Curricular change processes in Spain: from LOGSE to LOMLOE[1]

Los procesos de cambio curricular en España: de la LOGSE a la LOMLOE

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Abstract

The text presents an analysis of the curriculum reforms that have occurred in the Spanish education system between 1990 and 2022, within the framework of the four laws that have introduced changes to the curriculum: LOGSE, LOE, LOMCE, and LOMLOE. The Royal Decrees on Minimum Curriculum Requirements are compared in terms of the approach to defining educational intentions,, the actors and levels involved in curriculum decision-making processes, the selection of basic learning outcomes, the vision of learning and teaching, and curriculum development initiatives. It also reflects on the relationships between the official curriculum, teaching practice and student learning. The analysis concludes that there is a clear continuity between the LOGSE, LOE and LOMLOE, with changes that progressively improve the core role of the curriculum. Elements that have been incorporated into teaching practice, albeit after costly and very lengthy processes, are identified.

*Keywords***:** competency-based curriculum; curriculum change; core curriculum; curriculum implementation; curriculum making; curriculum regulations.

Resumen

El texto presenta un análisis de las reformas curriculares que han tenido lugar en el sistema educativo español entre 1990 y 2022 en el marco de las cuatro leyes que han introducido cambios en el currículo: LOGSE, LOE, LOMCE y LOMLOE. Se comparan

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1   This article's main reference is Coll and Martín (2025)

los Reales Decretos de Enseñanzas Mínimas en lo que concierne a los actores y niveles implicados en los procesos de decisión curricular, el enfoque de definición de las intenciones educativas, la selección de los aprendizajes básicos, la visión del aprendizaje y la enseñanza y las medidas de desarrollo curricular. Así mismo, se reflexiona sobre las relaciones entre el currículo oficial, la práctica docente y el aprendizaje del alumnado. Del análisis se concluye una clara continuidad entre la LOGSE, la LOE y la LOMLOE, con cambios que progresivamente mejoran el papel nuclear del currículo. Se identifican elementos que se han incorporado a la práctica docente si bien después de procesos costosos y muy largos en el tiempo.

Palabras clave: cambio curricular; currículo basado en competencias; currículo básico; elaboración del currículo; implementación del currículo; normativa curricular.

Introduction

The curriculum policies of the last four decades are logically inseparable from the other transformations that have taken place in the Spanish education system during these years. Eight laws were passed during this period by governments of different political orientations and with diverse emphases on the goals they pursued which are analysed in the first article of this monograph (Marchesi, 2025). Within this framework of global educational change, we will focus on the four laws that have had the greatest impact on the evolution of policies and processes of curricular transformation in Spain: the LOGSE, the LOMCE and the LOE, as well as the law currently in force, the LOMLOE.

First, we will review the most notable changes that have happened between 1990 and 2022 resulting from these four laws and the corresponding Royal Decrees on Minimum Curriculum Requirements. We will organise this review in five areas that are essential for the analysis and evaluation of any curriculum proposal: (i) the approach adopted in the process of specifying the educational intentions that guide teaching; (ii) the levels and actors involved in decision-making on curriculum issues; (iii) the criteria used to select the basic learning outcomes that should form part of the curriculum; (iv) the vision of learning and teaching that underlies the approach adopted in the process of specifying educational intentions and the criteria used to select basic learning outcomes; and (v) the policies and actions planned for the implementation,

development, monitoring and review of the established curricula.

Secondly, we will address the relationship between the official curriculum, teaching practice and student learning in two ways. On the one hand, we will analyse the extent to which successive revisions of the basic and compulsory education curricula associated with the aforementioned laws have taken into account the results of student performance evaluation. On the other, we will ask ourselves to what extent official curricula have had an impact on teaching practice.

Curricular changes between 1990 and 2022

The definition and specification of educational intentions

The selection, definition and specification of educational intentions is undoubtedly one of the cornerstones of curriculum proposals and a necessary reference point for teaching practice. In what follows, we will briefly present how these intentions are specified and formulated in the Royal Decrees on Minimum Curriculum Requirements of the four reference laws (LOGSE, LOE, LOMCE and LOMLOE).

