

# **Educational and vocational guidance in Spain: evolution in the period 1970- 2025 and current challenges**

## **La orientación educativa y profesional en España: evolución en el período 1970- 2025 y retos actuales**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to analyse the evolution of public policies on educational and vocational guidance and their effects over the last 50 years in Spain. It is divided into three parts. The first part covers the fertile reform period from the transition to democracy until the end of the 20th century (the precursor importance of the LGE, 1970; Royal Decree 334/1985; LODE, 1985 and LOGSE, 1990). The second addresses the main risks (LOCE, 2002; LOMCE, 2013) and advances (LOE, 2006; LOMLOE, 2020) for inclusive educational and vocational guidance in 21st century Spain. A normative review is carried out according to criteria of Nature (rank of the norm); Type of document/norma; Issuing institution; Rank of the norm; and Scope of application. In the third part, presents the cross-cutting and specific challenges of guidance today. The cross-cutting challenges are: sufficient and adequate investment in educational and vocational guidance; professional development of guidance practitioners; and greater territorial cooperation. Specific challenges: the effective provision of vocational guidance from a renewed perspective, and a more inclusive model of psycho-pedagogical assessment and support for student learning and participation.

*Keywords:* Educational and Vocational Guidance; Inclusive Guidance; Public policies; Legislation; Evolution; Spain

### **Resumen**

El propósito de este artículo es analizar la evolución de las políticas públicas sobre orientación educativa y profesional y sus efectos a lo largo de los últimos 50 años en España. Se articula en 3 partes. En la primera, se recorre el fecundo período reformista desde la transición

a la democracia hasta finales del siglo XX (importancia precursora de la LGE, 1970; Real Decreto 334/1985; LODE, 1985 y LOGSE, 1990). En la segunda se abordan los principales riesgos (LOCE, 2002; LOMCE, 2013) y avances (LOE, 2006; LOMLOE, 2020) para la orientación educativa y profesional inclusiva en la España del siglo XXI. Se realiza una revisión normativa de acuerdo criterios de Naturaleza (rango de la norma); Tipo de documento/norma; Institución emisora; Rango de la norma; y Ámbito de aplicación. En la tercera parte se plantean retos transversales y específicos de la orientación en la actualidad. Son retos transversales: la inversión suficiente y adecuada en orientación educativa y profesional; el desarrollo profesional de los orientadores; y mayor cooperación territorial. Retos específicos: la provisión efectiva de la orientación profesional desde una perspectiva renovada, y un modelo más inclusivo de la evaluación psicopedagógica y los apoyos al aprendizaje y participación del alumnado.

*Palabras clave:* Orientación educativa y profesional; Orientación inclusiva; Políticas públicas; Legislación; Evolución; España.

## Introduction

We will analyse the evolution of educational and vocational guidance and its determinants over the last 50 years. First of all, a review is made of the fertile reform period of educational and vocational guidance from the transition to democracy until the end of the 20th century (the precursor LGE, 1970; Royal Decree 334/1985; LODE, 1985, LOGSE, 1990 and LOPEG, 1995). We then address the main risks (LOCE, 2002; LOMCE, 2013) and developments (LOE, 2006; LOMLOE, 2020) for inclusive guidance in 21st century Spain. And finally, we set out the main cross-cutting and specific challenges for guidance today. Cross-cutting challenges are sufficient and adequate investment in educational and vocational guidance; the professional development of guidance counsellors within the framework of the teaching profession; and greater territorial cooperation. Specific challenges: the provision of vocational guidance from a renewed perspective, and a more inclusive model of psycho-pedagogical assessment and support for student learning and participation.

## **The fertile period of guidance reform from the transition to democracy to the end of the 20th century**

### **The LGE (1970): precursor of the right to guidance in the late Francoist period and the transition.**

It is unanimously acknowledged that *Law 14/1970 of 4 August 1970 on General Education and Financing of Educational Reform* was the first serious attempt to promote tutoring and educational and vocational guidance in the Spanish education system.

Its Preamble proposed something quite revolutionary:

*“In order to intensify the efficiency of the educational system the present Law attends (...) to the careful evaluation of school performance or the creation of educational and vocational guidance services, and the rationalisation of multiple aspects of the educational process, which will avoid subordinating it to success in exams”.*

In its articles, it establishes educational and vocational guidance throughout school life as a right of all pupils (Art.125.2.), a principle of the development of the education system and a continuous service which will attend to the capacity, aptitude and vocation of pupils and facilitate their conscious and responsible choice (Art.9.4.). It establishes the system of tutorials for each group and provides for mentoring between pupils (Art. 37.3). It regulates the means for locating and diagnosing pupils in need of special education (Art. 50) and cooperation with the Educational and Vocational Guidance Services (Art. 111.1).

