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Educational transformation:
half a century after Franco's death



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Monographic section

PRESENTATION

Álvaro Marchesi

This monographic issue responds to an exceptional event: the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 fifty years ago. It is not a trivial or inconsequential event, but marks the acceleration of the process of change towards democracy in Spain. It should be remembered that it was not possible to remove him from power before his death and that he even signed five death sentences a few weeks before his death, despite social pressures in Spain and the request for clemency from a large number of European and American leaders.

The aim of the different chapters is to point out the changes that have taken place in these 50 years, or 55 if the General Education Law of 1970 is included, in various dimensions of education. The main purpose of all of them is to offer a broad and diverse overview of the advances, difficulties and challenges that Spanish education has faced and continues to face. All the texts presented deserve to be included in this issue, but not all the significant topics have been included. The limitation of the number of articles, the decision to ensure gender parity among authors and the availability of specialists in the different topics have played an important role in the organization of the monograph. Perhaps the most notable absence is that referring to the activities and conditions of the teaching staff in these years. The final option has been to incorporate these changes in different chapters: the requirements in the qualifications and training necessary to teach in the chapter dedicated to legislation; the average number of students per classroom and the expenditure per teacher in the chapter on educational statistics; and the changes in the teaching competencies required in teaching in the chapters on the curriculum and on educational support for students with special needs.

The transformation of Spanish education over these 50/55 years has been highly relevant and positive as can be seen throughout this monographic issue. But it would not be appropriate to consider the progress in education without establishing a close relationship with other important changes in politics, economics, society and culture. It has not been possible to address the interactions between them, but it is necessary to record their existence in order to fully understand educational progress in these decades.

The first article offers a brief summary of most of the educational laws passed since 1970. Special attention is given to the laws that extended

compulsory and free education: the General Education Law (LGE) of 1970 and the Organic Law on the General Organization of the Educational System (LOGSE) of 1990, without forgetting other laws in force in the 21st century. The meaning of the constitutional agreement on education is also analyzed. The selected data show very relevant progress in public spending on education, in student enrollment across all educational stages and in the reduction of school dropout rates. Progress has been rather more modest in the area of educational inequalities, so different initiatives are proposed to improve equity.

Enrique Roca's article shows the most significant changes in the main indicators of Spanish education over the last 50 years. It includes indicators related to context, financing, schooling and results. All of them reflect the enormous transformations undergone by Spanish education, which in these five decades has moved from a notable educational lag in all indicators to achievements that place it at the average levels of the OECD and the EU, and even at higher levels in early childhood education and higher education. The selected data on the demographic and economic context point to their relationship with educational progress in these five decades.

The changes in the University in these 50 years are analyzed by María Fernández Mellizo-Soto. The article highlights the depth of these changes, which have led to progress from a centralized university model to a decentralized and more dynamic one. Of particular importance is the University Reform Law of 1983, which transferred a large part of the competences to the Autonomous Communities and granted greater autonomy to universities. In addition to commenting on other subsequent laws, the article analyzes four key issues: the extension of university education, the reorganization of academic programs, the financing of its studies, and study grants and scholarships to promote equal opportunities. Finally, it points out future challenges for university policy.

The transformation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) during these years is the core of the article by Isabel Fernández Solo de Zaldívar. Her main thesis is that VET has evolved from being an undervalued alternative to becoming a strategic option for the education system and the labor market. The text reviews the most important changes during this time due to the influence of European models and the recommendations of international organizations. The consequences of these changes can be seen in the reduction of school dropout rates and in the improvement of young people's qualifications. The article concludes by identifying strategies that

need to be promoted to ensure that vocational training becomes a high-quality and prestigious option.

Alejandro Tiana develops in his text the construction of a decentralized educational system from the approval of the 1978 Constitution, which established the bases for the distribution of competences in education, to the present day. His exposition is organized in two key stages to understand the educational decentralization: 1978-1994 and 1994-2000. Subsequently, he analyzes some positive changes that have taken place in recent years, such as territorial coordination and cooperation programs, and describes the tensions between recentralizing and decentralizing movements. Finally, it evaluates positively the growing convergence between autonomous communities, largely due to the decentralized management of education.

César Coll and Elena Martín analyze the curricular change in Spain from LOGSE to LOMLOE. First, they address the key elements necessary for the analysis and evaluation of the curriculum: the levels and actors involved, the process of specifying educational intentions, the criteria used to select basic learning, the socio-constructivist perspective that guides this process, and the policies and actions planned for the development and revision of established curricula. Subsequently, they evaluate the processes of curricular change and their complex relationships with student learning assessments, as well as the impact of the curriculum on teaching practice.

Progress in an inclusive response to students with special educational needs over the past five decades is the main focus of the article by Climent Giné. It addresses the changes in society, in Spanish culture, in legislation, in educational management, in community commitment and in educational practices towards a greater recognition of diversity and educational inclusion. The conclusions highlight the enormous progress achieved over the past 50 years, moving from the complete absence of students integrated into mainstream schools in 1975 to 84% in the 2022–2023 school year. However, it also point out that students with special educational needs are still largely excluded from the community.

School leadership is the subject developed by Francisco López Rupérez. The article start with the importance of the professionalization of school leadership and its value in the functioning of schools and in the improvement of the quality of education. His analysis is based on the review and comparison of the different laws that have dealt with this subject, practically all those passed since 1970. In order to conduct a rigorous

comparison, he uses three criteria to analyse each law: access to school leadership, professional practice and professional development. The analysis and evaluation of current legislation based on the proposed model allows the author to point out future lines of action for strengthening school leadership.

The article by Consuelo Vélaz de Medrano reflects on the process of implementation of educational guidance over the past 55 years, on its objectives and on the different organizational models. It analyzes the innovative proposals of the 1970 General Education Law (LGE) on educational guidance and the changes introduced by the 1985 project for educational inclusion of students and by the 1990 LOGSE, which led to the development of guidance teams and departments in all schools. The text also addresses the main advances and risks of the legislation and programs in the 21st century. Finally, the remaining challenges in vocational guidance and psycho-pedagogical counseling and evaluation are outlined.

The evolution of textbooks over the last 50 years is the topic of the article written by Gabriela Ossenbach, Kira Mahamud and Miguel Beas. The authors analyze the changes they have undergone during these years influenced by curricular transformations, by the progressive liberalization of their administrative control, by the organization of large publishing groups, by the evolution of their authorship towards work teams and by the modifications of their editorial design to favor more dynamic learning. The article highlights the remarkable adatability of textbooks during these decades. Their perspective of reaching the greatest number of students must be accompanied by the competence of the teacher to adapt them to the characteristics of each school and to the diversity of the student.

Two final remarks to conclude the presentation of this issue. First, the Revista de Educación is right to address in a monograph the evolution of education in Spain over the last 50 years. The second is the confirmation, after reading the full Monograph, of a statement about education expressed in the first article: any time in the past was worse.

Impact of laws on 50 years of education

Impacto de las leyes en 50 años de educación

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Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to assess the influence of legislation on changes in education occurred in the last 50 years. We review the main laws of Education (excluding university) especially those that have lasted at least three years LGE, LODE, LOGSE, LOPEGCE, LOE, LOMCE and LOMLOE. Special consideration is given to the two different ideological models: freedom to choose school versus public provision planning, and student differentiation versus comprehensive education. The article highlights the changes that have taken place over the past five decades, affecting the quality and equity of education, using key indicators of education, social, and economic development. These data show significant progress, especially in GDP per capita, public spending on education, and the enrollment of students from all social sectors at all educational stages. Progress in the area of educational inequalities, however, has been rather modest. Some well-established initiatives are proposed to improve equity.

Key words. Educational legislation, comprehensiveness, school choice freedom, educational planning, educational quality, educational equity

Resumen

El objetivo principal de este artículo es valorar la influencia de la legislación en los cambios educativos que se han producido en los últimos 50 años. Con esta finalidad,

se analizan las principales leyes anteriores a la universidad que han tenido al menos tres años de vigencia: LGE, LODE, LOGSE, LOPEGCE, LOE, LOMCE y LOMLOE. Se tiene especialmente en cuenta dos dimensiones que reflejan modelos ideológicos diferentes: la libertad de elección de centro frente a la planificación de la oferta pública y la diferenciación del alumnado frente a la educación común. El artículo incorpora los indicadores más relevantes, tanto educativos como sociales y económicos, que muestran los cambios que se han producido en estas cinco décadas en determinadas dimensiones de la calidad de la enseñanza y en su equidad. Los datos muestran progresos especialmente relevantes en el PIB per cápita, en el gasto público en educación y en la escolarización de los alumnos procedentes de todos los sectores sociales en todas las etapas educativas. Los avances han sido bastante más discretos en el área de las desigualdades educativas. Se proponen algunas iniciativas ya contrastadas para avanzar en la mejora de la equidad.

Palabras clave. Legislación educativa, comprensividad, libertad de elección de centro, planificación educativa, calidad educativa, equidad educativa

Introduction

The article analyses the main proposals included in the laws over the past 50 years¹ and their impact on reducing inequalities and improving the quality of education. Before addressing each of these legal texts from the past 55 years, it is worth highlighting two factors that facilitate their interpretation. The first is the ideological model guiding them and the goals behind their reforms. As Alonso Carmona, García-Arnau, and Vázquez-Cupei (2023) point out, “*every reform entails a ‘theory of change,’ an assumption about the causal logic that connects diagnoses, the measures implemented, and the goals pursued*” (pp. 6–7). This theory of change is based on a specific ideology regarding the main purposes of education and the most suitable way to achieve them. The continuous alternation of laws in Spain expresses the different ideological visions of the main political parties.

The second is the duration for which laws remain in force. It is difficult for short-lived laws that are replaced by others with different approaches to display their results. This is particularly true of laws passed in the 21st century. We are going to examine these laws, their goals to improve the education

¹ Specific legislation on Vocational Training, Universities and Higher Education is analysed in the articles by Isabel Fernández Solo de Zaldívar and María Fernández Mellizo-Soto respectively in this Monograph.

system and the initiatives launched before were repealed.

The article concludes by showing the changes that have taken place during these five decades in terms of improvement in education and inequality using for that purpose the most relevant education and economic indicators.

General Education Law and Financing of the Educational Reform

Significant changes took place in Spanish society throughout the 1960s, as a result of the economic development driven by the stabilization plans. A period of greater access to consumer goods, a better standard of living, and a general social feeling that the worst times had passed.

Franco's regime, however, faced a deep contradiction: it sought to maintain political structures rooted in authoritarian, non-participatory, and repressive models, while at the same time trying to modernize those institutions such as education that were lagging behind international standards. The most striking example of this contradiction was the presentation of the *White Paper on Education* in February 1969 when a state of emergency was declared as a result of university conflicts generated by the murder of law student Enrique Ruano in Madrid. There was no consultation with teachers or educational institutions, except for those with clear links to the Franco regime. The LGE (General Education Law) was passed in August 1970.

The *White Paper* was highly critical of education happening during the Franco era. Surprisingly, was published and distributed. The most revealing data is the advancement of students taken place through the different stages of the education system: "*In summary: by 1967 out of every 100 students who started Primary Education in 1951, 27 went on to Secondary Education, 18 passed the Basic Baccalaureate exam, and 10 completed the Higher Baccalaureate; five passed the Pre-University exam, and three completed university studies* (p. 24). It also highlighted the social differences in access to education. Only 0.2% of university students were children of agricultural

workers and the same percentage applied to children of manual workers (p. 27).