The teaching proposal of the General Education Law (LGE) in Basic General Education (EGB), which was in force until the development of the LOGSE, was formulated in the early 1980s in the Royal Decrees on minimum curriculum requirements for each of the three educational cycles: initial, intermediate and upper (1981, 1982a and 1982b, respectively). Its structure was very simple. The areas of each cycle were differentiated and the thematic blocks that constituted each of them were described. The educational objectives of the cycles or areas were not specified, nor did they include assessment criteria or methodological suggestions[2]. References to the educational objectives of EGB as a whole and its teaching methods were also included.

In contrast to this model, which consisted of specifying educational intentions by detailing the content that teachers should teach and the learning outcomes that students should achieve, the minimum curriculum

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[2]   It should be noted that dissatisfaction with this teaching model led to the launch of the experimental reform of the upper cycle of EGB in the 1984-1985 academic year.

requirements of the LOGSE opted to define them simultaneously in terms of the capacities that students were expected to acquire and develop and the learning content (Coll, 1987). The latter, for their part, are understood in a broad sense and cover other content, such as procedures or skills, attitudes, norms and values, in addition to facts or concepts. In this way, the minimum curriculum requirements for the different areas and subjects established within the framework of the LOGSE include three types of elements: the general objectives of the area or subject in question; the content, organized in turn into three categories: concepts, procedures and attitudes; and the assessment criteria, which '*establish the type and degree of learning that students are expected to have achieved at a given time, concerning the abilities indicated in the general objectives*'[3]. It should also be noted that the psycho-pedagogical principles underlying the minimum curriculum requirements of the LOGSE "are framed within a constructivist conception of school learning and pedagogical intervention understood in a broad sense" (MEC, 1989, p. 31).

Although they essentially maintain the principles and structure of the LOGSE, the minimum curriculum requirements of the LOE make a significant change in the specification of educational intentions by incorporating "basic competences" alongside objectives, content and assessment criteria as constituent elements of the curriculum. The basic competences – in linguistic communication; mathematics; knowledge of and interaction with the physical world; information and digital processing; social and civic competences; cultural and artistic competences; learning to learn; autonomy and personal initiative[4] – are an adaptation of the *Key competences for lifelong learning* proposed by the European Parliament and the Council (European Communities, 2007). Each of the areas and subjects at different educational levels emphasises its contribution to the development of basic competences while maintaining the simultaneous acquisition and development of the capacities that students must acquire, as well as the content in the formulation of the objectives. In addition, the formal classification by type disappears in the presentation of the content, although its diversity is maintained.

The changes introduced by the LOMCE represent a shift from the two previous laws. Among these changes, there are two particularly relevant from the perspective of the process of specifying educational intentions, one

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3   Royal Decree 1006/1991, of 14 June, establishing the minimum curriculum requirements for primary education.
4   Royal Decree 1630/2006, of 29 December, establishing the minimum curriculum requirements for the second cycle of early childhood education. Annex I. Basic competences (pp. 10-18).

relating to structure and the other to the vision of learning and teaching on which they are based. The first is the incorporation of '*assessable learning standards and outcomes*', together with objectives, content and assessment criteria, as a constituent element of the basic curriculum. When transferred to minimum curriculum requirements, this incorporation translates into long lists of '*assessable learning standards*' reminiscent of the lists of operational objectives in behaviourist-based curricular approaches. At the root of this change lies an even deeper one, related to the vision of learning and teaching that permeates the entire law and its regulatory development; a vision that places the ultimate responsibility for learning on the individual effort of the learner and, consequently, emphasizes that teaching should focus on creating the conditions that challenge students with this demand for effort.

Finally, the minimum curriculum requirements established within the framework of the LOMLOE re-establish continuity with the LOE, although they also introduce significant changes in the process of specifying educational intentions. Two of these are, in our view, particularly relevant (Martín and Coll, 2023). The first is the identification of a *student exit profile* at the end of basic education as the starting point for this process. This profile is competency-based and includes the same basic competences as in the case of the LOE, taking as a reference an update of the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*, carried out in 2018. The novelty lies in the fact that these competences are linked to the main challenges of the 21st century described by various international organisations and reflected, to a large extent, in the *Sustainable Development Goals* (UNESCO, 2017) and the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UNO, 2015). In short, the exit profile describes the level of competence development that students are expected to achieve in each of the basic competences to successfully meet these challenges.