Among the various regulations which developed it, we highlight the *O.M. of 6 August 1971*, which considers guidance as one of the most important innovations of the reform of EGB which called for a permanent collaboration between the family and the school, and the organisation of educational and vocational guidance (pp.108-112).

In practice, educational and vocational guidance was not extended to all pupils throughout their schooling, with the exception of tutoring, but the law raised expectations of change.

Within this regulatory framework, but with the transition to democracy already underway, the Provincial School and Vocational Guidance Services (SOEV) - initially by province, but later sectorised - were introduced on an

experimental basis by means of the *Ministerial Order of 30 April 1977*, as support structures for GBS schools. With scarce resources, the intervention of the SOEVs was not extended, despite the fact that finishing EGB with the Graduado Escolar was the horizon for hundreds of thousands of Spanish 14-year-old boys and girls who, with this qualification, would enter unskilled jobs.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Ministry of Education had a body specialised in the education of pupils with “deficiencies”, the Instituto de Pedagogía Terapéutica, which the Ministry of the UCD government transformed by *Decree 1151/75* into the Instituto Nacional de Educación Especial (INEE). In application of Article 49 of the Constitution, the INEE published the National Plan for Special Education in 1979 and in 1980 the Royal Board for Special Education was created, all of which served the objectives of the LGE in this area. Three years later, the *Law 13/1982 of 7 April 1982 on the Social Integration of the Disabled* (LISMI) was passed, which still did not contemplate early childhood care as an educational activity, leaving it in the hands of the health system.

The need to intensify support for disabled pupils, and in development of the National Plan and the LISMI (arts. 10 and 11), the Ministry of Education issued the *Order of 9 September 1982 regulating the composition and functions of the Multiprofessional Teams dependent on the National Institute of Special Education*. A few months later, *Royal Decree 2639/82 of 15 October 1982 on the organisation of special education* was enacted.

When José María Maravall was Minister of Education in the PSOE government, *Royal Decree 334/1985 of 6 March 1985* repealed the previous RD, which opened up the possibility of regulating early childhood care and support for schooling in ordinary centres:

*“The Special Education referred to in the previous article will be specified, either in early educational care prior to their schooling, or in the support and adaptations necessary for disabled or maladjusted pupils to be able to carry out their educational process in the ordinary centres of the school system, in the most integrated system possible, or in Special Education centres or units” (art. 2.1). (art. 2.1)*

### **Law 8/1985, of 3 July 1985, regulating the Right to Education (LODE).**

It was a fundamental law for the rights approach in guidance. It ratified school and vocational guidance as a right of students (Art.6.1. f and 6.3. d), granted the faculty the competence to coordinate the functions of tutoring and guidance of students (6.1.d), (Art.6.3. d) and guaranteed the right of parents or guardians (...) to be heard in those decisions affecting the academic and vocational guidance of their children (Art.4. g). This law underpinned successive regulations with great potential to transform guidance in a still rather centralised education system.

At the end of the 1980s, the school community put pressure on the administrations to include a guidance department in all schools, which would guarantee this right and accompany the integration of students with disabilities.

### **Organic Law 1/1990 of 3 October 1990 on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE): the decisive boost to educational and vocational guidance.**

In the previous period, most regulations focused on organising external support services for schools in the integration of pupils with special educational needs. However, LOGSE also defined a comprehensive guidance system: for all, with an educational approach and a three-tiered provision system: in the classroom (tutoring), the school (guidance department) and the sector (Equipo de Orientación Educativa y Psicopedagógica, EOEP). The Ministry argued for this in two programmatic documents that created an imprint: ‘La Orientación Educativa y la Intervención Psicopedagógica’ (MEC, 1990) and ‘Orientación y Tutoría’ (MEC, 1993).

When the LOGSE was passed, the MEC still had educational competences in 10 Autonomous Communities, as well as in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and was therefore able to deploy educational and vocational guidance planning measures extensively. In its Preamble, it ratified the right of students to receive educational and vocational guidance and included “psycho-pedagogical attention and educational and vocational guidance” among the factors of quality of education (Title IV) and its principles (Art. 2. 3.g). In the articles of Title IV on the quality of education, it regulated the basic aspects of guidance and tutoring (Arts. 55.e and 60.1). We will highlight Article 60.2:

*“The educational administrations shall guarantee the academic, psycho- pedagogical and vocational guidance of pupils, especially with regard to the different educational options and the transition from the educational system to the world of work, paying particular attention to overcoming discriminatory social habits that condition access to the different studies and professions. The coordination of guidance activities will be carried out by professionals with the appropriate training. Likewise, the educational Administrations shall guarantee the relationship between these activities and those developed by the local Administrations in this field (60.2.)”.*

Of particular importance in the subsequent development was the *Order of 9 December 1992* which integrated the SOEVs and the Multiprofessional Teams for special education into the EOEPs (Art.10). The order foresaw the creation of specialised services within them, establishing general functions for EOEPs (Art.6) and specific functions for their specialised teams (Art.7) and each of their professionals (social workers, specialist teachers, pedagogues and psychologists). It made the latter two responsible for the ‘*psycho-pedagogical assessment*’ of pupils and for participating in the ‘*assessment of their curricular competence*’ for the purpose of cycle promotion or arranging significant curricular adaptations (Art. 8).

