

# Characteristics and Properties of the Didactic Materials Developed by Local Governments

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**Abstract:** This paper presents the most relevant results from research conducted in the department of Teaching and Educational Organization at the University of Santiago de Compostela to identify educational media and didactic materials supported by municipal entities. Firstly, we will make some general comments on the topic and discuss a review of previous studies and the theoretical reasoning behind our interest in this field of research. Afterwards, we will go on to present the first part of a study focusing on the analysis of materials produced with support from municipal institutions. The steps followed during this phase of the research will be described, and then we will present the results and a general assessment of the characteristics of didactic materials found.

**Keywords:** textbook, didactic materials, teaching resources, local education

Many recent studies on materials in the Spanish context and internationally highlight the globalizing and centralizing character of textbooks (Rodríguez Rodríguez, Horsley, & Knudsen, 2011), which often leads students to lose touch with their immediate reality, and impedes a connection with their prior knowledge. Undoubtedly, there is a need for textbooks that include work proposals adapted to student diversity (Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2006), but we also need supplementary resources to help contextualize and adapt materials to the particularities of each region or community, as in the case of Spain.

In many cases, the development of didactic materials in local contexts has provided a chance to break the unifying character of textbooks and foster a work culture nearer to the reality of students and teachers. Likewise, the publication or elaboration of didactic materials as alternatives to textbooks in local contexts has sometimes been the result of alternative social movements seeking to include proposals different from those usually covered in books.

However, in our opinion, the study of didactic materials produced in local contexts should be undertaken with a consideration for the particularities of each context and reality, as it is not hard to find scenarios where locally contextualized materials have been promoted to destabilize centralizing education policies.

To provide quality education, schools must currently give proper attention to the particular needs of their students. Depending on the contents and activities included, materials can help to establish links between what happens in the school, and what happens in the social environment.

In general terms, and considering the sociocultural setting of our study, we could say that the contextualization of materials in local educational contexts can contribute in the following ways: by complementing textbooks which often do not cater to the cultural peculiarities of our students; by encouraging the development of significant learning through activities contextualized in the environment that motivate both students and teachers; and by attending to students with special educational needs, whose particularities are often not addressed. Moreover, these materials can contribute markedly to the preservation of local heritage and appreciation for the surroundings. Numerous studies have shown that materials often reflect little concern for the immaterial and architectural heritage proximate to students<sup>1</sup>.

In the Spanish educational system, local governments are subordinate to the regional administrations and the State, which are responsible for public education services, and have legal authority in this area. However, local governments exercise their educational functions in the regulated education (still holding educational buildings; participating in the management of complementary and extracurricular activities, programs of adult education, childhood education, art and music education, professional training, and so on; taking part in school boards and State School Council and City School Council), as well as non-regulated education (undertaking training processes throughout life in response to neighbourhood needs; conceiving education as part of other municipal policies and programs).

A first look at the activities, projects, and initiatives undertaken in recent years by municipalities in Galicia and other parts of Spain reveals that some city councils have paid special attention to activities involving the production of didactic materials and resources for a variety of objectives and goals (Álvarez Seoane, 2010).

It is not strange to see a mayor, council member, or historian presenting a new book, guidebook, educational project, or other didactic materials produced or funded by a city council. Likewise, there are many projects funded by local authorities for the purpose of developing didactic materials adapted to their local reality (Rodríguez Rodríguez & García García, 2007). If we notice what happens at schools, we can see that teachers and students use some of these materials in the classroom or as aids to certain activities. See for example, the *LEPI Project*, a support resource for school libraries in the municipality of Ames (Ames, 2005), the project on water published by the city of Ourense (Iglesias Novoa & Estévez Estévez, 1994), the comic book about the municipality of Carballo (Rajal, 1999) and the proposal for contextualized materials in the municipality of Pontes, focusing on different aspects of associations and community life in schools and other less formal contexts (Rodríguez Rodríguez & Castro Rodríguez, 2007).