The second relevant change is the incorporation of specific area and subject competences into the minimum currriculum requirements, replacing the general area and subject objectives of the three previous laws. Specific competences indicate the actions or types of actions that students must be able to perform in activities or situations that require the learning, articulation and mobilisation of knowledge specific to the area or subject in question. Specific competences thus become the connecting element between, on the one hand, the student's exit profile and, on the other, the knowledge or content of the areas and subjects and the corresponding assessment criteria. The aim is thus to facilitate the implementation of the competency-based approach in schools and classrooms, avoiding the risk that, faced with basic and cross-curricular

competences necessarily formulated in generic terms—as is the case in the LOE—, the planning of teaching practice ends up once again focusing on subject content.

The proposal to specify educational objectives adopted in the LOMLOE is associated with a socio-constructivist psycho-pedagogical approach that emphasizes the competency-based nature of learning.

Decisions on the curriculum: levels, actors, powers and responsibilities

The territorial, political, and administrative organization of the State into Autonomous Communities with full authority over education following the approval of the Constitution in 1978 has had a decisive impact on the structure of the Spanish educational system. This organization also underlies some of the core and distinctive aspects of curriculum policies and the processes of curricular change promoted and developed between 1990 and the present. This process is especially related to decision-making about the curriculum, its design, the institutions and actors involved, and the responsibilities assigned to them.

According to this organization, since the LOGSE, the official regulatory curriculum consists of two components. The first is "minimum curriculum requirements", in which the central government sets the basic aspects of the curriculum, which "*in no case shall require more than 55 per cent of school hours for Autonomous Communities that have an official language other than Spanish, and 65 per cent for those that do not*"; the second is *"the curriculum for the different levels, stages, cycles, grades and modalities of the education system*"[5], which is established by the education authorities of the Autonomous Communities[6].

Through the basic and common component established by the Government, the minimum curriculum requirements, the aim is to ensure that all students have access to the learning considered necessary for their development and socialization, regardless of their place of residence, as well as to ensure the coherence and continuity of this learning in the event of family mobility. Through the specific component, the curricula established by

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5   Articles 4 2. and 4 3. of the LOGSE
6   The Royal Decrees that developed the teaching proposal in the EGB established the minimum curriculum requirements and their corresponding timetable for all students (13.5 hours in the first cycle and 17.5 in the upper cycle). The distribution of the remaining teaching hours is attributed to the MEC and the Autonomous Communities with educational competences in their respective territories.

the Autonomous Communities aim to ensure that education responds to the social, economic, cultural, and linguistic realities of the students

In the LOGSE curriculum model, the combination of both components is called the *Basic Curriculum Design* and constitutes the first of the three levels of curriculum design in which the curriculum is articulated. This level is intended to be open and dynamic so that it can be adapted to the socio-economic and cultural context of the educational schools and to the diversity of abilities, interests and motivations of the students. The responsibility for developing the second level of curriculum specification, the *School Curriculum Project*, lies with the teaching teams of educational schools. Its function is to contextualize and detail the objectives and contents of the Basic Curriculum Design, taking into account the reality of each school and specifying how to achieve them. Finally, the third level of specification is the P*rogramming* developed by teachers for the teaching and learning processes they will carry out with their students.

The distinction between these three levels of curriculum design process has been maintained in the LOE (2006), the LOMCE (2013) and the LOMLOE (2020), although with differences between them. The two fundamental differences relate to the elements of the minimum curriculum requirements and the percentage of school hours they cover and are established between the LOE and the LOMLOE on the one hand, and the LOMCE on the other. Concerning the elements, while the LOE and the LOMLOE agree[7] that the minimum curriculum requirements consist of "objectives, competences, content and assessment criteria"[8], the LOMCE adds "assessable learning standards and outcomes"[9]. As for the percentage of school hours covered by minimum curriculum requirements, the LOE and the LOMLOE again agree on setting 50% in the case of Autonomous Communities with their own official language and 60% in those without, while the LOMCE sets these percentages at 55% and 65% respectively.