Finally, it undertook to maintain and extend the existing guidance teams and resources to guarantee adequate attention to all schools (Art. 2.5), and to provide the EOEPs with the necessary resources for the development of their functions (Art. 18).

*Royal Decree 696/1995, of 28 April 1995, on the organisation of the education of pupils with special educational needs*, made progress with respect to those of 1982 and 1985, especially in the guidance of the youngest children, as it entrusts EOEPs with the detection and assessment of needs from early childhood (Art. 12.1) “*in a context of maximum integration*” (Art. 12.2), reinforcing the opening of public education to early attention for the purpose of integration.

*The Instructions from the General Directorate for Pedagogical Renewal of 13 May 1996* structured EOEPs into Early Intervention Teams, General (to support primary schools), and Specific for the support of pupils with special educational needs. It charged Provincial Directorates with “*organising the respective province into sectors, attributing each geographical sector and its schools*

to an EOEP" (Art.2.2), which was an important organisational decision on the previous provincial distribution. It also established that educational administrations should proceed to the progressive creation of specialised educational, psychopedagogical and vocational guidance services to serve schools, so that the process would be completed by the time of the full implementation of the respective levels and stages of the new comprehensive system (Art.18).

Although most of the Autonomous Communities (CCAA) kept the same name (EOEP), some communities had previously adopted diverse names, although with the same logic and similar functions, such as the Psychopedagogical Support Teams (EAP, 1983) in Catalonia with support functions extended to secondary schools, the EPSA in Galicia (1985), the SPE (1989) in the C. Valenciana, the EPOE in Andalusia, or the COP (1988) in the Basque Country which gave way to the Berritzegune in 2001, among others.

Subsequently, in development of the LOGSE and the *Organic Law 9/1995, of 20 November, on the participation, evaluation and governance of schools* (LOPEG, 1995), two regulations were enacted to regulate the organisation of educational and vocational guidance in public schools in the territory managed by the MEC.

*Royal Decree 82/1996 approving the Organic Regulations for Pre-schools and Primary Schools* created a key body, the Pedagogical Coordination Committee (CCP) in both types of schools (Chap. III) and its composition, whose members, "*where appropriate, include the school guidance teacher or a member of the team for guidance and educational intervention, which corresponds to the school*" (Art. 43). It also regulated the functions of the Commission, which included "Drawing up the proposal for the organisation of educational guidance and the action plan tutorial" (Art.44.c). Its Chapter IV, defined the functions of tutors in coherence with the principles of participation, quality and attention to diversity (Art. 46). Finally, it established that stage curricular projects should include among the guidelines and general decisions "*the organisation of educational guidance and the tutorial action plan*" (Art. 49.2.f.).

For its part, the *Organic Regulations for Secondary Schools (RD 83/1996)* included a Guidance Department in schools, which was to collaborate with tutors within the framework of an Academic and Vocational Guidance Plan and a Tutorial Action Plan (Arts. 24 and 33). It is the first regulation that no longer contemplates the department in pre-primary and primary schools. In Article 42, it defines numerous functions for these departments, and in Article 54.c. it includes as a competence of the PCC, "To



*establish the general guidelines for the elaboration and revision (...) of the academic and vocational guidance plan and the tutorial action plan, included in the stage curricular project*". Chapter V was devoted to tutoring (Art. 56.1) and, finally, it established that the stage curricular projects should include the criteria and procedures foreseen for organising attention to student diversity and the "*Guidance and tutorial action plan*" (Art. 67.2.).

In short, the profile of guidance and its professionals in Spain was largely constructed during these years, very focused on supporting the reform in progress, involving them in the development of the third level of curriculum specification (at school level) and its adaptation to the needs of students, as well as in supporting the integration programme.

*"The meaning of educational guidance and the functions that the corresponding specialised services have to develop are framed in the general context of the educational reform, particularly in that of the new curriculum established for the different levels. Tutoring, guidance and specialised services have to ensure the quality of teaching and the adequate development of the curriculum, mainly in relation to the basic principle of a personalised education, attentive to the personal development and peculiarities of pupils"* (Preamble OM of 9 December 1992).