The main rejection of LGE came from the teacher's movement and later from the Professional Associations of Graduates and PhDs where progressive groups had a solid withhold on the governing boards (Pérez Galán, 1992; O'Malley, 1992).

The most significant change introduced by this law was the extension of compulsory, free and comprehensive education for all students up to 14 years, the so called Basic General Education. Compulsory education was also extended up to the age of 16, although was only free to the first degree in vocational training

Another major change was the elimination of the final exams at the end of the Lower and Upper Baccalaureates. These exams played a significant role in the selection of pupils and created barriers to their educational progress for many of them.

A significant step in expanding education was establishing the preschool stage within the system just before compulsory schooling. Similarly relevant was the initial idea of a Unified and Multipurpose Baccalaureate (BUP) together with a Vocational Training (VT), but this idea was later distorted in the process of implementation.

There were several innovative proposals related to the goals of education, the ways of teaching and learning, the curriculum design focusing on training and student auto-learning, teaching methodologies and student assessment. A significant innovation was also to include student's educational and vocational guidance.

One of the most important proposals was to upgrade teaching studies to a diploma level within the university system together with the requirement for graduates to complete a pedagogical updating course (CAP) to apply for a position in High schools.

Two main shortcomings that affected the implementation of these measures were a lack of funding on one side and a return to former models of the BUP and FP models on the other side. The first of these started to be solved with the arrival of democracy and the signing of the Moncloa Pacts. The structure of BUP and VET remained in place until the LOGSE was approved in 1990.

The constitutional pact

Franco's death in 1975 and holding first free elections on June 15 1977 under the presidency of Adolfo Suárez marked the beginning of a new democratic era in Spain. The severe economic crisis led to the signing of the so-called Moncloa Pacts in 1977. As a counterpart to the austerity measures, an Extraordinary Schooling Plan of 40 billion pesetas was approved. It can be said that the LGE began to be implemented effectively from 1977 onward since public education spending barely increased between 1970 and 1975.

The drafting of Article 27 of the 1978 Constitution, devoted to education, was a conflictive process and the final agreement entailed significant renounces from all political sides. The socialist party firmly defended the role of the state in education. The centre-right parties, on the other hand, defended public funding for private education and the freedom to choose the schools you wanted. Ultimately, both principles were incorporated into Article 27 with equal legal status. As Puelles (2002) points out, a basic agreement was achieved, but not a political one. In the absence of an overarching educational pact, it will be the parliamentary majority that will tilt the legislation towards one or the other option. This is what has happened so far.

Organic Law on the Right to Education

The first law regulating the School Statute, the 1980 LOECE, was passed without political consensus. The opposition challenged it before the Constitutional Court. Its ruling of 13 February 1981 annulled those relevant articles that restricted participation, parents' associations in schools and academic freedom. Although it was published in the Official State Gazette (BOE) on 27 June 1980, the law was neither revised nor redrafted and was therefore never in force.

The Socialist Party's large parliamentary majority achieved one year later paved the way for the drafting of a new law that replaced the LOECE: the LODE The

law stated in its preamble its intention to respect both educational pluralism and equity. It also emphasized that the regulation of the two networks of schools, public and state-funded private, should be based on two fundamental principles, planning and participation. These facilitate a balanced exercise of the right to education and the freedom of teaching.

To regulate private schools, the law established a system of agreements (the Education concerts) through which public funding was provided to private schools. One of its most innovative elements was that teachers' salaries would be paid directly by the Administration as a delegate payment on behalf of the school's governing body (Article 49.5).

Regarding participation and school governance, the law established the School Council as the body representing all sectors of the educational community. Among its functions was the election of the school principal. In state-funded private schools, the headmaster was to be appointed by agreement between the school's owner and the School Council.

The LODE faced strong opposition from the private education sector, especially religious school organizations. They believed the law aimed to eliminate the freedom to teach and their rights to operate schools. The conflict eased when the Spanish Episcopal Conference through the president of its Commission on Education, Archbishop of Zaragoza Elías Yanes, recommended religious schools to sign educational agreements with the government.

The basic structure of the LODE—planning, financing of private education and participation—has remained in place for over 40 years. However, Puelles (2016) questions its stability as it has been modified under Popular Party governments, although its original orientation was later restored under the existing socialist administrations.

Organic Law on the General Organization of the Education System

The PSOE's victory in October 1982 elections gave way to a new dynamic for addressing the reform of Secondary Education, based mainly on experimentation and the voluntary participation of teachers. The proposed model was organized into two cycles: one with a common curriculum from ages 14 to 16 and another from 16 to 18 with six types of Baccalaureate². This approach made it possible to evaluate both the successes and challenges of the experimental process.

In 1986, the OECD published a report on Spanish educational policy (1986). Its main conclusions highlighted the enormous effort in expanding school since 1977, but also significant shortcomings in terms of available school places, the quality of teaching, the value given to vocational training, and the percentage of students completing each educational stage. These conclusions may have led Minister Maravall to form a new team in the Ministry to drive a complete educational reform of the education system (universities excluded).

His work was overwhelmed by the strike and demonstration of secondary education students, demanding better teaching conditions and the abolition of the university entrance exam. After complicated negotiations, an agreement was reached with student associations that allowed a return to academic normality.

Once the student strike was over, the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC) presented the “*Project for the Reform of the Education System*” (MEC, 1987) for public debate. Most of the opinions were collected and published in four documents titled “*Papers for Debate*,” with a fifth synthesis volume (MEC, 1988).

The process of debate and participation was widely disrupted by a teachers' strike during much of the 1987–1988 academic year and ended without resolving the conflict with the Ministry of Education. In June of that year, José María Maravall was replaced as Minister of Education by Javier Solana.

² In 1981, the Ministry of Education (MEC) proposed a reform of Secondary Education with a first cycle free and common to all students from ages 14 to 16 and a second cycle of either Baccalaureate or Vocational Training. This reform attempt was halted due to opposing positions during the debate.

At the beginning of the 1988–1989 academic year, Solana reaches a broad agreement with the teachers' unions. In the first months of that school year, the Minister consulted with institutions, teachers and experts on the opportunity and feasibility of the reform. In January 1989, in a meeting between the Minister of Education and the Ministers of those Autonomous Communities that had jurisdiction over Education and different political visions (Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, Andalusia, Valencian Community, and Canary Islands), a highly significant agreement was reached expressing their support to the general directions of the reform project.

The *White Paper for the Reform of the Education System* was presented on April 22, 1989, and in March 1990, the bill was sent to Parliament, where it was approved in September of the same year with the support of all political groups except the Popular Party.

Achieving this broad political and social support for the LOGSE required continuous negotiation. The agreement reached with CIU and PNV on the distribution of responsibilities over curriculum development with autonomous communities was highly relevant. So was the agreement with the teaching colleges and their students, universities, and teachers' unions. The decision to eliminate 7th and 8th grades of General Basic Education (EGB)—taught by primary school teachers—and transform them into 1st and 2nd years of ESO—taught by university graduates—meant eliminating the upper cycle of EGB and consequently limiting the employment options of primary school teachers. The final agreement stated that to become a primary education teacher it was required to have a specific teaching degree a requirement that previously did not exist. It also established three new primary teacher specializations (English, music and physical education) and supported the integration of old teaching schools into the Faculties of Education within the universities.

The LOGSE had a wide range of ambitious objectives. The first and most important was to extend compulsory and free education up to the age of 16 establishing a specific stage of Compulsory Secondary Education from ages 12 to 16. Other goals were to give special importance to Early Childhood Education from the first months to the age of six; to transform vocational

training making it an attractive choice to students attached to the labour³ market. The next three goals were to design a more decentralized curriculum that takes into account the diversity of students⁴; promote inclusion in the system of pupils with special educational needs⁵; improve the quality of education; and progressively reduce inequalities. The first four goals have largely achieved their main goals over the years. The last three, despite progress, still require new initiatives.

The LOGSE included some proposals to make more flexible the principle of comprehensive education take into account the existing diversity of students by elective subjects which have more weight during this stage (Article 21.2), and curriculum diversification programs to allow students to achieve the ESO diploma through subjects and methodologies different from those established in the general model (Article 23.1). According to data from the Ministry of Education and Science (2004, p.53), 6.4% of students in the 3rd and 4th years of ESO followed diversification programs in the 2001–2002 academic year, and about 75% obtained the diploma.

Critics close to the Popular Party argued strongly that comprehensive education up to the age of 16 led students into mediocrity and resulted in a decline in academic standards. Therefore, they advocated for a stage of compulsory secondary education from ages 12 to 15 and a three-year Baccalaureate⁶. A large percentage of Baccalaureate school teachers also preferred this model and believed there were insufficient resources to successfully teach all students in the final two years of ESO. This may have been largely due to the fact that the development of LOGSE did not respond swiftly to the enormous challenges faced by schools with greater complexity. Criticism also came from educational sectors that expected more ambitious funding measures, more educational innovation, the reduction of public funding for private education or the elimination of religion as a school subject⁷.

3 See the article by Isabel Fernández Solo de Zaldívar in this Monograph

4 See the article by César Coll and Elena Martín in this Monograph

5 See the article by Climent Giné in this Monograph

6 However, in later laws (LOCE and LOMCE) passed with an absolute majority in Parliament, the Popular Party maintained the Baccalaureate duration at two years.

7 A good reference for diverse opinions is issue nº 451 of the Journal *Cuadernos de Pedagogía* (2014) under the title “40 years of education, 40 years of Cuadernos”.

Organic Law on Participation, Evaluation, and Governance of Schools

The implementation of the reform introduced by the LOGSE faced significant challenges. The most complex was adapting Secondary Schools and Vocational Training institutes and their teaching staff, including those who previously taught 7th and 8th grades of EGB, to the new educational stages established by the law.

The reform process promoted by the LOGSE was not easy to manage in part due to the lack of stability among school leadership teams. In the 1991–92 academic year, only 47% of public schools in autonomous communities still managed by the Ministry of Education selected their principals by the decision of their school council. This meant that 53% of principals had to be appointed directly by the educational administration, although such appointments were limited to a one-year term, as established by the LODE in 1985⁸.

Faced with these difficulties, the Ministry of Education deemed it necessary to strengthen participation, leadership, and educational supervision while promoting initiatives to improve the quality and attractiveness of public schools. With these objectives in mind, the document entitled *“Educational Centers and Quality of Education: Proposals for Action”* was presented in 1994 to the educational community for debate.

The main change involved was the process to select school principals and leadership teams⁹. While the election by the school council was retained, new requirements were introduced such as to credit specific training and evaluation, along with greater financial and professional incentives. The term of office was set at four years for both elected and appointed principals. This new model had positive effects: in the 1995–96 school year, the percentage of principals elected by the School Council rose to 64% (Marchesi & Martín, 1998). Additionally, in terms of educational inspection, the formal Inspector Corps was reinstated.

The law also included proposals to improve school autonomy,

8 Viñao (1996) is insightful regarding the rationale behind the LOPEGCE

9 See the article by López Rupérez in this Monograph.

participation, and evaluation. However, with the election of a new government in 1996, there was a shift toward quality management models (EFQM). The decentralization of educational administration to all autonomous communities, together with the establishment of general diagnostic evaluations, contributed to the gradual disappearance of comprehensive assessment of school performance (Tiana, 2018).

Alongside legislative changes, the Ministry of Education launched specific initiatives to enhance the quality of public education. One of the most significant was the bilingual education program in public schools, implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council. This initiative involved the inclusion of native English-speaking teachers and enabled students to obtain dual academic qualifications from both countries during compulsory education¹⁰.