However, in our opinion, the curricula finally developed under these laws have been significantly less open and flexible than the three-level model allows and suggests. Among the factors that explain this fact, it is worth highlighting the following. Firstly, as we will see in section 1.3, both the minimum curriculum requirements and the official curricula reflect a clear

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7   There is, however, a minor but significant difference from the point of view of the definition and specification of educational intentions, which is addressed in section 1.2 of this chapter. While the LOE refers to 'basic competences', the LOMLOE simply refers to 'competences' without further precision.

8   Article 6.1 of the LOMLOE

9   Article 6 bis. I e) of the LOMCE

difficulty in limiting the basic learning that all students are expected to acquire, which leads to an overload of content. Secondly, the fact of defining the respective weight of the minimum curriculum requirements established by the central government and the official curricula set by the Autonomous Communities in terms of percentages of school hours has led some of them to increase the learning content load of an already generally overloaded minimum curriculum. Finally, the development of educational projects and programming that fulfil the functions assigned to them in the scheme of levels of curriculum design requires curricular autonomy for schools which, although recognized in law, has not been specified in terms of teaching hours available to schools until the LOMLOE[10].

A hasty reading of the three-level scheme of specificity may lead to the conclusion that the actors involved in each level are differentiated and operate in clearly separate compartments: politicians, technicians and managers of educational administrations in the development of minimum curriculum requirements and official curricula; teaching staff, and especially management teams, in the development of school educational projects; and teachers in the development of programming. This interpretation, however, is simplistic and does not reflect the reality. Groups of teachers are selected by the educational authorities for different reasons, including their prestige and recognition by other teachers. Depending on the case, teachers' associations, educational renewal and innovation movements, professional unions and pressure groups of various kinds with equally diverse aims and objectives have also had a greater or lesser influence on this development. Likewise, the development of school educational projects and programming tends to reflect, again to a greater or lesser extent depending on the case, the demands of the community, institutions and pressure groups within it. These demands logically express the ideological and pedagogical options and the teacher's interpretation of the official curricula.

Decisions about what to learn and teach: basic learning

Until the approval of the LOMLOE, the criteria for selecting and organizing the content or knowledge included in the minimum curriculum requirements have been systematically, more or less explicitly and with greater or lesser emphasis depending on the case, of a disciplinary nature. Academic disciplines,

10   Articles 120.4 and 132 l) of the LOMLOE

especially those with a longer history, more consolidated and with a more solid internal structure, have been the main source of content or knowledge for the corresponding curricular areas and subjects. The structure and internal logic of the disciplines have been used as a reference for selecting, organizing and ordering curricular content.

The simultaneous inclusion of capacities and content in the process of implementing the educational intentions of the LOGSE is not unrelated to this approach. The main disciplines and areas of disciplinary knowledge are the reference points for selecting the curricular content and knowledge that are linked to the capacities. The novelty, which in our opinion is not insignificant, is that the selection is not limited to factual, conceptual or theoretical disciplinary knowledge, as was the case in previous curricula, but also incorporates procedural, attitudinal and axiological knowledge that is no less important, and often no less representative, of the corresponding academic disciplines.

The adoption of a competency-based approach in the process of implementing the educational intentions of the LOE, although it has important curricular implications, does not, in our view, represent a significant change in the criteria used to select curricular content based on disciplinary knowledge. The cross-curricular nature of basic competences, as well as their necessarily generic and poorly contextualised formulation, makes it considerably difficult to use them to select curriculum content for areas and subjects based on disciplinary knowledge. The consequence of this difficulty is that, once again, the criteria for selecting curriculum content refer more to the structure and internal logic of the disciplines, especially in the case of areas and subjects with greater academic weight.