In addition, being fundamental elements of the LOGSE the comprehensiveness of compulsory education and its extension to 16 years of age, the regulations endowed guidance departments and teams with wide-ranging functions to contribute to its implementation. Both were among its most important challenges and objectives, and schools perceived the arrival of guidance counsellors as messengers of the reform.

The law reformed the Certificate of Pedagogical Aptitude (CAP), which will last at least one year with an internship period (Art.24.2), created the speciality of "Psychology and Pedagogy" in the body of secondary education teachers (R.D. 1701/1991) and the Degree in Psychopedagogy (2nd cycle) by RD 916/1992, which were great steps forward.



## Risks and advances in inclusive guidance in 21st century Spain

Tutors and guidance counsellors work within the framework of the basic and autonomous regulations, so that to the extent that the organisation of the education system and the curricular model are more inclusive or more segregated, they facilitate or hinder their mission.

It is not appropriate to analyse what *Law 12/2002 on the Quality of Education (LOCE)* meant in terms of guidance, since it was not applied as it was repealed with the approval of the LOE in 2006. However, it is worth remembering that its emphasis on the freedom of parents to choose their school - while ignoring the fact that it reinforced the freedom of schools to choose their students - permeated society and led to the concentration of the most vulnerable students in public schools, causing segregation and increasing the difficulty of education and guidance in this schools.

### **A law to solve pending problems after the transfer of competences in education: Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May on Education (LOE).**

Once the transfer process was completed in 2000, the LOE only ordered the aspects established as basic in the Constitution and the LODE and, therefore, the specific guidance policies will from then on be the result of the Autonomous Community policies. This functioning implies, as a counterpart, the existence of coordination mechanisms to ensure coherence and the joint promotion of strategic programmes. One of these is the Sectoral Conference on Education (already provided for in the LODE), which brings together the minister and the regional ministries of all the Devolved Regions, whose dialogue and agreement on policies has had great impetus in the periods of the LOE (Art. 9 and Additional Provision 18) and the LOMLOE (Additional Provision 5), leading to a co-funding pact for educational programmes.

Consequently, in 2005, the MEC agreed with the Autonomous Regions on the *Plan de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo (PROA)* for primary and secondary schools. The role of tutors, departments and guidance teams in the “PROA centres” is leadership, the aim of the programme being to advise and support with resources and training those centres with greater educational complexity that submitted a kind of contract-programme to the PROA call for proposals in their Autonomous Community. It was established that, together with the other actors in education, they would work in two directions: to contribute to weakening the factors that generate inequality and to guarantee

attention to the most vulnerable groups, as well as to enrich the educational environment by involving families and the local community. For this reason, the PROA Plan was structured in two programmes: *School Accompaniment* and *Support and Reinforcement*. With this plan, the LOE implemented a combination of universal inclusive policies with policies focused on centres with greater educational complexity. The Programme had a funding of 500 million euros from 2005 to 2011.

The LOE replaced the principle of “integration” with that of “inclusion” (Art.1.b) -a far reaching change-, ratified guidance as a right of all pupils (First final provision, 3.d). It considers it a pedagogical principle, a necessary means for the achievement of a personalised education conducive to a comprehensive education in knowledge, skills and values (Art.1.f), a factor in the quality of teaching (Art.2.2.), and an essential intervention for lifelong learning (Art.5.6.). Consequently, it included “*The existence of services or professionals specialised in educational, psycho-pedagogical and vocational guidance*” among the resources for the improvement of learning and teacher support (Art.157.1.h).

It also took on an important challenge, to ensure that the Spanish population achieves a qualification in post-compulsory education or training, which will also be taken up by the LOMLOE (2020). By adding “shared effort and responsibility” as a new principle of the education system, it sent a clear message to society and school communities that they should banish the expectation that effort is only required from students, and that achieving the most complex educational objectives it is not the exclusive mission of guidance counsellors and specialist support teachers. Thus, it included guidance among the functions of teachers with a careful wording that we highlight:

“*The educational, academic and vocational guidance of pupils, in collaboration, where appropriate, with specialised services or departments*” (Art. 91.d),

and recognised and significantly reinforced for the first time the task of tutors:

“*The educational administrations shall favour the recognition of the tutorial function, by means of the appropriate professional and economic incentives*” (Art. 105.a.).

The LOE could not regulate the structures of guidance and its functions,

but it entrusted the ACs with the task of making guidance a fundamental element in the organisation of the stages, regulating its functioning and providing the necessary resources to guarantee the existence of specialised educational and vocational guidance services to support teachers and improve learning (Arts. 26.4., 130 and 157).