Organic Law of Education

The LOE was approved in 2006¹¹ which meant repealing the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE) passed in 2002 by the Popular Party but was not implemented due to PSOE's victory in March 2004.

The process followed in its elaboration was similar to that of the LOGSE: presenting an initial document titled "*Quality Education for All and by All*" (MEC, 2004), promoting maximum participation, closing the debate with the main conclusions from the consultation, and subsequently drafting the bill.

One of the most significant elements of this process was the attempt to reach an agreement with all social sectors and also between PSOE and PP to avoid legislative changes every time there was an alternation in government. Partial agreement was not achieved which included only the different

¹⁰ See the history of the agreement in Jover, G., Ponce, D.P. and González-García, R. (2024). Also the reactions in selected schools at https://elpais.com/diario/1996/02/07/madrid/823695874_850215.html

¹¹ During the LOE period, the CAP (Certificate of Pedagogical Aptitude) was transformed into the Master's in Teacher Training as a postgraduate degree, and the teacher diploma became a university degree as a result of the implementation of the Bologna Plan

educational stages (Tiana, 2007, p.97).

The main goals of this law were to recover the spirit and much of the content of the LOGSE and to address those problems that had emerged during the implementation of that law. Two of its main points of reference were the European Union's education objectives from the year 2000 onward and the OECD's competency-based approaches.

Among the most significant changes were the guiding nature of the fourth year of ESO, which allowed grouping subjects into different options while avoiding the separate academic tracks as established by the LOCE for the 3rd and 4th years; the reinstatement of the curricular diversification programs established in the LOGSE from 3rd year of ESO onwards leading to the ESO diploma; the creation of Professional Qualification Programs, which included modules related to units of competence corresponding to Level 1 qualifications in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, as well as other voluntary modules for obtaining the ESO diploma; access to Vocational Training for students who, without the required diploma, pass an entrance exam; the reference to basic competencies in the curriculum model; and the inclusion in the section on educational equity of a chapter dedicated to students with specific educational support needs.

While this law (LOE) was in operation, collaboration with educational regional administrations was effectively developed to reduce educational inequalities. A good example is the Support, Guidance, and Reinforcement Plan (PROA), aimed at providing academic support several days a week to students with learning difficulties, as well as promoting collaboration with families. The results of its evaluation (Manzanares Molla and Ulla Diez, 2012) show a broadly positive evaluation

Organic Law for the Improvement of Education Quality

The LOMCE approved in 2013 was the second law (after LOCE) enacted by the Popular Party to revoke perceived errors of the LOE and attempt to

improve student learning outcomes. The Popular Party's absolute majority victory in the 2011 elections enabled the law to be passed only with their votes.

The law involved hardly any public debate or attempts to reach consensus with other political groups, not even those ideologically close to the ruling party. This led to sign a joint agreement of the vast majority of political parties when a different parliamentary majority made it possible¹².

The main goals of the LOMCE were to support private education and those state-funded private schools and to favour a policy of differentiation and selecting students. The first of these is evident in the modification of article 109.2 of the LOE ("Educational administrations shall guarantee a sufficient number of public-school places, especially in newly populated areas") deletes "public... especially in newly populated areas."

The second objective is mainly reflected in the structure of compulsory secondary education (ESO). At the 4th year, two different academic routes are offered: one leads to the Baccalaureate and the other to the Vocal Training. This dual pathway concludes with an external final assessment, the passing of which is a requirement to obtain the diploma and to continue either Baccalaureate or Vocational Training studies. Its educational value is difficult to understand because restricts the educational progression of pupils with difficulties. Finally, the Popular Party's loss of its absolute majority in 2016 together with the pressure from the education and political community led to the elimination of external assessment as a requirement for obtaining the ESO and Baccalaureate diplomas.

The law eliminates the Curricular Diversification Programs that led to the ESO diploma and replaces them with the Learning and Performance Improvement Programs (PMAR). The differences are significant: PMAR appears as early as in the 2nd year of ESO and does not directly lead to getting the diploma but to enrol in the fourth year of ESO after taking one of the two tracks available. Can students who have followed these programs - arguably less demanding than the regular 2nd and 3rd-year courses of ESO- pass 4th year and then succeed in the final external exam?

A new pathway is also established to facilitate the progress of students

12

The article by Viñao (2016) provides a well-founded critical summary of the LOMCE

with greater difficulties starting at age 12: the Basic Vocational Training cycle. Completion of these cycles does not grant students the ESO diploma, but only access to Intermediate-Level Vocational Training.

Organic Law Amending the Organic Law of Education

The law passed in 2020, the LOMLOE, is essentially a motion of censure against the LOMCE. Its main reference point is the LOE, although with a stronger emphasis on equality policies and fewer concessions to subsidized schools, largely explained by the presence of the political party Unidas Podemos in the government and in parliament¹³.

Its articles establish education planning as a priority and provide clear support for public education, while also reassuring equity by embracing an inclusive perspective within the education system.

To prevent students from dropping out this model of comprehensive education includes three initiatives the fourth year of ESO has a guiding character through the clustering of subjects according to various options leading either to the different modalities of the Baccalaureate or to Vocational Training; the two-year curricular diversification programs leading to the ESO diploma are reinstated, and the PMARs program of the LOMCE are consequently eliminated; and Basic Vocational Training cycles are established, the successful completion of which leads to both the ESO diploma and the Basic Technician title in the corresponding professional specialty.

The law deepens the development of a competency-based curriculum and opens the door to a change in curricular structure, which is more clearly reflected in subsequent Royal Decrees¹⁴. One of its defining features is its commitment to gender equality through coeducation, inclusive and non-sexist educational and vocational guidance in ESO, the prevention of gender-based

13 Support to LOGSE from the private education sector funded by the Estate was achieved thanks to alignment with the pedagogical model and the two-year extension of funding agreement years. The LOE reassured the religious schools (FERE) when it was agreed to extend funding agreements in early childhood education.

14 See the article by César Coll and Elena Martín on the curriculum in this Monograph

violence, and the recognition of and respect for sexual and gender diversity.

It must be acknowledged that the LOMLOE builds on the experience of the LOE, with the parenthesis of the LOMCE, so the changes do not represent a major shift in the organization and structure of the education system. Perhaps for this reason, its rapid implementation can be excused¹⁵. However, more time was probably needed to understand and apply the curriculum in schools, and to develop a greater number of complementary initiatives to facilitate its implementation, as has happened in other countries (Egido, 2022).

Educational inequality

Educational inequality cannot be understood in isolation from economic, social, and cultural inequalities. These forms of inequalities influence each other. This section will briefly address the existing inequalities in education in terms of access, processes, outcomes, and social mobility, along with the factors that most influence them.

In terms of access, it should be first noted that the extension of compulsory and free education to age 14 under the LGE¹⁶ and to age 16 under the LOGSE twenty years later, has made access to schooling possible for all students and has supported their further progress. Furthermore, its comprehensive nature prevented early separation into differentiated tracks, the choice of which largely depended on students' social origin (Pedró, 2012).

However, it should be noted that in PISA 2022 (OECD, 2023a), between-schools variance in Spain is lower than the OECD average (15.3% vs. 31.6%), while within-school variance is higher (76.2% vs. 68.2%). This means that differences between educational networks are smaller in Spain and that equity policies should be implemented in all schools.

15 Possibly, fear of a change in government in the next elections that might halt the implementation of the law, as the socialists did with the LOCE, influenced this urgency. Including the implementation calendar in the law itself, which is harder to amend than a Royal Decree, supports this hypothesis.

16 So was the first degree of vocational training

From a broader perspective, a European Commission study on equity in education (2020) highlighted private household spending as a potential generator of inequality. The EU average of private spending as a percentage of public spending is 5.25%. Spain has the highest percentage: 14.2%.

PISA studies consistently confirm the effect of socioeconomic status (ESCS) on educational outcomes. In Spain, 16% of the difference in maths performance can be explained by socioeconomic status, similar to the OECD average (Cobreros & Gortázar, 2023). Other studies have also shown this association between ESCS and grade repetition, and between repetition and graduation in ESO (López Rupérez, García-García & Expósito-Casas, 2021)¹⁷. PISA data also reveal territorial differences which may stem from a historical legacy of social and educational inequalities. Nevertheless, it appears that progressive convergence among autonomous communities has been occurring over recent decades¹⁸

Similar conclusions are found in PISA studies when examining the relationship between parental education levels and their children's performance and early school-leaving rates¹⁹. It is important to note that the general education level of the population in Spain is lower than that of most EU countries, due to its historical backwardness. In 1997, only 11% of people aged 55-65 had completed upper secondary education, compared to 74% in Germany. These indicators support the importance of continuing expanding education to the entire population.

It is worth remembering that cultural, school, and family capital should not be seen only in terms of family education levels. There is also a second, important dimension: the transmission of that capital by the family environment (Lahire, 2000), which may be hindered by cultural and economic limitations that affect their ability to support their children's learning (Martín & Gómez, 2017). However, the vast majority of families can learn to take an interest in what their children do at school, read with them, encourage older siblings or other family members to help younger ones and maintain positive expectations towards them. These kinds of activities and relationships are of undeniable value for children's motivation and learning, and for that reason, support and

17 This study used the age 15-grade appropriateness rate measured on a census basis

18 See the chapter by Alejandro Tiana in this Monograph

19 See the chapter by Enrique Roca in this Monograph

guidance to families with lower education and economic backgrounds should be part of the school's educational project.

The OECD (2011) points out in the same direction by highlighting strong PISA 2006 results from students who performed much better than expected given their sociocultural and family backgrounds. The title of the report, *Against the Odds*, is a powerful message encouraging public policies to focus on the factors that are main drivers of student progress and learning.

Data on social mobility show that, although the average education level of all social sectors has increased due to expanded educational opportunities, upward mobility has made only slow progress (Bruna, Rungo & Alló, 2022)²⁰, or has barely occurred at all (Fernández-Mellizo, 2022). In addition, parental income greatly influences the income their children will earn in the future (Soria, 2022).

Data on social mobility shows that although the average educational level of all social groups has increased due to expanded educational opportunities, upward social mobility has progressed slowly (Bruna, Rungo & Alló, 2022) or has barely been achieved (Fernández-Mellizo, 2022)²¹. Moreover, parents' income has a strong influence on their children's future income (Soria, 2022)²².

Faced with this scenario—one of slow progress and persistent shortcomings—it is necessary to reflect on those initiatives that are more effective in creating a more equitable education system. The following proposals are outlined schematically as measures that could have a significant impact on reducing educational inequality²³:

1. Recognize teachers professionally. A future model for professional development²⁴ encompassing all teaching staff should include special evaluation and incentives for those teachers assigned to more

20 The study based on the 2020 INE Survey on Living Conditions 2020 indicates that the children of parents with university degrees have nearly an 80% probability of obtaining a university degree themselves, while that probability is less than 35% if the parents only have primary education.

21 Study no. 2634 (*Social Classes and Social Structure*) from 2006 by the CIS was used

22 Microdata from the *Atlas of Opportunities* were used.

23 Some of these proposals have also been suggested by Pedro (2012, Tiana, 2015, OECE, 2023b and Gortázar, Martínez and Bonal (2024).

24 See in Marchesi and Pérez (2018) a proposal for teacher evaluation based on self-assessment and supervision of their teaching competencies to support professional development and economic incentives.

challenging schools and take into account also the number of years worked there. It is important to note that teacher turnover is higher in those schools with a greater percentage of vulnerable students (Gortázar, 2025). This would not only recognize their efforts but also help to ensure greater stability among teaching staff and the school's educational project.