The incorporation of specific areas and subject competences into the basic curriculum within the framework of the LOMLOE represents a significant change in academic disciplines as a source of curriculum content. As mentioned in the previous section, the core of specific area or subject competences is the actions that students must be able to perform in situations or activities that require them to have learned certain knowledge of the area or subject in question. It follows from this characterization that the curriculum content or knowledge must be that which enables the actions or types of actions referred to in the specific competences to be performed. This content does not necessarily have to be that which would be selected using criteria specific to the structure and internal logic of the disciplines associated with the areas and subjects in question. In other words, the criteria for selecting

curriculum content originate from specific competences, thus allowing that content to be connected to the student's exit profile and facilitating continuity and consistency in the process of specifying educational intentions.

The change introduced by the LOMLOE in the criteria for selecting curriculum content should also make it possible to address one of the most significant problems that has traditionally affected basic education curricula in Spain: content overload. In effect, selecting the content of an area or subject based on the knowledge that needs to be learned to act in a certain way in certain types of situations should make it possible to distinguish between the curricular content or knowledge that is essential to learn and that which, although desirable or even highly desirable for students to learn, is not necessary to achieve the level of competence established by the specific competences (Coll, 2007). Failure to differentiate between these two types of learning content, and above all to consider them equally 'basic' and address them as such in the normative curriculum, can be an insurmountable obstacle to achieving competence-based and personalized learning in schools and classrooms (Coll and Martín, 2023). However, the review of the minimum curriculum requirements and official curricula established within the framework of the LOMLOE raises some doubts about whether this obstacle can be overcome. In some areas and subjects, there continues to be a significant volume of content or knowledge, all of which is presented as equally 'basic', whose selection seems to respond more, in our opinion, to disciplinary criteria than to the fact that they are essential for the acquisition and development of the corresponding specific competences.

The vision of learning and teaching: pedagogical approaches

There is a common tendency to think that a good curriculum is one that clearly and normatively establishes how to teach, assuming that if all teachers follow the same methodology, educational intentions will be ensured in the classroom. This belief, however, contradicts the fact that teachers are reflective professionals (Schön, 1989) and not mere executors of what others decide. Furthermore, the different nature of knowledge, attention to student diversity and the personalization of learning also require diversity in methodologies.

This does not mean, however, that it is not necessary to adopt a pedagogical approach in curriculum design or that it is not advisable to provide methodological guidelines for classroom activity. Guidelines that, without prescribing specific methods, respond to the conception of learning

and teaching underlying the curriculum. Since the approval of the LOGSE, this concept has been based on a framework that was initially constructivist and later became socio-constructivist, which understands that the mental activity of the student is promoted through intentional help from the teacher or, where appropriate, from classmates. Teaching is helping to learn without replacing the activity of the learner and engaging students in the activity being carried out, which in turn implies that they attribute personal meaning and value to this educational experience. This vision of teaching and learning processes is once again recognized in the three progressive ideology laws (LOGSE, LOE, LOMLOE).

From the socio-constructivist perspective that guides the LOMLOE, certain methodological principles such as collaborative learning take on special relevance. Likewise, it is proposed to promote student participation not only in the activities designed by the teacher but also in joint decision-making with the teacher on the organization of these activities, as a strategy for personalizing learning. Identifying and specifying students' interests and promoting new interests also contribute to personalizing learning. Reflection also stands out as a relevant methodological principle. The aim is for students to reflect on the consequences of their actions, to become aware of what they have learned and why, and how their learning experiences contribute to building and rebuilding their identity as learners (Engel and Coll, 2021). The aim is thus to help students better understand learning in its complexity and to develop the competence of learning to learn (Martín and Solari, 2024).

But perhaps the most important piece in the methodological principles of the LOMLOE's competency-based approach is the proposal that teaching and learning activities be structured around *Learning Situations* (Coll and Martín, 2023). Teaching from a competency-based approach involves planning classroom activities in a situated context that gives meaning and purpose to learning. Learning situations are in turn organized into an orderly sequence which constitutes the classroom programming.

This brief overview of the methodological principles underlying LOMLOE's curricular approach justifies, in short, guiding teachers towards the use of active methodologies. Project-based learning, inquiry-based methodologies, collaborative learning, interdisciplinary proposals, and service learning are examples of organising classroom activities that fit well with the constructivist and socio-constructivist vision of learning and teaching outlined above.