A contribution of this law that brings together recognitions is the competence-based approach to the curriculum in the implementation of which it gives a fundamental role to the collaboration between teachers and guidance counsellors:

“The actions of guidance counsellors, like those of all teachers, will collaborate - from the principle of attention to diversity - so that teaching in the different areas and subjects contributes to the development and acquisition of the following basic competences (...)”.

Moreover, in application of the Bologna Plan, it replaced the CAP with a “qualifying” Master’s degree for teaching in secondary education, vocational training and special regime teachings (Chap. I), among whose specialities it incorporated “Educational Guidance” (RD 1834/2008), consolidating its professionals.

It can be said that, in relation to the challenges it faced, the LOE was a modernising law and a guarantor of rights from a Ministry with few competences in a quasi-federal country. Therefore, it would not be fair to assess its successes and limitations without simultaneously considering its application and development by the regional and local administrations.

On the other hand, the few studies carried out to identify the processes of reform of public policies on guidance and school support in the ACs show (Vélaz de Medrano et al, 2013) that in this period there have only been partial changes, except in the case of Castilla-La Mancha in 2006, which designed in a very participative way a new and interesting - although costly - integrated guidance system, which when it was taking its first steps was extinguished by the government of the Partido Popular that won the autonomous regional elections.

### **The Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, for the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE)**

This law challenged inclusive education and guidance with its break with comprehensivity and its peculiar model of attention to diversity. It created real barriers for vulnerable pupils, both with the creation of early segregating itineraries and programmes, as well as the elimination of cycles in ESO and an over-evaluation of unmanageable curricular content. If the inertia of the classifying clinical model of 19th century pupils continued to connote psychopedagogical guidance and assessment despite the efforts of the LOGSE and the LOE, in the framework of the LOMCE it did not encounter structural neither curricular limitations. Moreover, there are few references to guidance in its articles. It establishes that *“end-of-stage external assessments... must allow students to be guided in their school decisions in accordance with the knowledge and competences they actually possess”* and that *“tutoring and educational and vocational guidance will be given special consideration in the training blocks”* of the Basic Vocational Training cycles (Art. 42.4). Finally, Article 67.9 states that *“specific curricula may be established for adult education leading to qualifications, including educational and vocational guidance adapted to their needs”*.

### **Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOMLOE).**

The objectives of this law are to repeal the LOMCE, to recover and update the LOE and to correct, as far as it is concerned, some limitations and weaknesses in educational and vocational guidance, fundamentally through territorial cooperation between the Ministry and the Autonomous Regions. It emphasises the planning of educational and vocational guidance in ESO (Art.22.5) and Bachillerato (Art. 35.1) and places the Guidance Council at the end of the 2nd year of ESO, with time to provide the necessary support to the student before the end of the stage.

Consequently, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) has promoted two territorial cooperation plans for guidance and promotion of school success and prevention of early school leaving, for which it provides its own funds and obtains European *Next Generation* Funds:

1. Given that the evaluation of PROA (2006) evidenced a high

degree of assessment and appropriation of the programme by centres and CCAA (Ulla and Manzanares, 2014), in dialogue with the communities proceeded in 2019 to its improvement, with PROA+ (*Programme for Guidance, Advancement and Educational Enrichment in centres of special educational complexity*) being approved in 2020. The investment in the period 2020-2024 was 586 million and currently more than 2600 schools participate in the programme (Source: MEFP).

2. *Personal and family support and guidance units for educationally vulnerable pupils (UAOPF)* were created with the mission of providing sectoral support for the educational trajectories of pupils at risk of dropping out of school, promoting their success at school. They were set up in the ACs in diverse ways and with different specialists and entities, within the sectoral psycho-pedagogical teams or in coordination with them, creating new quotas of guidance counsellors, educators and social workers with the aim of guiding and accompanying pupils and families. They operated from Primary Education to the end of ESO and Baccalaureate in public and publicly funded schools until the 2023-24 school year, when the implementation of European funds came to an end, although some Autonomous Regions have maintained this resource. Its funding in the period 2020-2024 was €124,710,000 (Source: MEFP).

We have no evidence that in recent years the Devolved Regions have undertaken comprehensive reforms of their guidance systems on the basis of prior evaluation, with the exception of the Autonomous Region of Valencia recently, but rather changes generally limited to the location of services. Some have incorporated a guidance unit or department in pre-primary and primary schools (CEIP) with a certain number of units: Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Galicia, Basque Country and Valencia (also Ceuta and Melilla since LOGSE). Further information can be found in the report of the Confederación de Organizaciones de Psicopedagogía y Orientación de España (2020) and in Huguet et al (2022).