2. Eliminate voluntary fees in public-funded private schools, along with the related increase in public funding. This should be done while also aiming to achieve a more social balance in school composition—perhaps by defining new school districts that can include two or three neighbourhoods with different social contexts²⁵.
3. Support students from disadvantaged social backgrounds through programs based on personal tutoring and small working groups both during and outside school hours. These activities should include an emotional dimension (Tarabini & Montes, 2015) so that students feel recognized and valued. At the same time, implement family guidance programs to help parents convey their interest and support for their children's learning.
4. Differentiate teaching conditions, support resources and school funding based on the school's social contexts.

These actions do not require new laws. Only planning, agreement, and funding. If these initiatives are implemented, alongside inclusive social policies, significant progress will likely be made toward equality in the education system during the next 15 years.

²⁵ The article by Ferrer and Gortázar (2021) discusses some experiences and strategies from countries and regions for seat allocation with the same goal.

The impact of laws and social change on education: any past time was worse

It must be emphasized that the changes occurred during these 50 years have been enormously positive, both in the field of education and in economic and social progress. The starting point was a significant gap with most European countries due to the neglect of education during the dictatorship, but in recent decades these differences have been substantially reduced. Contrary to the pessimistic view of certain social sectors, which claim that the education system functioned better in the past and that students learned more, the available data clearly show that any past time was worse.

This statement does not prevent us from also highlighting that the challenges facing education are now more demanding than in the past due to rapid social and technological changes, greater diversity among students in classrooms, and broader educational objectives.

The article by Enrique Roca on educational data in this Monograph offers a systematic and comprehensive overview of the progress made during these five decades. For this reason, only a brief summary of the most relevant data will be presented here to conclude this text.

GDP per capita is a key indicator. It has increased from €438 (1970) to €30,968 in 2023. This growth also shows notable differences between autonomous communities: from €42,198 in the Community of Madrid to €23,218 in Andalusia (INE, 2024). These interterritorial income disparities are closely linked to those observed in education.

Public spending on education has followed an upward trend from 1975 (2.5%) to 2022 (4.62%). The highest figure was reached in 2009 (5.02%), dropped to 4.18% in 2018, and recovered in subsequent years. Compared to other EU countries, Spain's position has improved relative to the past, but it still lags behind the European average.

School enrollment has improved at all educational stages. In 2022, the percentage of children enrolled in early childhood education was 42% for those under age 3, and 92% for those aged 3 to 6—figures above the EU and OECD averages. The percentage of 17-year-olds enrolled in school rose from 63.6% in 1990 to 90.4% in the 2022–2023 academic year.

The gross graduation rate from ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education) increased from 73.4% in the 1999–2000 school year to 81.6% in 2022–2023. This slow progress is hampered by a high repetition rate—22% in 2022–2023—higher than in most European countries, although it was 43% in 1994–1995. The most notable change is seen in the early school leaving rate, which fell from 40.4% in 1992 to 31% in 2005 and to 13% in 2024. The EU average dropped from 15.6% in 2005 to 9.5% in 2023.

Student performance in the PISA assessments has gradually aligned with the participant average, although with slight backwardness in some years. The most critical voices argue that not reaching the average score is proof of a failing education system—an argument not supported by PISA evidence. Other studies have shown no significant difference from the PISA average (Carabaña, 2009) and point out that several autonomous communities achieve results comparable to those of the highest-performing countries.

A necessary conclusion

Although the substantial improvements in education are discussed in an article focused on education laws, it is important to underline that legislation alone explains only part of the positive changes described. The progress achieved must be attributed primarily to the value that families and society as a whole have placed on the education of younger generations, to the collective effort of broad social sectors to improve education, and to the dedication, competence, and adaptability of teachers in responding to new and ever-changing social and educational conditions.

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Selection of Educational Indicators. Spain 1970-2025

Selección de Indicadores educativos. España 1970-2025

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to offer a very synthetic quantitative overview of some of the most significant indicators, especially those that show the evolution of the main results of Spanish education over the last 50 years. A total of 16 indicators have been selected, two on the demographic and economic context, one on funding, one on expenditure per pupil, one on teachers, three on school enrolment and nine on the results and educational level achieved by the adult population.

The sources used directly are the official ones proposed by the national and international institutions responsible for educational statistics and indicators or, in some cases, these same sources from their compilation by Spanish researchers of statistics from the last century.

The progress made in Spanish education since 1970, promoted by the main state and regional education laws and policies, is truly remarkable. The proposed indicators show that Spain's educational backwardness prior to 1970 has been transformed into achievements in international assessments that place Spain within the OECD and EU averages and attainment levels in higher education similar to those of the most successful countries at this stage.

Keywords: schooling, 'student rates...', qualifications, graduation, educational success, educational attainment of the adult population.

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es ofrecer una mirada cuantitativa, muy sintética, de algunos de los indicadores más significativos, sobre todo de aquellos que muestran la evolución de los principales resultados de la educación española de los últimos 50 años. Se seleccionan 16 indicadores en total, dos de contexto demográfico y económico, uno de financiación, uno de gasto por alumno, uno de profesorado, tres de escolarización y nueve de resultados y nivel educativo alcanzado por la población adulta.

Las fuentes utilizadas directamente son las oficiales propuestas por las instituciones nacionales e internacionales responsables de las estadísticas y los indicadores educativos o, en algunos casos, estas mismas fuentes a partir de su recopilación realizada por investigadores españoles sobre las estadísticas del siglo pasado

Los progresos de la educación española desde 1970, promovidos por las principales leyes y políticas educativas estatales y autonómicas, son realmente notables. Los indicadores propuestos evidencian el paso de un destacado retraso educativo español antes de 1970, a unos logros en evaluaciones internacionales que sitúan a España en los promedios de OCDE y UE y a unos niveles de logro en educación superior similares a los de países de mayor éxito en esta etapa.

Palabras clave: escolarización, “tasa de alumnos...”, titulación, graduación, éxito educativo, nivel de formación de la población adulta.

Introduction

The selection of indicators presented in this article is intended to provide a quantitative and synthetic overview of the objectives, educational stages and results obtained as a consequence of the application of educational laws and policies since 1970, as well as the incorporation of the proposals of OECD, UNESCO and EU. The purposes of this article and its dimensions require limiting the vast amount of information available to a few indicators (Table 1).

TABLE I

Indicators “50 Years of Education”

Contents

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- R8 Labour force participation and unemployment rates; wage indices.

Source: Compiled by the authors

The different educational stages, schooling ages and degrees present complex requirements when it comes to determining historical series of indicators in which the figures are comparable over time and with those of education in other countries. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (UNESCO, 2011) (Table 2) has made it possible to unify criteria and educational stages and thus facilitate comparisons over time and between countries.

TABLE II. International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (UNESCO, 2011)

Level	Programs	In Spain
ISCED 0	Early Childhood	Infantil
ISCED 1	Primary	Primaria
ISCED 2	Lower Secondary ESO	Bachillerato/ Form. Prof. Grado Medio
ISCED 3	Upper Secondary	Formación Profesional Superior
ISCED 4	Non-tertiary secondary	Graduado
ISCED 5	Tertiary short cycle	Master
ISCED 6	Bachelor's degree	Doctorado
CINE 7	Master's Degree	
ISCED 8	Doctorate	

Source: UNESCO General Conference, 36th Session. Paris.

The fundamental sources used in this article are three. First, Spanish educational statistics, produced by the Subdirectorate General of Statistics and Studies of the MEFID¹, which has been producing annual data and historical series since the 1990s and are the starting point for the INEE's State System of Educational Indicators². Second, the OECD's International Indicators (INES), whose report, *Education at a Glance*, has been published annually since 1992 to date. Third, the European indicators of the Key Figures in Education, those linked to the Educational Objectives of the European Union as of the year 2000 and to the new strategic framework for European cooperation (2021-2030).³

Demographic and economic context

C1 Resident population in Spain

The Spanish population in 1900 was 18.8 million inhabitants. In 1971 that figure had risen to 34.0 million inhabitants (almost double, despite the Civil

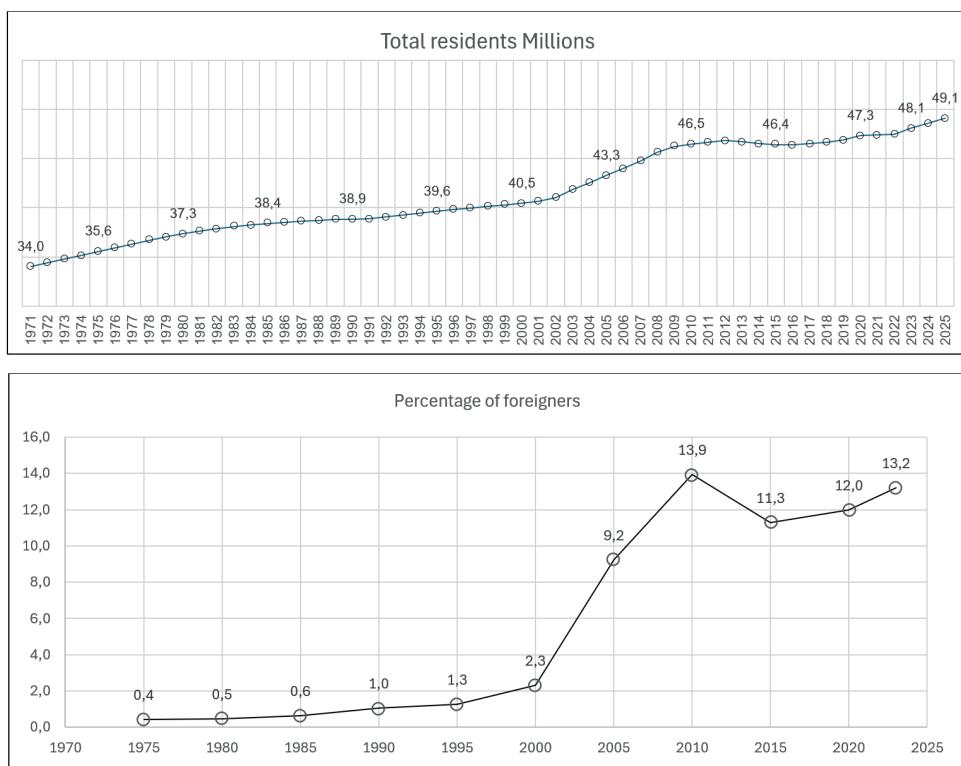
1 I would like to thank its Director, Jesús Ibáñez, for his review and suggestions for the indicators presented here.

2 The INEE's State System of Indicators has been published annually since 2000 and "offers the results of the main national, regional and international educational statistics".

3 The figures and tables presented in this article were prepared by the authors from the sources cited in each case.

War), of which only 0.4% were foreigners. In those 70 years, the growth was essentially due to the difference between births and deaths. Twenty years later, in 1990, there were 38.9 million residents (3.3 million more, a more moderate increase than in previous decades) and 1% foreigners. In the first decade of this century, the Spanish population increased by 6 million inhabitants, reaching 46.5 million in 2010, of which 13.9% were foreign residents, a growth that coincided with economic development until the 2008 crisis (Figure C1.1) (INEbase 2024a).