These materials were conceived, in many cases, for educational purposes from a variety of perspectives. The existence of these materials and their dissemination

<sup>1</sup> For a deeper understanding of these issues see: Rodríguez Rodríguez, J., Horsley, M., & Knudsen, S. V. (2011). Local, National and Transnational identities in Textbooks and Educational Media. Tenth International Conference on Research on Textbooks and Educational Media. Santiago de Compostela: IARTEM.

among the population and in schools sparked our initial interest in their study and analysis. From a didactic point of view, we began to look into the features and functions of materials that were produced by municipalities. In this regard, several questions came up which did not have an answer in the scientific literature, such as the following: What are the reasons that lead many municipalities to produce their own materials? Why do other municipalities produce no didactic materials at all? What features do these materials present? What aims are they elaborated for? Why are these materials funded by local authorities? What training do the authors of these resources have? What use is made of the materials developed for local contexts?

## 1 State-of-the-art

With these issues in mind, we initiated a line of research at the University of Santiago de Compostela that would allow us to understand the features and functions of materials created with the support of local administrations. We will now look at some of the principal reasons that help us justify the concern and study of these didactic materials, as well as their contribution to our field of research.

### 1.1 Materials concept

One of the main aspects requiring clarification from the outset was the meaning of educational materials produced and funded for local educational contexts. The truth is that we are living at a time of undefined terminology in the field of educational technology, and in the specific field of materials analysis in non-school educational contexts. We need to specify what we are referring to by the concept of didactic materials in the setting of our study. In our case, we were faced with the task of defining what is meant by didactic materials produced or funded in municipal educational contexts, for more information on the meaning and implications of undefined terminology in the field of educational technology, we recommend (Rodríguez Rodríguez & Montero Mesa, 2004). Throughout the course of this paper, and in order to guide our study, we use the following definition: a resource intentionally elaborated for school, work, or social settings with the support of one or more local governments insofar as planning, design, publication, and/or dissemination for the primary purpose of mediating learning processes, either by providing proposals for educators, facilitating knowledge-building processes, or as a primary source of information. We will specify the didactic materials considered in our study in section 2.3, *Specification of learning materials studied*.

### 1.2 The Galician reality

We could say that in recent years in the Galician context a significant number of materials have been produced and funded by local educational institutions. As an

26 example, we can mention the didactic materials developed in the museum setting by the Education Department of the Pontevedra Provincial Museum (Castaño García, 2007), and by the Department of Communication and Cultural Management of the Lugo Museum (Reigosa, 2010). In the school setting, we can mention the resource elaborated by the Magdalena Municipal Nursery School in the city of Ames, based on the project carried out with their students during the 2007/2008 academic year (Dios Suárez & Otero Cores, 2009), and the didactic material on traditional games developed by A Capela Primary School (López García, 2006). In the business context, we can mention the didactic materials prepared by Sotavento Experimental Wind Farm (Candela Barreiro, Feijóo Varela, Rodríguez Rodríguez, & Teijeiro Bóo, 2005). Similarly, as indicated in recent research (Mareque León, 2011), municipal education departments devote part of their efforts and budgets to the design and evaluation of didactic materials. Most of the cases mentioned refer to educational resources developed for the purpose of addressing content or topics not raised in local school textbooks. Usually, materials developed for schools include work proposals serving the objectives and suggestions from curricular designs that should be taken as reference, but that may not be covered in textbooks.

### 1.3 Responsibilities of municipalities

A detailed review of the core responsibilities that must be met by municipalities (Caballo Villar, 1997, 1999) reveals that the Basic Law on the Status of Local Government (España, 3 de abril de 1985) stipulates mandatory and optional educational responsibilities, as expressed in Article 28, “Municipalities may carry out activities complementary to those of other public administrations, in particular activities relating to education, culture, women’s rights, housing, health, and environmental protection”, which may include the development of didactic materials. Regarding this issue, it would be interesting to know to what extent policies for the development of didactic materials are influenced by these responsibilities and the lack of specific funding.