Given the lack of far-reaching reforms, it might seem that the educational and preventive guidance model promoted by LOGSE has not changed in two decades, although in some territories it has been transformed by reducing investment in resources and/or through lower-ranking regulations

(Vélaz de Medrano et al, 2013).

In short, educational reforms have successively faced the rapid schooling in the 60s and 70s, the subsequent extension of the compulsory period in the 90s, and the promotion of post-compulsory studies in the 21st century, which, together with the limitations of the educational system to take them on, has shown the need for sufficient resources for guidance and psycho-pedagogical counselling and strengthen the training of its professionals.

## **Challenges for educational and vocational guidance**

After five decades of reforms and changes in guidance, it is fair to recognise the enormous advances that we have already pointed out in the course of the laws, and also to make visible some challenges that administrations, schools and guidance counsellors should undertake, taking into account the growing social, technological and cultural changes and their incidence on the guidance function.

We will organise them into cross-cutting challenges for all areas of guidance, and specific challenges referring to two areas which in our opinion deserve an additional effort of renewal.

### **Transversal challenges for the improvement of guidance**

They are cross-cutting because they affect the right to guidance of all students and therefore its provision and the adequate performance of all guidance counsellors' functions, regardless of the educational stage or the service in which they are located. We will highlight the following:

*a. Sufficient and adequate investment in resources for educational and vocational guidance at all stages, in the centre and from the school sector or area.* There are not enough professionals, with large territorial differences. According to information provided by the MEFP, in 2025 there are 18,468 guidance counsellors in the system, teachers specialising in Therapeutic Pedagogy (PT), Hearing and Language (AL) and Community Services (PSC), of which only 5,390 are guidance counsellors. Therefore, the ratios of guidance counsellors/pupils and sector teams/schools are far above what is desirable and the UNESCO recommendations.

*b. Professional development of guidance counsellors in the framework of the teaching profession*<sup>1</sup>. A model of initial and continuing training more complete and closely linked to professional challenges: with a university Mention on Educational and Professional Guidance in the Master's access studies; qualification through a quasi-dual Master's degree<sup>2</sup>; accompanied professional induction and evaluated, and performance assessment linked to career development (improvement, recognition and promotion).

*c. Greater intersectorial cooperation on educational and vocational guidance.* Policy dialogue between administrations and the adoption of commitments and co-funding pacts for strategic programmes is a key factor in boosting guidance action in decentralised countries such as ours.

Taking on these general challenges will result in making the multiple areas of intervention assigned to guidance professionals in the regulations viable:

- Early childhood care.
- Inclusive socio-psycho-pedagogical assessment and organisation of the circle of support for learning and participation of pupils, with special attention to the most vulnerable for whatever reason and the support of ICT.
- Psycho-pedagogical advice to the management team and coordination bodies.
- Accompanying teachers in their functions with a strategic vision.
- Support for the tutorial function and family guidance.
- Collaborative pedagogical leadership to make the right to comprehensive and inclusive guidance a reality for all students through the planning and evaluation of tutoring and educational and vocational guidance, flexible organisation of the centre (spaces, times, groupings , teaching); attention to transitions between stages and centres, innovation and research linked to a centre training plan based on shared transformation and improvement objectives and the boost of participation in inter-centre professional networks.

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1 In Vélaz de Medrano (2023) a comprehensive proposal is made.

2 This is permitted by RD 822/2021 of 28 September.



- Psychopedagogical counselling on curricular adaptations; prevention of absenteeism and early dropout; emotional education; guidance counselling (ESO); participation; coexistence; gender equality and diversity, and prevention of dependence (on toxic substances, electronic devices and social networks).
- Coordination with psycho-pedagogical, social, health and employment services and entities in the community environment.
- And, in several ACs, teaching when so decided by the centre's management.

### **Specific challenges**

Among the areas of intervention of guidance professionals mentioned above, there are two which, in our opinion, have been renewed to a lesser extent than the others in the period under review, and which represent specific challenges worth highlighting. These are the extension and modernisation of vocational guidance, and the adoption of a more inclusive model of assessment in general, psycho-pedagogical assessment in particular, and learning support and participation for all learners.

### **Vocational guidance: ensuring its provision throughout the system with a renewed vision.**

The different rates of progress in education, training and employment, and the varying socio-cultural and economic traditions of countries have given rise to two perspectives and policies on guidance:

1. One more focused on extending the years of quality schooling in an inclusive manner addressing the diversity of educational needs (case of Spain, among other countries).
2. Another more linked to socio-labor integration, following in the wake of the origins of vocational guidance (Germany is the paradigmatic example).

Prioritising one or the other perspective has led countries to organise the provision of guidance and to select and train professionals in very different ways.