FIGURE C1.1. Resident population in Spain. Millions



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística. INEbase

Since 2010, the number of residents decreased slightly, mainly due to the fall in the number of foreigners, 2.6 million fewer, to 11.3% in 2015. From this date, the number of residents recovered to 49.1 million in

2025, thanks mainly to the new increase in the number of foreigners, which recovered 1.9 percentage points between 2015 and 2023. It can be concluded that the evolution of the Spanish population has been stimulated by economic development and that the economy has been favored by the increase in the foreign population residing in Spain

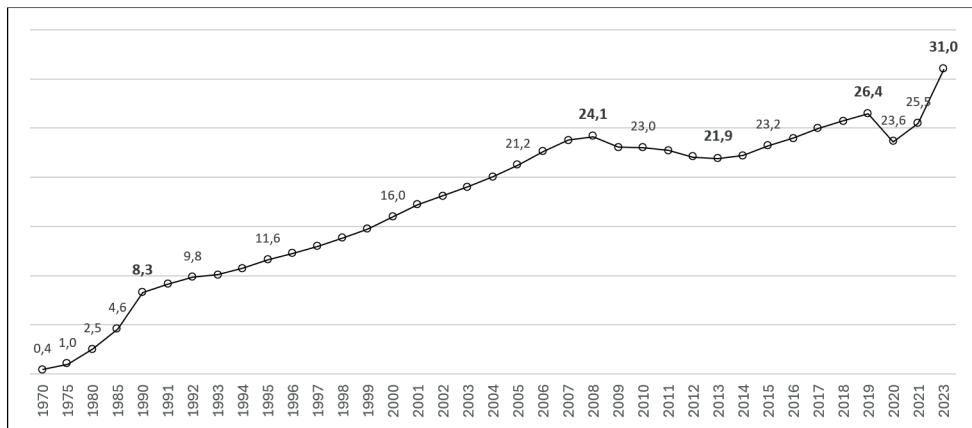
Given these figures, it is worth considering the evolution of the birth rate in Spain, according to the nationality of the mother, Spanish/foreign, which is shown in Table C1.2 (Appendix). In 2023, there were 6.61 births per 1000 inhabitants in Spain, compared to 18.70 in 1975; the current Spanish rate is among the lowest in the world, together with those of Italy and Japan. The arrival of immigrants to Spain, which has increased notably since the beginning of the 21st century, with a current birth rate of foreign resident families of 12.35, has moderated the constant fall in the national total and doubles that of Spanish resident families (5.76) (INEbase, 2024b).

Something similar occurs with the fertility rate (number of children per woman aged 15-49), which in Spain was 1.16 in 2022, compared to the OECD average of 1.5: “below the “replacement level” of 2.1 children per woman”, which “could have important implications for economic growth and prosperity”. (OECD, 2024a).⁴ The Spanish fertility figure is currently the second lowest in the EU (Eurostat, 2024a).

C2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita

GDP per capita calculated in current prices has risen in Spain from 400 euros in 1970 to 30,968 euros in 2023. (Figure C2.1). (Prados de la Escosura, L. (2021) and INEbase, 2024c). It is a very synthetic indicator of the macroeconomic development of a country, which does not provide information on the particular prosperity of its inhabitants, but it does provide an overview of the vigor of the growth or crises of a country’s economy and allows a comparative view with other countries, i.e. a view with very useful benchmarks.

⁴ In addition to the report for Spain, the international situation and the corresponding comparison can be found in the report Society at a Glance (OECD, 2024a)

FIGURE C2.1. GDP per capita. Current prices. Thousands of euros

Sources: from 1970 to 2000: Prados de la Escosura, L. (2021). From 2000 to 2023: Instituto Nacional de Estadística. INEbase (2024c)

The values are presented by five-year period from 1970 to 1990 and then the labels of values corresponding to the years of change in trend up to 2023. GDP per capita growth was remarkable between 1970 and 2008 (24,100 euros per capita). The economic crisis of 2008 led to a fall in GDP by more than 2000 euros per capita to 21,900 in 2013. A recovery follows until 2019 and a new drop in 2020 (23,600) due to COVID 19. From 2020 to 2023, there is a new increase until the last available data in 2023, 31,000 euros per capita.

Figure C2.2 (Annex) shows a selection of data from the World Bank Open Data (2023), corresponding to 2021, including some of the main Western economies and those of our environment. GDP is presented measured in current international dollars, converted using PPP (Purchasing Power Parity). The Spanish figure, 40,592, is clearly lower than those of the economic powers (USA, Germany, UK, France...), close to those of Japan and Italy, and slightly higher than those of Portugal and other European countries.

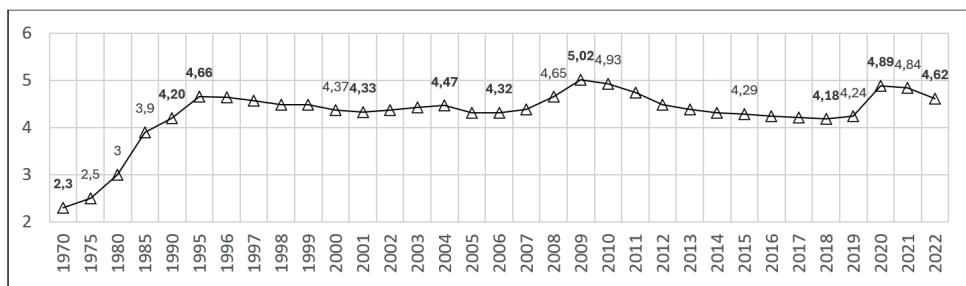
Financing, expenditure per student and average number of students per teacher

F1 Public expenditure on education and expenditure per pupil

Expenditure as a % of GDP offers a very general view, but it is a good indicator of the economic effort that societies are willing to make in favor of their education. The analysis of the historical evolution of this indicator in Spain offers an approximation of this investment effort.

In 1970, Spanish public spending on education reached 2.3% of GDP, a modest figure in comparison with those of the countries around us (Antón, V., Burgos, J., Coll, P., 1992). Between 1970 and 1995, spending doubled, reaching 4.66% in 1995; a remarkable increase in those 25 years, with different growth rates (Figure F1.1)

FIGURE F1.1. Evolution of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP. Spain



Sources: 1970 to 1985 Antón, V., Burgos, J., Coll, P. (1992).

From 1990 to 2022, MEFP. Educa base (2024b). Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del MEFPD.

From 1995 to 2006 (4.32%) the previous trend was broken and public spending decreased with slight variations; it recovered between 2006 and 2009 (5.02%), the historical maximum. It decreased again until 2018 (4.18%), grew until 2020 (4.89%), second maximum, to finally drop again to 4.62% in 2022 (MEFP Educa base (2024b)). Political changes in the responsibility for education and the economic and COVID crises probably explain these rises and falls since 1995, which leave the final figure in 2022 equal to that of 1995 after these 27 years have elapsed (MEFPD Educa base, 2024b).

The Spanish figures for public spending on education are far from

those of countries (World Bank Group, 2024) such as Sweden (6.7%), USA (5.6%), UK (5.4%), France (5.2%) and the Netherlands (5.1%). Around the Spanish figures are those of Portugal (4.6%), Canada (4.6%) and Germany (4.5). Finally, the figures for Italy (4.0%) and Japan (3.5%) are lower.

F1.2 Expenditure per student in public educational institutions as a percentage of GDP per capita (F.I.II, Annex)

In 2021, spending per pupil as a percentage of GDP per capita in Spain was 30.6%, higher than the European average and that of countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Portugal, which are around 27% (Eurostat, 2024c). When considering this indicator, differences due to the dispersion of the school population and population distribution should be taken into account: the more rural the population, the higher the expenditure per pupil.

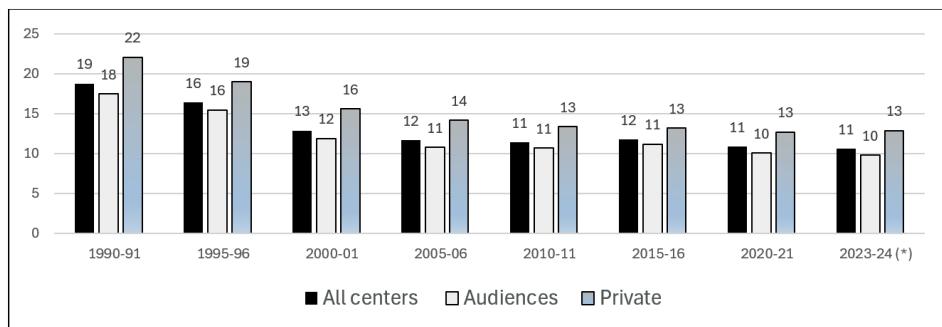
The material resources (number of educational centers, school furniture and materials, etc.) and human resources (teachers, administrative and service personnel) have grown in Spain since 1970 at the same time as the demand for students in the different educational stages; in addition, schooling conditions have improved notably, both in terms of the number of students per classroom and per teacher, as well as the new plans and curricula, as discussed in the different articles in this monographic issue, which include some of the selected indicators.

P1 Average number of students per teacher

A very notable proportion of the investment in education is dedicated to personnel, 62.4% in 2022. (MEFPD Educa base, 2024b). Only two indicators are addressed in this section:

Figure P1 shows the evolution of the average number of students per teacher in General Education MEFPD Educa base, 2024c); in 1990, the average was 19 students per teacher and dropped to 11 in 2010, a figure that has been maintained until 2023-24. In all the years considered, the average number of students per teacher in private schools exceeds that of public schools by 2-4 points. The analysis of these figures must take into consideration the high distribution of private schools in urban areas and the low distribution in rural and depopulated areas.

FIGURE P1. Average number of students per teacher. 1990-2023



Source: Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes.

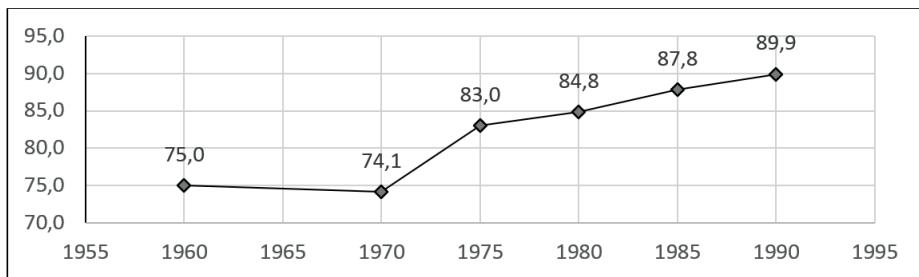
P2 Percentage of women out of total faculty members

The evolution of the percentage of women with respect to the total faculty went from 62% in 1990-91 to 72% in 2020-21 (Figure P2, Annex) (MEFPD Educa base, 2024d). The percentages of women in 1990 were in private schools three to four percentage points higher than in public schools, but the figures were equalized as of 2010.

School enrolment

E1 The School enrolment of the population from 5 to 14 years of age increased from 75% in 1960 to 83% in 1975 and 89.9% in 1990. During these years, the curricula outlined in the 1950s and the LGP were implemented, with compulsory education from ages 6 to 14.