Curriculum implementation: curriculum development policies and actions

Since the LOGSE, the curriculum becomes the core element that structures the rest of the decisions on the organization and functioning of the educational system. However, this centrality of the curriculum as a social project that specifies educational intentions also entails a weakness insofar as its implementation depends on the implementation of systematically planned educational policies and actions, without which its innovative potential may bear little or no fruit. It is therefore necessary to design, plan and implement curriculum development measures that support the understanding, appropriation, specification and development of the curriculum from its normative definition to classroom practices[11].

The implementation of curricular changes depends, first and foremost, on the consistency of decisions regarding the organization of teaching. In the LOMLOE, there are three actions taken by educational administrations that are worth highlighting. The first is the establishment of school hours that can be freely allocated by the school in the corresponding regulations. The second is the possibility of organizing different subjects in secondary education into interdisciplinary areas, thereby facilitating not only the methodological advantages that this implies but also co-teaching and its greater capacity to cater for diversity and personalize the curriculum (Ferrández, 2023). The third is to reinforce the exceptional nature of repetition, limited to two possibilities throughout basic education, to emphasize the idea that the help needed by those who have not learned enough is a greater adjustment in the curriculum and not teaching them the same thing again (Grisay, 2003).

The educational intentions set out in the curriculum are aimed primarily at teachers. They will be the ones who interpret, specify, enrich and expand it planning teaching activities for their areas and subjects. Educational administrations must therefore ensure that the initial teacher training is updated and consistent with the new curriculum.

Without detracting from the importance of initial training, the most

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11   It should be noted, in this regard, that the implementation of the LOMLOE curricula has been hampered by the limited time available between, on the one hand, the enactment of the Royal Decrees on the minimum curriculum requirements and the Decrees on the curriculum of the Autonomous Communities, and the other hand, their almost immediate implementation in educational schools. This has led to certain initial limitations in the design and development of curriculum development policies that are essential for harnessing its innovative potential, such as adjustments to initial and in-service teacher training, the development of materials and resources in line with the new curriculum approach, and support and guidance for schools and teachers.

urgent measure for curriculum development is continuing training. The most appropriate form of training is "in-school training", which is based on the needs of the school and is aimed at its teaching staff. The essential objective is to advance the coherence and continuity of the school curriculum, understanding the moments when teachers from different cycles and departments meet to develop programs as privileged training spaces. Management teams should offer their support by organizing the time required for these meetings, without forgetting that this requires working conditions in which coordination activities are considered as important as teaching.

In this process of defining spaces for joint reflection on programming, the task of educational inspection is of great importance. Its supervision should in turn be a training resource. The principle of curricular autonomy set out in the LOMLOE requires educational inspection services that share the vision of autonomy as a source of professional growth, thus facilitating pedagogical alignment with these services.

The implementation of a new curriculum also requires the advancement of teaching materials, as for many teachers they remain the basic resource for programming. The degree of commitment that publishers make to the new curriculum is an important predictor of its success.

Finally, care must be taken to ensure that external curriculum evaluations are aligned with the curriculum. The influence of standardized performance tests is well-known (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Beyond the intrinsic limitations of evaluations of this nature, which are addressed in the following section, their approach must correspond to the characteristics of competency-based learning.

Official curriculum, teaching practice and school learning: a complex relationship

Curriculum change processes and student learning assessments

As mentioned in section 1.1, the LOGSE is the first Spanish education law to regulate the distribution of educational powers between the government and the autonomous communities, including those relating to the curriculum. Within this framework of administrative and pedagogical decentralization, it is considered essential to have an institution that can evaluate student learning

outcomes from the perspective of improving the system and guaranteeing equal educational opportunities. These reasons, together with the growing importance of the PIRLS[12] and TIMSS[13] tests of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), led to the creation in 1990 of the current Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE)[14] .