In Spain, prioritising the first perspective has led to career guidance<sup>3</sup> being a line of intervention relegated in many schools, or limited to some information sessions on optional subjects, post-compulsory study alternatives and the careers or professions to which they lead, and/or the application of vocational tests at the end of ESO and baccalaureate.

However, three decades ago, the international agenda defined educational and vocational guidance as a scientific discipline and activity that has to contribute to respond from early childhood education to the demands of globalisation and the knowledge economy, the creation of a lifelong learning society, prevent exclusion, and establish bridges and close links between education, training and employment, from a new understanding of them. This implies that citizens need to develop and strengthen throughout their lives the essential competences to develop personally and socio-professionally, to go through multiple life and work transitions, and to move forward by adapting positively to change.

In short, there are four axes underpinning the current guidance movement: *inclusion, key competences, employability and lifelong provision*.

These axes are at the basis of the concept of personal and professional “career”, as a synonym for a long-range trajectory or project that must be learned to manage from early childhood by developing key competences. For this reason, for almost two decades now, international organisations have been using (in English) terms referring to guidance whose foundations - without the need to change the terminology - are slowly being incorporated into the Spanish education, training, guidance and employment system: *lifelong guidance, career guidance, career management skills, career education, career development or vocational guidance*.

Educating and guiding in the knowledge society means creating opportunities for children and young people to learn to mobilise values and basic and complex knowledge to solve problems; to develop creativity, personal initiative, will, responsibility, empathy, self- esteem; the ability to work in teams and networks; to understand the environment in which they live and the rules that regulate it; to develop new skills according to changes and problems; to use what they know to learn more, to consider mistakes and problems as opportunities to improve, and to develop a social capital of networks and relationships that offer help, keen, resilience, learning and opportunities. In other words, it requires giving them opportunities to develop

3 Organic Law 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Training devotes Title VII to Vocational Guidance. See the article on VET in this monographic issue.

the basic competences identified decades ago by transnational organisations (OECD, European Commission, UNESCO), which are contemplated in our country in the LOMLOE (2020) and its curriculum decrees.

Career guidance requires sustained actions to develop the broad range of competences that provide a structured pathway for analysing, understanding, synthesising and organising educational and vocational information, with the aim of helping citizens to become “competent” in planning and managing their learning, academic and vocational pathways and transitions, in accordance with the principles of active citizenship, lifelong learning and sustainable employment. This is therefore the content and task of renewed vocational guidance.

Guidance throughout life (GLL) involves helping to develop these competences with a particular focus on transitions (between education/training and from training to employment), where the exploration of one’s own potential and strategic vision of the future is vital. To be able to do so requires a flexible and interlinked education system, education focused on essential life skills and learning, specialised professionals and inter- sectoral and inter-professional collaboration. It requires collaboration between institutions and organisations (schools, colleges, universities, youth and adult education centres, social and employment services, companies and entities in the community environment), and a high degree of commitment from the different administrations that have to work in a coordinated manner (Vélaz de Medrano et al, 2016; CEDEFOP et al, 2021).

Therefore, at the end of 2007, EU member states established a *European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network* (ELGPN), with the aim of drafting the key features of the OLV system. Countries are recommended to consider in their policies four areas of work: 1) Development of personal, educational and vocational career management skills for learners; 2) Access to guidance services for all; 3) A mechanism for quality assurance and data collection on guidance; and 4) Sufficient and functional cooperation and coordination mechanisms between key actors. The importance given by the Commission to investing sufficiently in the VLO system has been concretised in a set of standards for monitoring and evaluating VLO systems and services (CEDEFOP, 2021).

From this approach, a new perspective on vocational guidance is evident, in which its provision - linked to personal and academic guidance - takes the form of continuous collaboration between guidance counsellors, tutors and teachers at all stages so that the development of the essential

competences and learning contained in the curriculum becomes a reality for all students (Vélaz-de-Medrano et al, 2023).

In conclusion:

The Spanish guidance system should not abandon its guiding principles and objectives (quality, equity, inclusion) but it has to find a better balance between inclusive guidance and vocational guidance.

Vocational guidance will not be a right for all students if it is limited to the intervention of counsellors and tutors; it must be a task that is truly shared with teachers and the community environment in order to reach all students and be comprehensive (personal, academic, professional and family).

### **A new model of psycho-pedagogical assessment and support for vulnerable learners from the perspective of inclusive education<sup>4</sup>**

In the half century that concerns us, many political and practical advances in guidance in our educational system have permeated the psycho-pedagogical assessment of students with support needs.

We have learned that all students can find themselves in “vulnerability zones” or at risk of not learning and participating sufficiently due, not only to personal circumstances, but also to barriers of all kinds that exist in society, the educational system, their school, classroom and immediate environment. And that all need support, some more than others, or in some moments and learning more than in others.

