

## **RESEÑA: *VIVENCIAS DE UN INSPECTOR EN MADRID*. Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín**

## **REVIEW: “EXPERIENCES OF AN INSPECTOR IN MADRID”. Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín.**

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### **DATA SHEET**

Title: *Vivencias de un Inspector en Madrid* (Experiences of an Inspector in Madrid).

Author: Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín.

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Number of pages: 388.

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### **Resumen**

*El contenido del libro versa, como consecuencia de una serie de ensayos publicados en el blog Épica educativa, de la vida profesional y emocional del autor a partir de su experiencia como inspector de educación.*

**Palabras clave:** *Inspector, ensayos educativos, vivencias personales, encuentros, conversaciones.*

### **Abstract**

The content of the book is the result of a series of essays published in the blog *Épica educativa*, about the author's professional and emotional life based on his experience as an education inspector.

**Keywords:** *Inspector, educational essays, personal experiences, meetings, conversations.*

Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín, an education inspector and journalist, as well as a PhD in Information Sciences, is backed by a long academic career, as evidenced by a wide range of published books. Among these works are *Los Inicios de la Escolaridad Obligatoria*, *Víctimas del Sistema* and *un Maestro sin Revólveres*, without forgetting *Fiel a su Vocación*. These titles, like the one we are about to discuss, come from the same source: the author's interest in and commitment to education. All his works are different spheres, but all of them are united around the same source: education. Today we must add *Vivencias de un inspector en Madrid*, also thematically linked to expose his central concern for the ideas and life that circulates around education.

*Vivencias de un inspector en Madrid*, as the title makes explicit, brings us closer to the emotional territory, to the people who surround the office of inspector at a given time, hence its biographical and historical value. With his approach to the people who have accompanied him in the exercise of the inspector's office, he tries not only to introduce us to them, but also to point out the contexts of which they are a part. His empathetic understanding brings us closer to those who constituted a generation of inspectors who with their efforts contributed to raise the educational building of this country, although the territory is Madrid.

He tells us the origin of the book in the prologue: "While writing this, I find that *Épica educativa* has had more than 120,000 entries", in addition to the laudatory comments that accompany them. In fact, the text we have in our hands stems from the essays published in his blog *Épica Educativa*, from where he observes how his different notes have a growing public interest. With the security provided by such a base, he decided to publish the various essays in book format, which has forced him to make a certain formal adaptation when changing from digital to print.

The book begins with the first years that lead him to his vocation as a teacher and, from this springboard, leap to the corps of Education Inspectors. His wanderings through the neighborhood of Carabanchel Bajo, among a gray and sad environment, but enriched by different flanks in his youth, he managed to enter the San Isidro Institute, with no little effort and success, as a High School. An institute, as Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín tells us, that hosted an important part of the political and scientific elite of this country since its origins in the 19th century. Years in which he shows us what the life of a student was like, the subjects that disciplined knowledge, how it was qualified and the efforts that were demanded at a time when speculative knowledge prevailed over practical results.

Subsequently, with the reward for the effort sustained and demanded by the revalidated exams, with the title of teacher in hand, he will be a teacher of Therapeutic Pedagogy, a world that will put our author in contact with a sector of students with physical and mental difficulties to face life, which deepens his interest in teaching. The Patronato de Educación Especial at the Instituto San José, the Centro Público de Reeducción Especial de Inválidos and the Centro Público de Educación Especial María Soriano were his professional and life destinies. Through its pages we not only see their concerns, but also shows us the portrait of an era in these centers. With empathetic understanding she will show us her memories of the nuns in charge of the care and assistance of the inmates, of the way medical assistance was managed, of the vegetable garden, of their pedagogy. A world in which nothing is quick and difficult, as George Steiner would say.

The year 1982 marks a turning point in the writing of the work, as it is the year of the examination for the education inspectorate, of his entry into the corps of education inspectors and, with it, of a new drawing in his life and relationships. A competition, today difficult to imagine its hardness, because it lasted two years, with an agenda of more than 200 subjects —exactly 220— covering legal, administrative, pedagogical, and psychological disciplines, with a court chaired by a university professor, Ricardo Marín Ibáñez. His exercises, as told by Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín, and I cannot resist reproducing them, give an idea of the demands and qualifications of the education inspectors at the time, as well as the intellectual rickets of the present times. The eliminatory exercises began with a written topic (Psychology of the gifted: educational treatment); the second exercise consisted of an oral presentation of four topics chosen by lot; the third exercise, popularly known as a “trap” among the competitive examinations, had to develop the topic entitled Comparative critical analysis between the

renewed programs and the pedagogical orientations for EGB<sup>1</sup>; and the fourth was the practical exercise on a conflict situation originating in a public center, without forgetting the translation of a text in another language into Spanish. A recruitment system for senior civil servants which, in the author's opinion, responded to the personal and qualified training expected of professionals who should face, in a disciplined manner, the dynamic and sometimes conflictive reality of educational centers.

When he joined the Corps of Education Inspectors, the story changes its characters. Now his daily life is mainly related to inspectors and school principals. The affinities, for professional reasons, are different. From this moment on, he shows us the reality of the Department of Education of Madrid, his closeness to distinguished inspectors —as Alfredo Mayorga, José Antonio Palacios, Eduardo Soler, Lucía López, among others—, his experience in the rural schools of Madrid, his days in Madrid-East and Madrid-Capital as his destination, until 2006, the year of his retirement.

From this moment on, Ricardo Gutiérrez continues to talk to us about education and inspectors, but from the perspective and distance that retirement and the serenity of life provide. It is the edge of what he calls "the rest of my life". He continues to make us part of daily life by telling us about his meetings with other colleagues, with special mention of Manuel Rivas Navarro, Jesús Mesanza, Zacarías Ramos, Pedro Caselles; his encounters with the profession on different tributes, the pleasant conversation born in different lunches and stimulating experiences shared in the name of the profession and, on occasions, of friendship.

In the third part he continues in the same style, although he embraces the period of the pandemic inaugurated on March 14, 2020. Now life,

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<sup>1</sup> Junior High or Middle School.

meetings, conversations will be, as he says, more intimate, more sober. From the confinement arise the experiences in relation to Las Escolapias de Carabanchel Alto and the memories of his time as inspector, his relationship with the cultural association of Brunete, the sensations that the forties produce, and the return to the symposium with intelligent and educated colleagues, following the traces of experiences and readings. The book ends with an extensive section dedicated to the books published by the author, because, he says, we are the result of the books published and those we read. In short, Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín comes to tell us that the profession, the encounters with others, even if they are absent, the conversation, the communication, and the books, feed us and make us.

Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín says that the experiences shared in the name of profession, reading and writing, not only teach life, but keep it sustained in the encounter, the symposium, culture, and imagination. The humble conversation at a lunch, at a retirement meeting, in a cafeteria, "offers such surprising events that we do not have to strain our imagination to find them" (p.216). A way of inviting us to share Ricardo Gutiérrez Ballarín's passion and interests, a book that keeps the memory alive and through daily professional encounters nourishes life.