### 1.4 Analysis of didactic materials approach

Based on previous research (Area Moreira, Parcerisa Arán, & Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2010), we can see that the interest in studying materials funded by municipal entities runs parallel to the need to study the materials produced in socio-community contexts. In a relatively recent study, Rodríguez (2010, pp. 31–32) points out that, “the participation of other institutions in the educational process, the important educational space generated by social education, the role assigned to didactics in the shaping of teaching-learning scenarios in the different contexts and the existence of new community settings where educational activities take place all entail the need to analyze and reflect on the meaning of materials in different professional scenarios”.

### 1.5 Diverse format and recipient

A look at the typology and characteristics of the materials published in the Galician reality reveals significant diversity in terms of format and target audience. We find materials funded by local authorities that could be intended for schools (Taboada Pérez, 2011), or materials mainly destined for groups such as adults, museums, cultural centres, social and cultural entertainment centres, and tourism centres (Fernández Bello & López Ferro, 2009).

### 1.6 Diverse authors

The materials created in municipal educational contexts are designed by professionals from different knowledge area backgrounds. In addition to teachers, social educators, and pedagogues who have didactic training, it is not uncommon to find didactic materials and educational resources created by local governments, authored by historians, biologists, linguists, and other professional backgrounds without specific didactic training. At first, it would seem that this confluence of professionals in the process of elaborating materials could have a beneficial impact in terms of improving elaboration processes, and representing an opportunity for professional development. Nevertheless, as stands out in some of the materials produced by municipalities that were analyzed, lack of pedagogical training was evident in some materials, manifested either in how they were organized, how the activity proposals were written or the underlying educational conceptualization.

### 1.7 Territorialized materials

The development of our study started out with a belief in the potential of local considerations and the idea that materials can contribute, in Carbonell's words (1995, p. 214), to "reinventing the territory" in the sense that they can promote the discovery of new educational spaces existing within municipalities, promote respect for cultural diversity and encourage the development of decentralized educational processes. Likewise, we believed that the formulation of locally contextualized proposals with contributions from the territory could help prevent cognitive non-contextualization produced by exclusively formal learning, which often tends to produce a high degree of social non-contextualization and uproots the child from their socio-cultural environment (Álvarez, 1990). It is also necessary to keep learning community principals in mind (Flecha García & Puigvert, n. d.; Freire, 1997), and emphasize the establishment of dialogic learning, the consideration of the family and relations in the development of materials, schools as learning centres for the whole community and the joint action of the teaching staff, and the consideration of other community entities in the development of proposals. We also agree with Alfieri (1990) in the needs for local protagonists (made up of families, local institutions, associations, and production structures) to be committed to providing children with

28 an experimental foundation that is rich, integral, authentic, distinct and healthfully conflictive.

### 1.8 Preparation of materials in local educational contexts

In our view, the development of didactic materials in local educational contexts constitutes a great opportunity to formulate alternative proposals to textbooks, so that we can compensate for many of their deficiencies. To provide quality education a school must pay proper attention to the particular needs of its students, especially in those education systems that insist on the need for addressing student's territorial and socio-linguistic diversity. Depending on contents and activity proposals, materials can contribute to weaving ties between what happens in school, and what happens in the social setting. Another aspect that has been highlighted in numerous accounts is the feasibility of elaborating materials contextualized in the municipal educational reality in order to help preserve heritage and appreciation for the local environment (Braga García & Schmidt, 2011; Rodríguez Rodríguez & García García, 2007).

In order to properly understand the object of our study and the research background leading up to the development of our research, we carried out a bibliographical review to determine the current situation. Insofar as recent literature reviews or national and international conferences, hardly any research was available focusing on the analysis of the issue of materials produced or funded in local contexts.

For an example of this we can look at the reviews and papers published in recent international conferences on Textbooks and Didactic Materials organized by the International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IARTEM) (Bruillard, Aamotsbakken, Knudsen, & Horsley, 2008; Horsley, Knudsen, & Selander, 2005; Horsley & McCall, 2009; IARTEM & Education-Madagascar, 2008; Rodríguez Rodríguez, Horsley, & Knudsen, 2011), The International Conference on Scholastic Manuals (Quebec, 2006) and The International Seminar on Scholastic Texts (Educación, 2006). Similarly, we paid close attention to literature reviews analyzing the situation in recent years (Martínez Bonafé & Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2010). To summarize the research reviewed, we can say the following: *There is little tradition of research on the subject, basically experiences* (in general, the studies in this area focus on experiences presenting examples of different materials and papers published in local contexts revealing a proliferation of materials approaches and styles), *lack of awareness in schools regarding didactic materials produced in municipalities* (Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2006), *participation by a variety of professionals in the design and elaboration of materials, diverse types of didactic materials, and local presence in didactic materials*. According to a number of recent studies published regarding the content of textbooks, we observed that local considerations were virtually non-existent. There were hardly any references to content or tasks that encourage students and teachers to develop initiatives involving the local reality. However, we