Consequently, the LOE (2006) replaced the principle of integration with that of inclusion, which meant a qualitative leap in the attention to the diversity of support needs of all students, which should govern the actions of administrations and centres.

However, the model of assessment, psycho-pedagogical reports and support does not seem to have been transformed in the system in line with the principle of inclusion (Calderón-Almendros et al, 2022). The warnings made for decades by many specialists about the negative consequences for students of the abuse or misuse of psychometric tests and the disregard of socio-educational “barriers” in psycho-pedagogical diagnosis have not been sufficiently taken into account (García Yagüe, 2007).

We should recognise that we know the change that needs to be undertaken, as there are inspiring experiences, literature and quality training available

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Climint Giné's article deals with the evolution of the education of students with support needs.

(Echeita et al, 2013; Booth & Ainscow, 2015). However, sometimes the constraints can be stronger than the desire for transformation. These may be a consequence of the complexity of the challenge itself, social and professional beliefs, the culture of schools - especially secondary schools -, resistance to change, or some public policies, among others. Here are some situations that exemplify this:

- The demands of the management team, teachers and/or families on guidance counsellors and support teachers (PT, AL and PSC) at different stages and in external centres or teams are very strong and tend to concentrate on the diagnosis and specialized attention to students who show more difficulties in learning or living together. This, together with the insufficient investment in guidance, has at least two important consequences:
- The response to this demand absorbs practically all the time of guidance counsellors and support teachers; and 2) Support for these students is not perceived as a responsibility of all members of the school community, but rather as the exclusive responsibility of the guidance counsellor and specialist teachers;
- Policies that establish “psycho-pedagogical assessment protocols” that induce “enabling” administrative reports that condition the allocation of new resources to schools.

The consequences are an increase in the number of students diagnosed from before pre- school with a disability, high ability or disorder, with the consequent stigmatisation of students, and pressure on guidance counsellors to issue administrative reports that guarantee the allocation of more support specialists for the school.

Changing the model requires the school community and also the sectoral psycho- pedagogical teams, to commit to and advance along three axes of transformation:

- Clarity and commitment to what an inclusive model of assessment and guidance for students with educational support needs entails, creating processes of reflection in the school on their practices and values.
- Giving students, teachers and families a voice in understanding support needs and designing inclusive responses together through

an pedagogical and distributed leadership between the management team, educational inspectorate, guidance counsellors, teachers and even families, which helps to move together towards a more inclusive model.

- Working with an inclusive theoretical reference model.

*Another model is possible: the “Model of Supports and Quality of Life” (MAYCV) in assessment and guidance.*

There is considerable unanimity among experts on the suitability of using this theoretical model - on which the Universal Design for Learning (DUA) promoted by the LOMLOE (Art. 4.3.) is based - to inspire in the school community the desire to take the first steps and transform the educational culture of the school. In order to adopt this model, the school should consider three elements:

- The dimensions of well-being (physical, emotional, cognitive, social...) or quality of life of each student, adapting the educational project, plans and didactic programmes to the Universal Design for Learning.
- Adjust the methodologies and participants in the assessment of student competences to the principle of inclusion, particularly in the psycho-pedagogical assessment when necessary (Sandoval et al, 2019).
- And as a consequence of the above, to organise a ‘circle of support’ for each student’s learning, participation and well-being, identifying first the ‘natural supports’ they need (their teachers, tutor, peers and family members) and then, where appropriate, the specialised supports needed in their natural learning environment.

The purpose of this inclusive model is that attention to diversity is *an enrichment for the whole school* (Reis et al, 2021)<sup>5</sup>. Some practical proposals are the elaboration of the “individual learning profile” of all students, the “classroom needs assessment report” (Marquez, 2018), or the creation of the “school’s portfolio of talents”, among others. These are elements that regulate the teaching processes and resources and the provision of the necessary support in the context and dynamics of the classroom and the school (Elizondo, 2025; Sandoval et al, 212). This proposal

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5 The proposal that Reis and Renzulli originally referred only to students with high abilities is extended to all students.

implies that teachers and tutors know each of their students well, constant dialogue with families , flexible organisation of the school and the curriculum, multilevel teaching and co-teaching, among other possible measures.

Adopting this model and its psycho-pedagogical, didactic, organisational and participatory strategies will foster a school culture more focused on recognising diverse talents, and transforming teaching and guidance, with the aim of increasing the learning and well-being of students and the school as a community.

## **Epilogue**

We would like to conclude by acknowledging that the importance and consolidation that the regulations have been giving to guidance and guidance counsellors in recent five decades, and especially the excelen and essential work of these professionals, has earned the unanimous recognition of the educational community and society. This demands and deserves improved training and to increase their presence in our education and vocational training system.

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