FIGURE E1. School enrolment of the population aged 5-14 years. 1960-1990



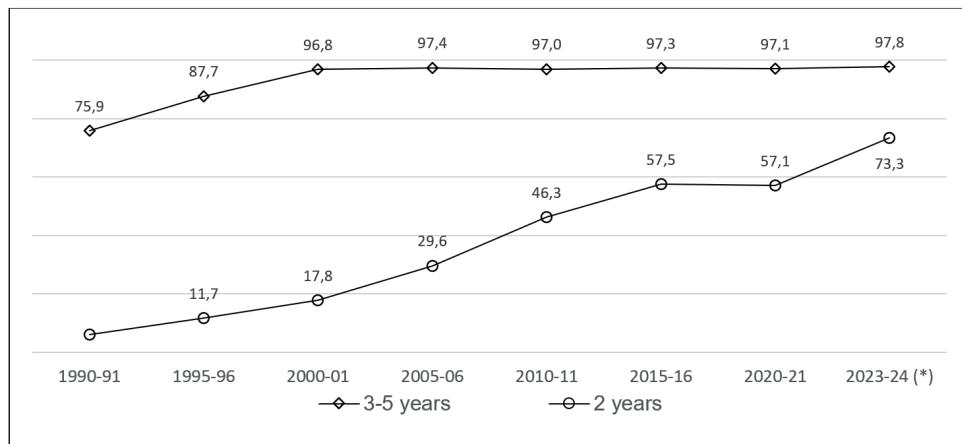
Source: Carreras, A. and Tafunell, X. (2005).

As of 1990, the LOGSE extended compulsory education from 6 to 16 years of age, giving rise to a drive to achieve complete schooling at these ages. Along with this effort, schooling objective was also focused on the non-compulsory stages

E2 School enrolment in early childhood education MEFPD Educa base, 2024e)

In 1990, net schooling rates for 3 to 5 year olds were 75.9% and reached 97% in 2000, a figure that is considered practically full schooling. Schooling at age 2 was very low in the early 1990s; in 1995 it stood at 11.7%. Over the next 20 years it grew markedly until 2015 (57.5%), and declined slightly until 2020. In the course 2023-24 schooling at 2 years of age has reached 73.3%, with a growth of more than 16 percentage points in the last 3 years.

FIGURE E2.1. Net schooling rates for children aged 2 and 3 to 5 years. Spain

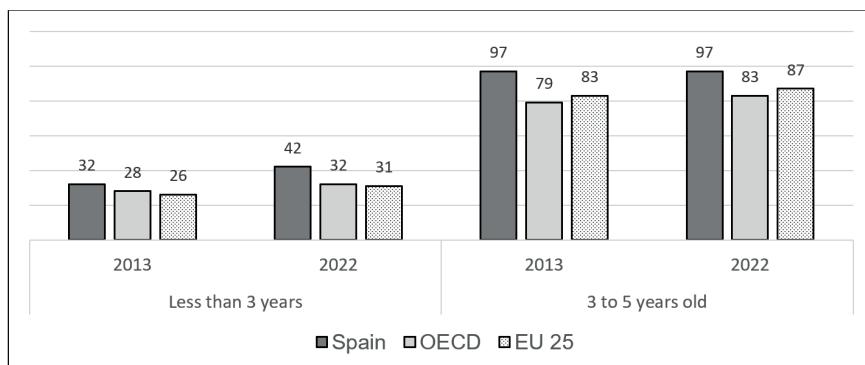


Source: Non-university Education Statistics. Subdirectorate General of Statistics and Studies. MEFPPD

The European target for 2030 (European Commission, 2024) proposes that at least 96% of children between 3 years old and the age at which compulsory primary education begins should participate in early childhood education and care.⁵ In the international comparison shown in Figure E2.2, it can be seen that Spain has child schooling rates, both before the age of three and from 3 to 5 years, that are higher than the EU and OECD averages (OECD, 2024b). The improvement in these schooling rates since the early 1990s has been accompanied, moreover, by progress in the pedagogical discourse on the conception of this important stage in the educational system.

⁵ Education and Training Monitor 2021. Council Resolution 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training in view of the European Education Area.

FIGURE E2.2. Comparison of child schooling in Spain, the OECD and the EU

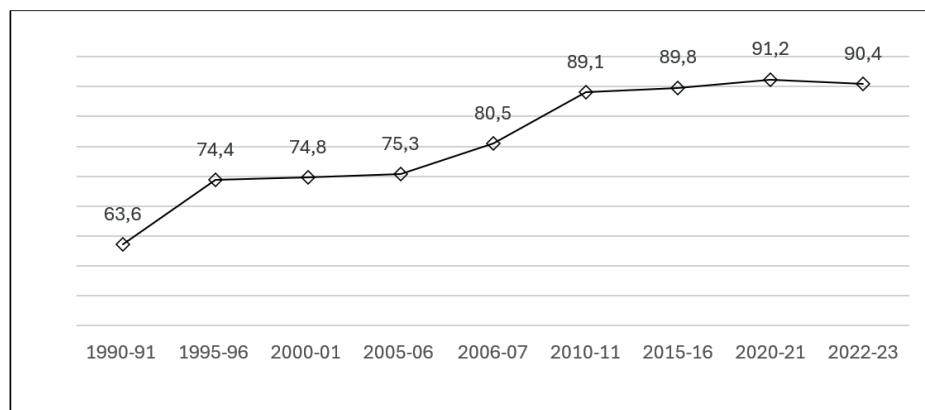


Source: OECD (2024b). Education at a Glance 2024

E3 Upper secondary school enrolment

Between 1960 and 1990, the “gross schooling rate for the population aged 14 to 19 years did not exceed 40% (Carreras, A. and Tafunell, X., 2005) (Figure E3.1, Annex). Between 1990 and 2023, schooling at 17 years of age has evolved as shown in Figure E3.2 (MEFPD Educa base, 2024f).

FIGURE E3.2. Net schooling rate at age 17. Spain



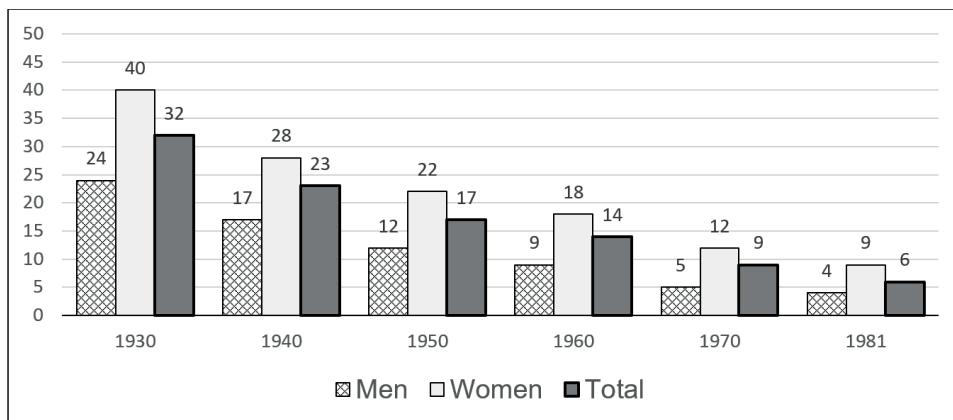
Source: Non-university Education Statistics. Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios of the MEFPD Educa base.

Level of education attained by the adult population

R.1. Evolution of illiteracy in Spain (Vilanova, M. and Moreno, X., 1992).

In 1930, 32% of Spaniards were illiterate. The figure was reduced to 23% in 1940, undoubtedly thanks to the efforts of the Second Republic in the creation of schools and the provision of teachers and in spite of the inevitable effect of the War on schooling. The figure continued to decrease in the following decades until it reached 6% in 1981, a figure achieved thanks to the schooling and study plans of the 1950s and the new EGB of 1970, as well as the literacy programs promoted by the Ministry of Education in the 1980s. The difference between the male and female rates also decreased, from 16 percentage points in 1930 to 5 in 1981. Illiteracy among the adult population was progressively reduced in a remarkable way, which undoubtedly meant an important benefit for the people affected and for their families.

FIGURE R1. Illiteracy rate in Spain (%): 1930-1981



Source: Vilanova, M. and Moreno, X. (1992).

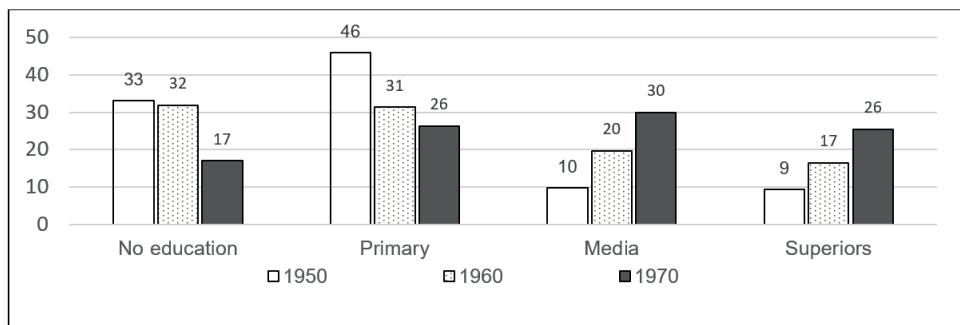
The difference between the male and female rates decreased from 16 percentage points in 1930 to 5 in 1981. Illiteracy among the adult population was reduced in this remarkable way and ceased to be a major educational problem in Spain.

ED Level of education attained by the adult population

This indicator provides information on long-term educational outcomes, but also on the context in which students study, due to the significant influence of the parents' (and particularly the mother's) studies.

Figure ED.1 shows the percentages of the educational level of the generations born in Spain in the decades indicated (Carreras, A. and Tafunell, X., 2005). Among those born in 1950, 33% of the population had no education, 46% had primary education, 10% had secondary education and 9% had higher education. In other words, in the 60s of the last century, the young people who finished high school and its revalidation, as well as other intermediate studies, did not exceed 10% of the total population, and these same young people mostly went on to complete higher education.

FIGURE ED1. Educational level of generations born in Spain. 1950-1970 (%)



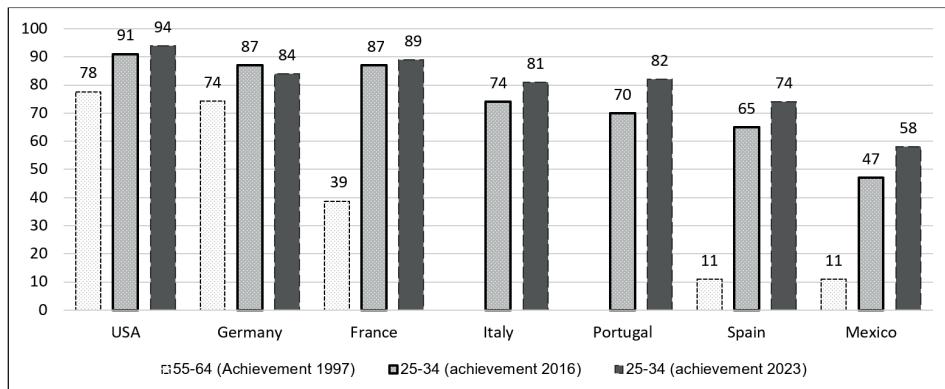
Source: Carreras, A. and Tafunell, X. (2005).

Those born in the 1970s came to enjoy the new LGE curriculum; 30% of young people completed their secondary education and 26% completed their higher education.

The study carried out by the OECD (2011), on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, whose partial results, referring to Spain and 6 other countries in our environment, are shown in Figure ED. 2, provides a good link between these results and those included in the international system of educational indicators. The data in Figure ED.2 refer, first, to the percentage of adults between 55 and 64 years of age, born between 1933 and 1942 who, in 1997, had attained at least upper secondary education (ISCED 3), equivalent to

the current baccalaureate and intermediate vocational training. In Spain and Mexico, these adults were 11%; in the United States they were 78%, in Germany 74% and in France 39%. These figures show unequivocally the “backwardness” of Spanish education in the years prior to the LGE of 1970 with respect to that of the most developed Western countries.