This Institute has been responsible for conducting evaluations of Primary Education and Compulsory Secondary Education since 1995. Under the LOE, sample evaluations were carried out in the 4th year of Primary Education and the 2nd year of Compulsory Secondary Education. Following the approval of the LOMCE, these became census tests, administered in the 3rd and 6th years of Primary Education and the 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education. The LOMCE attributed accrediting status to these tests, with an impact on student grading and promotion decisions. The Compulsory Secondary Education tests were never implemented. The same Government that had introduced them temporarily suspended them, and the subsequent approval of the LOMLOE eliminated them. Some Autonomous Communities have maintained, along with the national tests, their census diagnostic evaluations, the fundamental objective of which is to provide schools with information that enables them to draw up improvement plans. Along with these national and regional evaluations, participation in the IEA and OECD evaluation and assessment programmes (PISA tests) continues[15].

Currently, following the provisions of the LOMLOE, the INEE in which all the Autonomous Communities participate, prepares, applies and disseminates the general evaluation of the Spanish education system and coordinates the framework for regional diagnostic evaluation. The general evaluation, which is national in scope, is a sample evaluation, carried out at the end of each stage (6th year of Primary Education and 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education) and evaluates the key competences of Linguistic Communication and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)[16]. The regional diagnostic evaluations are census-based, are carried out in the 4th year of Primary Education and the 2nd year of Compulsory Secondary Education, and evaluate specific competences in the areas and subjects of Spanish Language and Literature, Mathematics

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12   PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.
13   TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.
14   This institute was created in 1990 under the name National Institute for Educational Quality. In 2012, it adopted the name National Institute for Educational Assessment.
15   PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment.
16   STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

and Foreign Languages. The document, *Marco General de Evaluaciones del Sistema Educativo* (INEE, 2023), sets out the matrices[17] for both the general evaluation of the system and the diagnostic evaluation of the Autonomous Communities.

We could conclude from this brief review that the students' learning assessments have become firmly established in the Spanish education system. Except for the LOMCE period, their accrediting purpose has been discarded, rankings have been eliminated, and results have been analyzed taking into account the influence of the socio-cultural level of families. On the other hand, since the LOE in 2006, tests have been developed from a competency-based approach, taking the national curriculum as a reference. The reports present the competency matrix, unravelling the dimensions and processes involved in their development, and the results are defined in terms of competency levels and not merely numerical scores. This theoretical framework, largely inherited from that proposed by the OECD, both in the PISA tests and in the DeSeCo programme (Rychen and Salganik, 2003), has contributed to the legitimization and dissemination of the competency-based approach. This ensures alignment between the curriculum and external evaluation, one of the fundamental requirements for ensuring that educational intentions do not contradict evaluation tests, as already noted. In summary, we can affirm that external performance evaluation undoubtedly contributes to understanding the level of achievement of the educational intentions expressed in the curriculum. Can these evaluations also be the main source of curriculum reforms, as some authors claim (Salomon, 2002)?

Our response in this case is much more cautious, based on both theoretical arguments and the concrete experience of Spanish curriculum reforms. Concerning the former, postulating this relationship is based, in our opinion, on an epistemological reductionism that assumes the hypothesis that it would be possible to infer without great difficulty from students´ learning assessment results the causes that explain them (Coll and Martín, 2006). Furthermore, even if this were possible, this conception assumes another equally complex and debatable hypothesis, according to which the causes attributed to performance results are related to the curriculum. Attempting to identify and evaluate the curricular factors directly involved in the performance levels evaluated is certainly a complex task. It is much more

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17   The test matrices specify, for each competency evaluated, what proportion of each type of item (closed-ended, semi-constructed, open-ended or constructed) should appear in the tests (general and diagnostic), as well as the cognitive processes to be evaluated in each competency and the selected contexts.

complex and uncertain than what is derived from a linear causal relationship between external evaluation and curricular reforms.

This difficulty of the direct and linear relationship between students´ learning assessments and curriculum reforms is corroborated when is analyzed the Spanish experience. In 2006, we reviewed the curriculum changes that had taken place between 1995 and 2005 and analyzed the extent to which these changes had been informed by the results of students´learning assessments (Coll and Martín, 2006). The results of this analysis show that the changes in the laws of that period (LOGSE-LOCE) and in their regulatory development did not use evaluation data to support their model. The same trend has continued between 2005 and 2022.