should point out the existence of new research reflecting on the need to produce materials addressing the local reality.

## 2 Method

This section discusses the methodological process and results of a descriptive empirical study regarding the analysis of characteristics and features of materials developed by local governments. The descriptive study is part of a wider research project whose overall objective is to identify and understand the decisions, functions, processes and characteristics of didactic materials in print and digital format created with the support of local governments in the province of A Coruña. To do so, we developed a data collection form including several analysis categories, which will be mentioned later. After completing the data collection form, we needed headed off to city councils in order to collect and describe learning materials.

### 2.1 Study sample

To select the study sample, we considered the entire population of the province of A Coruña (Galicia, Spain), consisting of 93 municipalities. A deliberate non-probability sampling was used to select informants in these municipalities. First of all, we contacted the town hall by telephone, explaining the purpose of our research and the information sought. We were then referred to the person, agency, or department that best knew the information.

In most city councils (29%), municipal culture workers provided information regarding existing materials and their location. In other cases (16%), the person in charge of municipal libraries was considered to have best knowledge of these resources, because much of the materials published by municipalities can be found in these libraries. Less commonly (10%), information was provided by the Department of Education at the city council.

In addition to this direct contact with the 93 city councils, other local institutions were contacted for information: nursery schools, municipal museums, and city public libraries. Moreover, we paid close attention to the information in municipal websites and information provided by key informants.

### 2.2 Data collection

A descriptive research method was used, framed within a mixed research design (qualitative and quantitative variables). This study aimed to describe the elaboration of didactic materials in the municipality without influencing its development, and as background for other research designs. By means of this overview, we can establish the variables, unique cases, and representative cases of good practices worth studying in more depth in the future.

The methods used for data collection were interviews (Ketele & Roegiers, 1994) and document analysis (Creswell, 2005; Prior, 2003). A telephone survey was used to analyze if the municipality produced or had produced didactic materials. If the answer was yes, access to those published materials was requested. The didactic materials provided by town halls, libraries, schools, and key informants were then analysed in order to extract information to describe the overall picture and characteristics of these materials in the province of A Coruña. To identify relevant information in these documents, a categorized instrument was prepared. The categories studied include the following: geographical location; year of publication; authors' training, position and gender; format; language; target context; themes of the didactic material; and its use in schools. These aspects are discussed in detail in section 4 of this article. These categories favoured a data analysis method based on codification and allowed us to establish patterns and category analysis that were analyzed using SPSS statistical software.

### 2.3 Specification of didactic materials studied

Due to the need to specify the type of teaching and learning materials in the study and the very vagueness of the concept of didactic materials (Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2001), before starting document collection, we defined the concept of didactic materials developed with support from the local administration.

It was understood to mean the following: a technological resource intentionally elaborated for school, work, or social settings with the support of one or more local governments insofar as planning, design, publication, and/or dissemination for the primary purpose of mediating learning processes, either by providing proposals for educators, facilitating knowledge-building processes, or as a primary source of information.

These learning materials may appear in several experiential modalities and symbolic systems (audiovisual motion picture; audiovisual fixed image; audio media; digital media; print media; actual-means manipulative resources, and symbolic-means manipulative resources), but must serve an educational program or project.

Ten non-exclusionary criteria were established for selecting publications. Thus, meeting at least one of the following criteria was required:

- The didactic material is structured as a teaching unit.
- The didactic material makes reference to its didactic purpose.
- Some of its authors are teachers or educators.
- Publisher describes it as a didactic material.
- The didactic material deals with curricular topics.
- The didactic material is designed for use by an educational institution (school, museum, training centre) or its members.
- The didactic material is part of an educational or training project.
- The didactic material is part of a municipal plan.
- The didactic material is designed to respond to an educational process.