FIGURE ED.2. Progress in upper secondary education attainment (ISCED 3)⁶



Sources: OECD 2011: Education at a Glance 2011, Education at a Glance 2018 Table A1.2, Education at a Glance 2024. Table A1.2

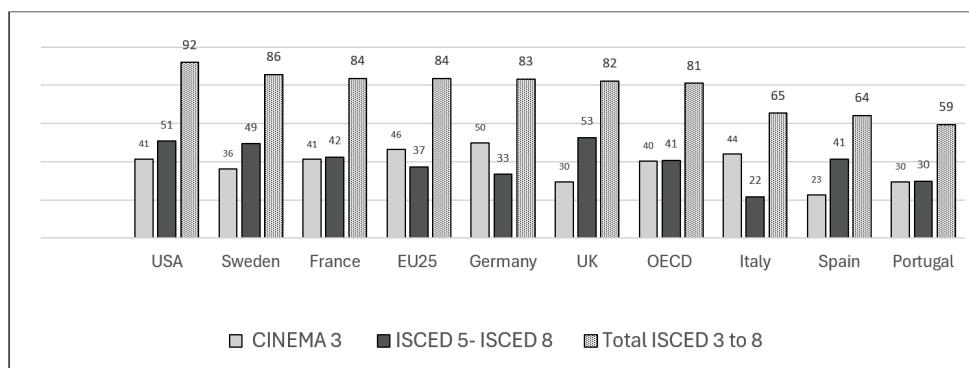
The situation began to change very noticeably since the approval of the 1970 and 1990 education laws. 65% of young Spaniards born between 1982 and 1991, aged 25-34 years in 2016, reached the upper secondary level of education (OECD, 2018). The figure has reached 74% of young people born between 1989 and 1998, who were between 25 and 34 years old in 2023. Progress has been remarkable, although our adult population with that level of education is currently 7-8 percentage points below Italy and Portugal, 10 points behind Germany, 14 points behind France and 20 points behind the United States.

Figure ED.3 plots together the percentages of adults aged 25-64 (populations other than those discussed in the previous figure) who have attained ISCED level 3, ISCED levels 5-8 and the sum total of both percentages (OECD, 2024b). The percentage of Spaniards with ISCED 3, 23%, is half

⁶ The 1997 data correspond to the percentage of adults aged 55 to 64, born between 1933 and 1942, who had an upper secondary education in 1997. The 2016 data correspond to the same attainment of 25-34 year olds, born between 1982 and 1991. Finally, the data for 2023 correspond to the attainment of young people aged 25 to 34, born between 1989 and 1998.

the EU average and 17 points lower than the OECD average. However, the percentage of Spaniards with ISCED 5-8, 41%, is equal to the OECD average and higher than those of the EU, Germany, Portugal and Italy. Thus, the main Spanish difficulty with respect to the levels of education attained by the adult population lies in upper secondary education, ISCED 3, and not in higher education.

FIGURE ED.3. Percentage of adults aged 25-64 with the highest level of education attained. 2023



Education at a Glance 2024

Secondary education attainment

The changes introduced by the LGE and the LOGSE in the structures of the educational system, in schooling and in results, aimed at the educational success of all students in compulsory education. These changes led to very significant progress, as shown by the results indicators presented in this section. However, at the same time, courses and stages were approached in practice with a selective character, as evidenced by the high figures for grade repetition, as well as by the also high percentages of students who did not graduate at the end of EGB or ESO

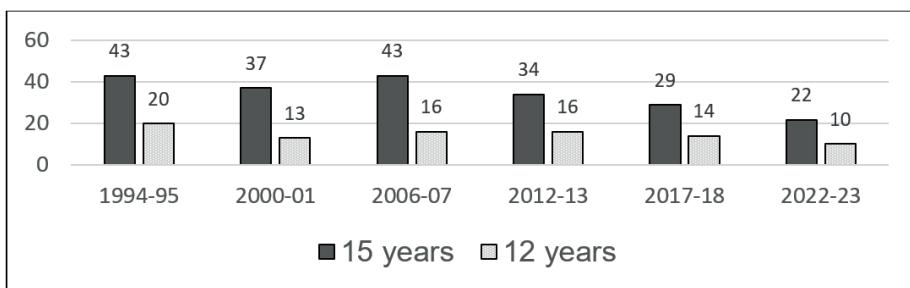
R2 Pupils repeating grades in compulsory education

In making decisions about promotion to the next grade, for most students in compulsory education, a propaedeutic, academic and selective conception of the teaching of areas and subjects, inherited from previous curricula, particularly that of the 1950s (elementary and higher baccalaureate, with its revalidated exams), has been taking precedence. This conception has led to the classification of students, at the end of each year, into passers (success) and repeaters (failure). The implementation of basic competencies in 2006, as proposed by the LOE, did not substantially transform the situation described before 2012.

Grade repetition in primary and secondary school has been and still is high. When students did not pass learning in different subjects, grade repetition has been used as a resource to improve learning, with the purpose of guaranteeing success in the following grades and educational stages. The result is the grade repetition figures shown in Figure R2.1.

In the 1994-95 school year, one out of every five 12-year-old Spanish students had repeated at least once. The percentage of repeaters in primary school fell slightly in the following years and with greater intensity in the last 5 years, to 10% in the 2023 school year. This Spanish figure is much higher than those of countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Italy, France and Germany, where in 2018 repetition in primary school was between 1% and 4% (Consejo Escolar del Estado, 2020) (see Figure R2.2 and Figure R2.3 in Annex).

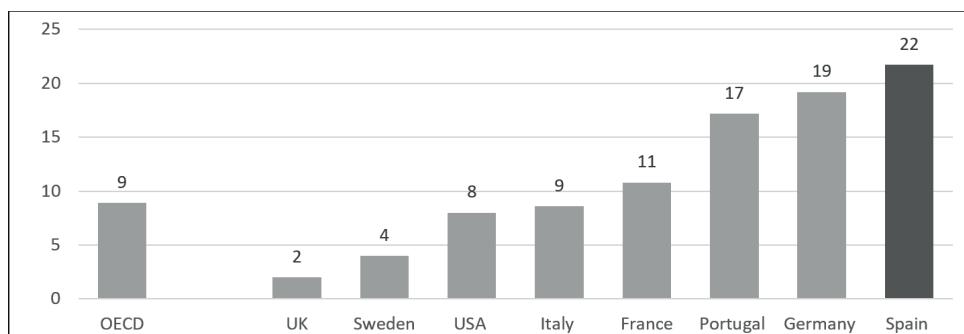
FIGURE R2.1. Percentage of students who have repeated at least once. Spain



Source: Own elaboration based on Consejo Escolar del Estado (2020) and PISA Reports 2018, 2022.

The percentage of students who have repeated at least once in ESO is practically double that of primary school in all the years considered; it was 43% in 1994-95 and in 2006-07; it progressively decreased to 22% in 2022-23. The international comparison presented in Figure R2.4 (OECD (2023), shows the current situation of repetition in Spain: it is 10 times that of the United Kingdom, 5 times that of Sweden; it is double or higher than repetition in the United States, Italy and France (the latter two countries which, together with Portugal, presented figures as high as those of Spain and which have been drastically reduced in the last decade). PISA has repeatedly stated, from its first report in 2000 to the recent one in 2022, that grade repetition is costly for the country, inefficient for the system and dramatic for the students who suffer from it

FIGURE R2.4. Percentage of students repeating at least once in PISA 2022



Source: Data prepared from PISA Report (2023), PISA 2022 Results (Volume II): Learning During - and From Disruption, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris,

In the last years of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st century, international institutions, experts and educational leaders from different countries engaged in a process of reflection on educational objectives and the importance of education in satisfying social aspirations for individual, economic and social development. A new conception of education took shape, first, in the publication of the Delors Report *Learning: The Treasure Within* (UNESCO, 1996). The report states that education is (should be) based on 4 basic pillars: that citizens *learn to know, to do, live together* (con-vivir, to exercise citizenship) and to *be*.

Second, the OECD launched the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) in 2000, in which participating countries agreed to assess

the acquisition of basic skills of 15-year-old students⁷. Third, the EU adopted in 2002 the *Education and Training 2010* program which member countries agreed on the *European Educational Objectives*; it has confirmed these objectives and added new ones in the *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training for the European Education Area and beyond* (EU, 2023).

R3 PISA results

The PISA study has been conducted every 3 years since 2000, except for the last one which was delayed to 2022 because of the pandemic (OECD, 2023). The definition of competencies and the very varied results obtained can be found in the successive reports (OECD, 2000-2022).⁸ The INEE publishes a Spanish report each year (MEFPD 2023a).⁹

The most publicized PISA result is the average score (and the resulting ranking) of the countries, referring to an initial OECD average that was made equivalent to 500 points¹⁰. In the three competencies the Spanish average was lower than the OECD average between 2000 and 2009, between 7 and 30 points in reading, between 24 and 15 in mathematics and between 9 and 13 points in science (Figures R.3.1), but always remained at level 3, like the rest of the developed countries (Roca, 2012). These differences decreased in successive studies, to 2 points below in reading in 2022, 1 point in mathematics and the same average in science. In other words, Spanish results in PISA are currently at the OECD average, a very different reality from the backwardness of Spanish education described at the beginning of the 1970s.

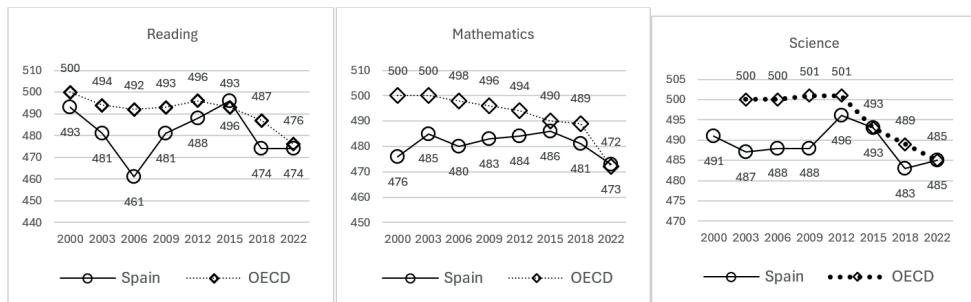
7 At the same time, the OECD promoted a project called DeSeCo, which addressed the definition and selection of basic competencies proposed by this organization (Rychen and Salganik, 2001 and 2003).

8 OECD (2000-2022). Data and graphs in this section come from our own elaboration based on the OECD PISA Reports and the corresponding Spanish INEE Reports.

9 Ministry of Education. National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE). The last published report is for 2022 (MEFPD, 2023a).

10 The study establishes between 5 and 7 levels of performance in each competency and describes what students scoring at each level are able to "do". The OECD, EU and most developed country averages are at level 3. PISA does not describe what characterizes different scores within a level.