The LOE justifies the incorporation of competences into the curriculum by relying on the OECD's DeSeCo project and, more specifically, on the European Council's proposal on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning of December 2006 (European Communities, 2007). In the LOMCE, the main changes are not only not based on evaluation data, but in several cases contradict the consensus reached in international forums, for example by promoting pathways that separate students into academic and applied tracks despite the OECD's warnings about the risks of this measure. In turn, the LOMLOE recovers the structure of the LOE and introduces a curriculum with a clear focus on competences, which requires the autonomy of schools, as discussed in section 1.2 of this chapter. However, once again, the curricular changes introduced are not justified based on students´learning assessment results, but rather on theoretical arguments and international education policy as well as on an analysis of the difficulty experienced by LOE-associated curricula in implementing a truly competency-based curriculum in schools and classrooms.

The picture offered by this review of the relationship between curriculum reforms and students´ learning evaluations in the education system agrees with the epistemological reasons against reductionism, which involves placing evaluation as the source of educational intentions contained in the curriculum. This does not exclude the possibility that this influence may be greater when the evaluation uses the school as the unit of analysis with certain conditions. If the application of the evaluation and the analysis of results is properly planned and supported by management teams and promotes contextualized reflection among teachers at the school, this can create an interesting opportunity to review the coherence and continuity of the school curriculum project (Martín, 2011).

The impact of the curriculum on teaching practice and educational transformation processes

Without wishing to oversimplify the complex causes at work in any educational transformation, we dare to suggest that thirty years of a curriculum approach that has focused on equity, comprehensiveness, attention to diversity, school autonomy and, more recently, a competency-based approach have contributed to improving the quality of the Spanish education system. The evolution of the indicators presented in Roca's article included in this monograph serves as a good example.

These advances have been made possible by certain modifications in the organization of teaching, but it has also been necessary to promote changes in teaching practice. Although we are not aware of any studies that have systematically analyzed these transformations – the OECD's TALIS reports[18] are not very informative in this regard – we can point to some curricular advances that have been consolidated. The first of these refers to the acceptance of curricular autonomy as an essential means of adapting teaching to the diversity of the school context and its students and promoting a more professional and reflective teaching profile.

Most teachers have also changed their understanding of the relationship between capacities and competences on the one hand and content on the other. Although the weight given to content remains excessive in our opinion, teachers generally agree with the idea that the goal of school learning is capacities or competences and that these cannot be acquired in a vacuum, but require disciplinary content. Teachers often identify continuity between the LOGSE and the LOMLOE in this curricular decision, so much so that it sometimes makes it difficult to perceive the scope of the changes implied by a competency-based curriculum compared to a capacity-based curriculum.

The distinction between types of content has also been consolidated. When the minimum curriculum requirements of the LOGSE organised the curriculum content into "concepts", "procedures" and "values and attitudes" because different activities are required to teach and assess each type of knowledge in teaching practice, there was considerable confusion and resistance among different groups of teachers. At present, however, this is a distinction that teachers handle with ease in their lesson programming, even though the LOMLOE curriculum does not separate knowledge into these three categories.

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18   TALIS: *Teaching and Learning International Survey.*

The methodological curriculum decisions that inform teaching practice also show some established characteristics. Cooperative work is one of the most widespread. There is also an increase, albeit still incipient, in interdisciplinary curriculum organizations, as well as in the use of active methodologies.

Finally, actions aimed at a more inclusive approach are present in the projects and programming of most schools. These changes have been accompanied by a certain shift in the use of teaching materials. Textbooks, in paper or digital format, are beginning to be used by many teachers as a useful resource for their practice without, however, defining it completely. The combination of materials, both their own and those of others, is becoming increasingly common.

In summary, we could say that some of the hallmarks of the curricular approach proposed by the LOGSE in the 1990s and continued in the LOE and LOMLOE have become 'naturalized' in the teaching practice of a large part of the teaching profession, but this has taken a long time to happen.

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