- Publications without an initial educational purpose but likely to be used educationally due to their thoroughness or interest for the topic.

In addition, an eleventh exclusionary criteria was established, stipulating that the following would not be taken into account in the study: publications lacking an education or training purpose, those without a didactic treatment of contents or iconographic design, and those providing very basic information.

The above criteria provide guidelines for identifying didactic materials, but to complete the concept of didactic materials developed with support from the local administration we needed criteria to identify what constitutes local government support. Firstly, we understood that the local government supported the development of didactic materials or educational resources whenever they participated in any of the four stages of development (planning, design, publication, or dissemination). Secondly, we identified such participation whenever at least one of the following four criteria were met:

- Institutional logo of the city council appears on the material.
- The didactic material contains a foreword or similar signed by a member of the government and mentioning the relevance of the didactic material.
- Explicit expression of gratitude to the council for its participation in any of the development stages (planning, design, publication, or dissemination).
- The official municipal website makes the educational material available for dissemination.

## 2.4 Categories considered

After identifying the selection criteria for the didactic materials in the study, categories to encode the information in these documents were established. This was done bearing in mind the overall research objectives, as well as other research on evaluating teaching resources and related archival and documentation processes (Abadal Falgueras & Codina Bonilla, 2005; Álvarez Cienfuegos, Gayoso Calatayud, & Novoa López, 1993; Marín Fernández, 1998; Moya Anegón, López Gijón, & García Caro, 1999; Parcerisa Arán, 1996). The categories selected were the following: geographical location, year of publication, authorship (training profile, employment status, and gender of the authors), form of the materials, language of publication, target context, and topic.

## 3 Results analysis and discussion

Data obtained from the analysis of documentation is here presented in light of the categories listed above. We would like to begin by noting the difficulty of getting information from city councils. The lack of knowledge and time, segmentation of government structures, and changes of government were factors hindering our search

32 for didactic materials produced with the support of local government. Although our parallel search in libraries, museums, schools, and municipal websites located at least one resource in all councils, we must indicate that the participant sample (those municipalities which actually responded) was approximately 82%.

### 3.1 Geographical location

The 761 resources located were unevenly distributed among 93 councils. Most resources (67.7%) were located in a minority of municipalities (10.75%). In 6 municipalities in the province of A Coruña, more than 30 publications were located that met the research criteria, while in 4 other municipalities, between 16 and 30 publications were located. Between 3 and 15 educational resources were found in 33 municipalities. In other words, 21.8% of didactic materials were located 21.5% of city councils. On the other hand, the remaining municipalities, comprising the majority of those in the province of A Coruña (67.75%), registered the smallest percentage of resources (10.5%). This is because in 50 municipalities, only one or two publications were found. From the data obtained, assertions can't be made regarding the reasons for these differences, but the following may have an influence on the distribution of didactic materials: budgetary differences (municipalities with the highest population have more financial resources) (Mareque León, 2011); the presence of technical workers or politicians sensitive to the role of local governments in the contextualization of teaching (Candedo Gunturiz, 2002); lifelong learning programs in the municipality; the presence of education professionals who design their own didactic materials (Braga García, Lima Picanço, Santiago Bufrem, Rodríguez Rodríguez, & Knudsen, 2013) or, from another perspective, the work done by municipal libraries (training materials created in some councils are no longer preserved, thus, conservation efforts by libraries may have an influence).

### 3.2 Year of publication

The data indicates that no didactic materials previous to 1984 were located. From that date, the presence of didactic materials was increasingly observed, as can be seen in Figure 1, because municipal administration in Spain as it known today started with the Spanish Constitution in 1978 (España, 29 de diciembre de 1978), and the first municipal elections in 1979. We can imagine that in the early years city councils focused their resources on other programs, and not on making didactic resources. There may have been an influence by the regulation of participation in education by the educational community introduced in the Organic Law regulating the Right to Education in 1985 (España, 4 de julio de 1985).

