes as well as to formulate personal training programs b) collaboration, with a focus developing a spirit of collaboration and building the skills needed to do teamwork and teamwork; the critical approach, which allows them to handle facts and information more objectively; and (e) creative thinking, focused on developing ingenuity, fantasia, imagination and flexibility in approaching any situation (CIIP, 2010: 6). More specifically, regarding the critical approach, the investigation of the object of the reflection, the verification of the accuracy of the facts, the adoption of an opinion / point of view are promoted. It also encourages students to compare their judgment, to explore different possible or existing points of view in the language text (CIIP, 2010: 11).

In summary, it concludes that the new policy for the harmonization of educational objectives between different language areas, introduced in recent years and based on heterogeneity, leads to the development of skills in different learning environments, in which critical thinking can be developed. and awareness of students / students leading from primary education to the teaching of critical literacy, while cultivating collaboration and the creation of independent students who can assess their abilities.



### **ICT and WebQuest in the Swiss Curriculum**

The Swiss school system adapted relatively quickly to the growing digitalization of society. Thus he managed to gather significant experience by creating a complete and modernized system based on new technologies (updating study plans and instructions, adapting to timetables, teacher training, ICT-based school curricula such as WebQuest, training in the use of digital aids continuous training in this field, integration of media education in the curriculum, provision of teaching material, etc.).

Initially, Lehrplan 21 was an important step in media education in German-speaking Switzerland. Although the cantons are free to decide whether to incorporate the new technologies into the curriculum, almost everything has been done. For example, the school curriculum of Saint Gallen, Schwyz, and Zug encourage the use of computers (Institut pour la Coopération internationale en Éducation, 2018: 65-67). Since the new technologies are an integral part of the education of German-speaking Switzerland, and especially of the primary ones, it has created a website entirely designed for the registration and finding of WebQuests ([www.webquests.ch](http://www.webquests.ch)) which is suggested as a source of training by the schools themselves. such as the school in its area, which is part of the German-speaking canton of Turgau. The website of this school<sup>16</sup> suggests to the search engines for children (Kindersuchmaschinen) the website of the Swiss WebQuests, typically saying that the internet offers rich content, which is very suitable for learning and practicing for school teaching, for this reason they offer students links to sites with exercises and further material. As of the beginning of February 2021, 222 web pages have been created with WebQuests<sup>17</sup>, about six thousand in total, from a variety of subjects that are addressed to all school levels.

However, education in new technologies does not have the same acceptance and repercussion in all language areas, as it is not included in the school curriculum of the French (Plan d'études romands) and Italian-speaking cantons (Plano di studio del Cantone Ticino). However, the cantons of Friborg and Neuchâtel have already introduced these tools, through programs based on digital and technological education. For this reason, the situation with new technologies and especially with WebQuest is expected to change and other cantons will follow (Jeunes et médias Program national de promotion des compétences médiatiques, 2014: 15).

### **CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMPARATIVE STUDY**

Having studied the curricula of the two educational systems in primary education, namely Spain and Switzerland, focusing on both the phenomenon of critical literacy and the didactic approach of WebQuests, there are both convergences and exclusions between them. Regarding the language teaching of critical literacy in the Spanish primary educational system, there is a low level of acceptance and integration in the language course. Despite the fact that there are reports on critical literacy issues, they are done indirectly and visibly superficially. There is a lot of research which refers to the positive results of critical literacy and emphasizes how important such activities are. However, it seems that a hyper-superficial skills model prevails in Spanish schools today, which is based on problem solving rather than knowing how they arise, while it would be preferable for students to learn to analyze and support controversial and controversial issues. On the other hand, the Swiss educational system has supported the existing MS in the country in the ideas and perceptions of critical literacy, teaching the development of skills in various learning environments, in which both critical thinking and awareness of students and students can be developed cooperation. An ardent supporter of critical literacy's ideas are the French-speaking and Italian-speaking cantons through the Plan d'études romands and the Plano di studio del Cantone Ticino respectively, while both the Spanish and German-speaking cantons of Switzerland follow with fewer reports.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.vsbb.ch/lernlinks.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.webquests.ch/public>

Regarding the new technologies and especially the WebQuests, based on the educational curriculum of the French-speaking part of Switzerland and although the critical literacy is very much integrated in education, it is not the same with ICTs which have not yet been included in the teaching. On the other hand, in German-speaking Switzerland, ICT is of paramount importance, and in particular web-based explorations, which have a dedicated web site for widespread use by both teachers and students for further practice. The situation is similar in Spain. After a thorough research, it was observed that most autonomous communities have a separate section (see Footnotes 5 to 12) dedicated to webquests on their educational website. A similar condition prevails on the official website of the Spanish Ministry of Education, which has a free manual with information on their use. It is noteworthy that by paying a token fee, the teacher can purchase a CD-ROM with more detailed instructions and examples.

In summary, it can be seen that in the cases of Spain and Switzerland the situation that prevails is that in the former the non-essential integration of the CC takes place and extensive use and acceptance of WebQuests. In Switzerland, there is an internal diversity in the educational curriculum, where on the one hand the Plan d'etudes romands and the Plano di studio del Cantone Ticcino, strongly supporting the critical literacy and exclude new technologies altogether and on the other hand in Lehrplan21 they are highly valued and acceptance of both, as there is a special website dedicated to them. It is clear that French-speaking Switzerland places more emphasis on introducing new ideas rather than new technologies. This may be due to the proximity of this part of Switzerland to France and the existence of a common official language. This fact may prove the need not only for linguistic separation of French-speaking Switzerland from German-speaking Switzerland, but also for ideological separation. Something similar to French-speaking Switzerland is also happening in Spain regarding Critical Literacy. The explanation may here be the common linguistic origin between Spanish and French, as well as the common ideology regarding educational issues which is probably a consequence of the common linguistic origin. Furthermore, it wasn't possible for the researcher to detect findings of previous research on the topic so as the results could be corroborated. This deficiency leads to the conclusion that dealing with both critical literacy and the ICT means, and especially webquests, in teaching is of a vital importance.

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