There was also a slight increase detected in 1990, probably due to the creation of the International Association of Educating Cities that year, which meant that some councils joined this international project and started designing didactic materials contextualized to their own reality, see, for example, the collection *Papeis de Ed-*

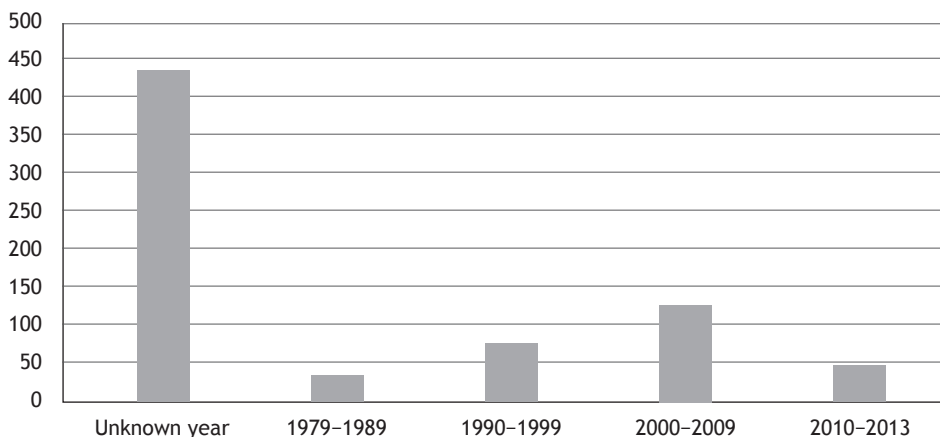


Figure 1 Educational resources by year of publication

*ucación* (Education Papers) developed by the Department of Education in Santiago de Compostela (Rodríguez-Abella Gómez, Varela Morales, Iglesias Martínez, & Papín Fernández, 2008).

### 3.3 Authorship (training profile, employment status, and gender of the authors)

Regarding the *training profile*, authors of 22% of materials had a bachelor's degree related to the design and evaluation of didactic materials, while 12% of materials had a mixed group of authors (consisting of people with a background in design and evaluation of didactic materials, and other people with specialized scientific careers, such as biology or history). The fact that there are authors with a didactic profile helps to explain the adequate structure and organization of didactic materials and their contextualization (Ramos Fernández, Castro Rodríguez, & Rodríguez Rodríguez, 1999). The percentage of materials whose authors had no-didactic training was residual (0.88%). Finally, the majority (65%) of materials located did not indicate the training profile of their authors.

Regarding author *employment status*, 62.8% of cases did not indicate the author's job profile. Of the remaining cases (37.2%), the majority were city council workers (12.5%), followed by museum training department workers (11.62%), primary and secondary school teachers (4.9%), members of associations (4.9%), and university professors (2.9%). In general, we can say that none of the authors were professionals dedicated exclusively to elaborating didactic materials, but did so as a supplementary task.

In the category of *gender* of authors, there is a clear predominance of mixed work groups consisting of both men and women (30.7%). In cases involving individual or co-authors, more educational resources were elaborated by men (10.2%) than by women (only 2.4%).

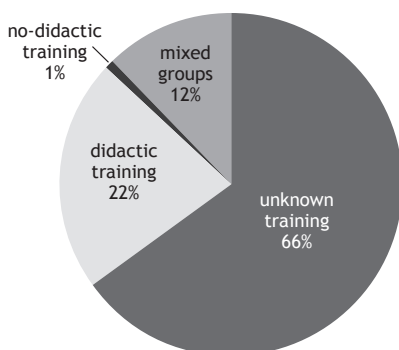


Figure 2 Training profile of the authors

KIND OF RESOURCE	EXAMPLE: TITLE, BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND LINK
Web	“Educabana”: Access to local deposit of publications.
	<a href="http://concello-cabana.es/portal/educabana">http://concello-cabana.es/portal/educabana</a>
Video	“Ao pé do Lar: As cociñas da xente”: Video about the grandparents kitchens missing of great historical speeches.
	<a href="http://vimeo.com/9162923">http://vimeo.com/9162923</a>
Book	“Concello de Oroso. Guía histórica en imaxes”: Resource elaborated by a cultural asociation in partnership with the council for awareness of local culture.
	<a href="http://www.manuelpazos.info/Marzoa.pdf">http://www.manuelpazos.info/Marzoa.pdf</a>
Pamphlet	“Mareas negras”: Monograph of scientific communication elaborated by a museum to answer questions about the ecological disaster caused by the Prestige (oil tanker) in November 2002.
	<a href="http://mc2coruna.org/emuseo/?woo_extras=mareas-negras">http://mc2coruna.org/emuseo/?woo_extras=mareas-negras</a>
Notebook	“COEducando construímos igualdade”: Teaching guide of good practice in equal education.
	<a href="http://www.igualdade.naron.es/sites/arquivos/guia_coeducacion.pdf">http://www.igualdade.naron.es/sites/arquivos/guia_coeducacion.pdf</a>

Figure 3 Examples of Educational Resources

### 3.4 Format of the materials

The didactic materials found can be classified into two groups (Figure 3): digital format (32%) and printed or manipulable format (68%). Among those in digital format, web resources were predominant (65.2%), followed at a distance by video (20%) and CD (11.8%). Among the materials in printed or manipulable format, books (56.3%) and pamphlets (25.16%) stood out. They were followed by notebooks (10.9%), binders (1.3%), and community newspapers or magazines (1.3%). These results are in line with other studies in Galicia (Romero Rodríguez, Gradaílle Pernas, & Montero Souto, 2008).

### 3.5 Language of publication

One aspect of great importance in the context of our research refers to the language in which didactic materials are written. Galicia has its own language, and both Galician and Spanish are official languages. Galician is recognized in the school curriculum as a subject matter, and as the mandatory vehicular language in certain subjects.

The Galician language was predominantly used in didactic materials created with the support of local governments (69.8%), but Spanish was also used (22.9%). Residually, there were bilingual publications (in Spanish and in Galician) (2.9%) as well as trilingual publications combining text in Spanish, Galician and English (or sometimes Spanish and English) (4.3%).

It should be noted that in recent years, the Department of Culture, Education, and University Planning of the Autonomous Region of Galicia has offered financial assistance to encourage the use of Galician in didactic materials (see e.g. the 2013 edition: <http://www.edu.xunta.es/web/node/8557>) and city councils have responded to these calls. Likewise, the enactment of the Galician Language General Standardization Plan (Galicia, 2006) and municipalities' own commitment has had a positive influence on the elaboration of didactic materials in the Galician language.

### 3.6 Target context

With respect to the target context category, it should be noted that a large majority (60.1%) of the publications considered to be didactic materials or resources elaborated with the support of city councils in the province of A Coruña target the social context. The social sphere promotes sociability, as well as cultural and social development in the target population, thus promoting incorporation into social networks in terms of education, employment, leisure, and social participation. We found a wide variety of contents among the materials for the social sphere: recovery of historical memory with older people, didactic materials related to programs for equality and against gender violence, as well as those promoting local identity or popular science. Defining target contexts turned out to be complex. In this case, we

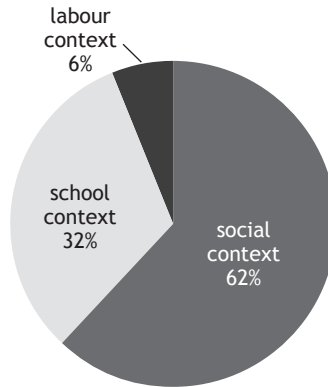


Figure 4 Educational Resources by target context category

situated ourselves midway between other terms used in the literature: non-formal education (educational activity outside the official education system to facilitate learning by adults and child population subgroups) (Trilla, 2003) and social education (development of sociability, social movement as well as student cultural and social promotion) (Petrus, 1997).

Secondly, 31.4% of the materials were destined for the school context with a clear predominance of curricular topics (biology, history, literature, and so on) addressed from the standpoint of local reality, as well as the tangible and intangible heritage of the municipality. We are referring to formal education ranging from primary education to secondary and higher education. And finally, 5.7% of the educational resources found were for the labour context. They tended to focus on job-hunting, continuing training, and models for administration workers. We would like to point out that this area was quite underdeveloped, and most resources were found in only three city councils. In Figure 4 we can see a pie chart with information regarding this category.

### 3.7 Topic

A variety of contents were found among the publications elaborated by city councils. What stood out from the rest (37.1%) were didactic materials where heritage was the main theme (natural, historical, linguistic, cultural, architectural, and so on); followed by city tours or hiking trails (21.8%); those relating to social policy, such as materials about equality or the use of new technologies (16.7%); 12% were resources on curricular content, especially those focussing on the environmental; and there was a similar frequency of materials for the popularization of science (10%). Many of these teaching materials contextualized in the Galician reality claimed to offer themes that were not present in textbooks with a “centralist” view of the curriculum (Martínez Bonafé, 2003, 2008).

A particularly important fact is that the vast majority of materials tested do not appear to be part of a community action project (Parcerisa, 2010, p. 23). Instead, they seem to respond to specific themes, isolated interests for political campaigns, or unique municipal needs. Our findings are in line with other studies seeking to determine the type of materials developed in local contexts, which highlight the presence of materials regarding cultural heritage and city tours or hiking trails (Castro Rodríguez, Rodríguez Rodríguez, & Zapico Barbeito, 2013).

### 3.8 Use in schools

Although not the primary objective of the study, during materials collection we had the opportunity to hear opinions from librarians, those in charge of municipal cultural programs, and teachers regarding the use made of these materials in schools. In general terms, and bearing in mind research on the use of materials in schools, we can highlight the following: teachers often lack knowledge of the materials existing in socio-educational institutions near schools containing locally contextualised educational proposals. Adherence to textbooks and the lack of an adequate materials dissemination policy may partly explain the ignorance of these materials (Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2001). A sporadic use of didactic materials to supplement textbooks in the development of certain activities has occasionally been detected. A large part of the material produced by municipalities is used as reference materials. It should be noted that a lesser degree of knowledge of local materials is detected in those schools where teachers are not permanent. The fact that their job is only guaranteed for one course leads teachers to focus on using didactic materials available at the school, i.e. mainly textbooks.

## 4 As a synthesis

To summarize, we could say that no common pattern of didactic materials design and publication was found in the city councils in the province of A Coruña. This may be because municipalities design didactic materials and educational resources to answer specific needs of their own territory, and since needs differ among municipalities, it is reasonable for the characteristics of educational resources to also differ.

The diversity among city councils manifested itself in an uneven territorial distribution of resources, seeing as the majority of didactic materials located were concentrated in 10 municipalities, there was also a wide range of contents and topics interacting with the diversity of target contexts and groups, various presentation formats (although print was still dominant), and a diverse use of language including Galician, Spanish, and English, with a clear predominance of the first.

There are two other categories in our study where significant similarities were observed. One is the year of publication, which presented some differences among municipalities, but showed a common trend in that publication of didactic materials

38 with support from city councils has continued to increase gradually since 1984. In the category of authorship we also identified a predominance of professionals trained in the evaluation and design of didactic materials (or mixed groups including authors with this educational profile); employed in education-related fields but in a variety of contexts (schools, museums, councils, etc.); and there was no significant gender gap, with a predominance of groups with a mix of male and female authors.

As a final comment, we believe that the literature review and the empirical data demonstrate that this is a field of required research which presents new possibilities for the study of textbooks and didactic materials. Although the lack of previous research makes it more difficult to understand some of the characteristics of materials sponsored by local governments, we can say that these administrations are interested in developing didactic resources that can complement school textbooks and help the community to understand its environment. The study results suggest the need for deeper analysis on issues such as government decisions affecting the elaboration of didactic materials at the municipal level; the professionals who design these materials; the didactic evaluation of existing materials and the effective use of didactic materials. We hope to provide new results on some of these issues in the near future. The results also highlight the need for more municipalities to promote the elaboration of materials contextualized in their sphere.

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