FIGURES R3.1. PISA means scores. Spain and OECD. 2000-2022

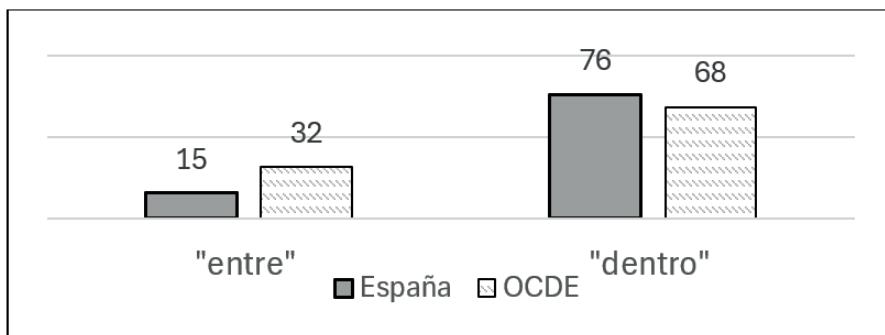


The Spanish results at the lowest performance levels (1 and <1) are also similar to or lower than the OECD average. The percentage of Spanish students at these levels is lower or equal in all three competencies (Figures R.3.2. Appendix). However, the Spanish percentage in the high levels is lower in all cases than that of the OECD. In other words, the Spanish education system is more efficient with students at lower levels, despite the repetition that dominates at those levels, and less efficient, relatively speaking, with students at higher levels.

The analysis of variance allows us to assess the dispersion of student results that occurs “between” and “within” schools. The variance attributable to the differences in the results of students from different schools (*between-school variance*) is much lower in Spain, in all PISA studies, than the variance attributable to the differences in the results of students from the same school (*within-school variance*). (Figure R3.3).

In 2022, in the OECD as a whole, the overall variation in student performance between schools (32%) is significantly lower than that within schools (68%). The same is true in Spain: 15% between schools and 76% within schools. Spanish results are similar to those of countries with greater equity.

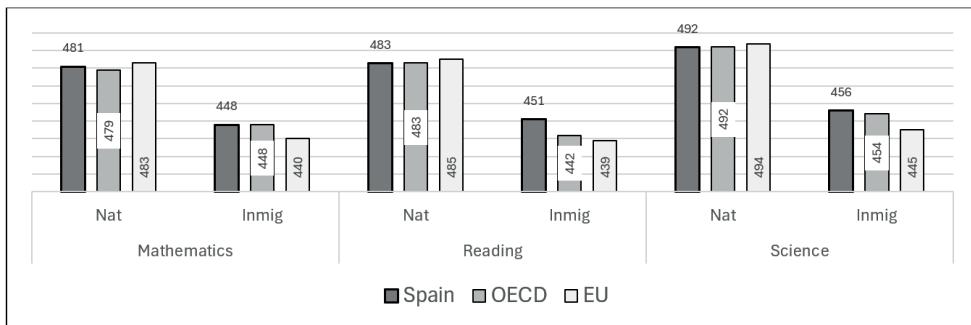
FIGURE R3.3. Percentage of variance. Differences “between” and “within” centers. 2022



In addition, half of the difference between schools in Spain is attributable to differences in students' social, economic and cultural status (ISEC). The average ISEC of the OECD countries as a whole is 0.0; the ISEC of the EU is -0.04 (very slightly below the average) and that of Spain is 0.03, slightly higher than that of the EU and the OECD average. This Spanish value has risen notably in the last 20 years: the Spanish ISEC figure was, in 2009, 0.3. This signifies Spanish socioeconomic and cultural progress, which is a good index of the improvement in the learning environment enjoyed by students (MEFPD, 2023a).

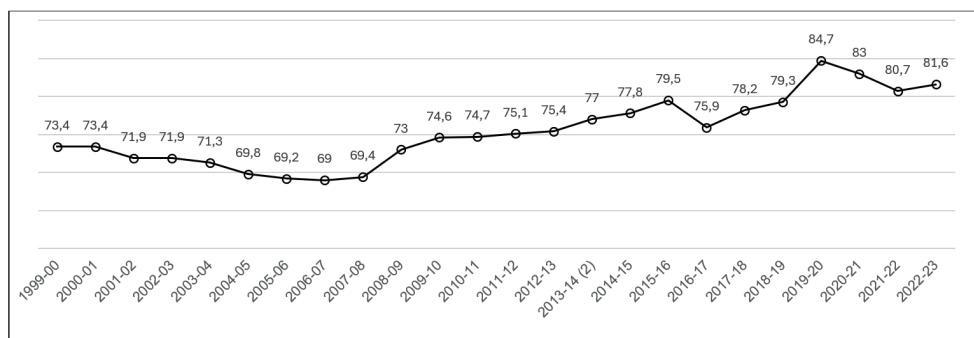
Girls score higher in reading (around 487 points) than boys (around 463). In mathematics, boys score higher (478 points compared to 468 for girls, practically equal averages in Spain, OECD and EU). In science, the differences between boys and girls are small in OECD, EU and Spain. These relative differences have undergone little variation in the different PISA studies (Figure R3.4. Annex).

Regarding the results of natives and immigrants, Figure R3.5 shows that Spanish natives have scores that are practically equal in 2022 to the averages of natives in OECD and EU countries in the three competencies. In all cases, these scores are higher than those of immigrants by about 30 points.

FIGURE R2.5. PISA 2022. Native and immigrant differences

R4 Compulsory secondary education graduation (ESO). (ISCED 2)

As has just been mentioned, in the last PISA exercise, Spanish students scored equal to the averages of the OECD and EU countries. However, the selective nature of the ESO diploma has been preventing students who do not obtain it from continuing their studies in upper secondary, general or professional education, which has contributed to the so-called “school failure”. The reasons for this failure are very complex, as stated in the Report “*Success in primary and secondary education*” of the State School Council (2020), to which the interested reader is referred

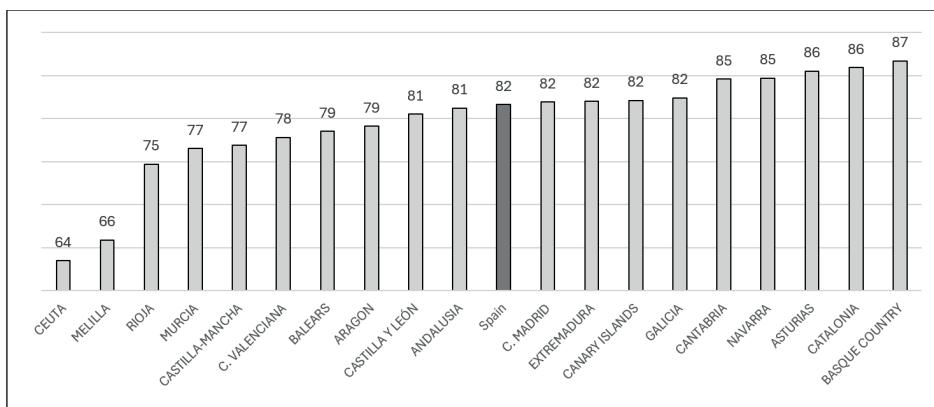
FIGURE R4.1. Gross rate of population completing ESO (ESO Graduation) (percentage)

Source: Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios. MEFID

In 2000, 73.4% of the student body obtained the ESO graduation at the end of this stage, a figure that dropped to 60% in 2006-07. It rose to 79.5 in 2015-16 and, after a decline of 3.6 percentage points in 2016-17, increased to 84.7% in 2020. It is complex to attribute the declines observed in the series to economic crises or policy changes by different governments, although the decline from 2000 to 2006 is eloquent; perhaps more evident is the effect of COVID on the decline that brought the rate to around 81%. In any case, practically one out of every 5 Spanish students was not able to continue with high school or professional studies in recent years because they did not reach the ESO degree at the expected age (MEFPD, 2023b).

The Spanish figure of ESO graduates in 2023 corresponds to quite diverse percentages of graduates in the autonomous communities and cities, ranging from 64% in Ceuta to 87% in the Basque Country (Figure R.4.2).

FIGURE R4.2. Gross rate of population graduating from ESO. CCAA. Percentage of students. 2023



Source: Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios. MEFPD

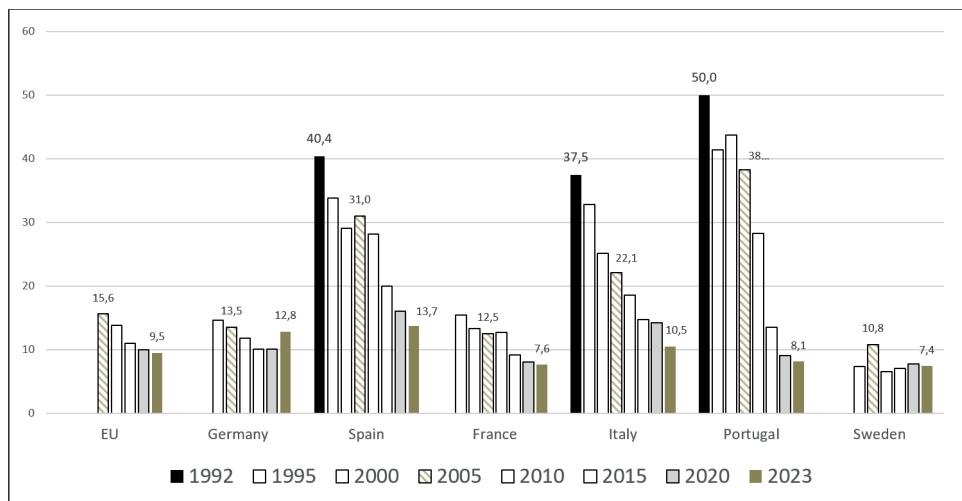
In most Western countries, there has been a shift from initial selective approaches, similar to Spain's, to a firm intention to extend education effectively to all citizens up to the age of 18, as indicated by the European target of bringing the early dropout rate below 10%.

R5 Early leavers from education and training.

Reducing early school leaving was one of the main objectives of the EU since 2003 (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2003), confirmed in the 2030 Strategy. Early dropout is defined as the percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 years that has completed at most the first stage of secondary education (ISCED 2) and does not pursue any studies or training (European Commission, 2011). From the outset, the target was assumed by Spain in the LOE and incorporated into the Spanish educational objectives (Roca, 2010). The current European target for 2030 (European Commission, 2024) is to bring the early dropout rate below 9%.

Figure R5.1 shows the official figures provided by Eurostat (2024d). Spain had one of the highest dropout rates in 1992 (40.4%), together with Italy and Portugal. The Spanish figure fell to 31.0% in 2005 and to 13.7% in 2023. The decrease has been very notable over the last 18 years, but it has not reached the figures of the two neighboring countries mentioned above, particularly those of Portugal, which has gone from 38.5% in 2005 to 8.1% in 2023.

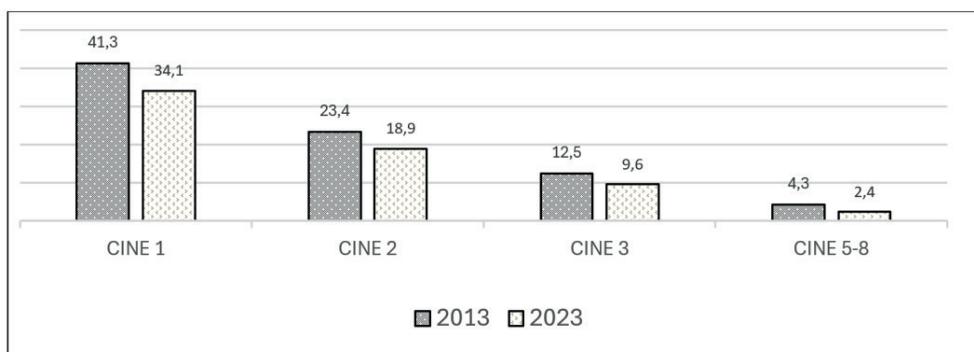
FIGURE R5.1. Trends in early school leaving. Spain, the EU and selected countries.



Source: Eurostat. Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status. Data extracted on 04/12/2024

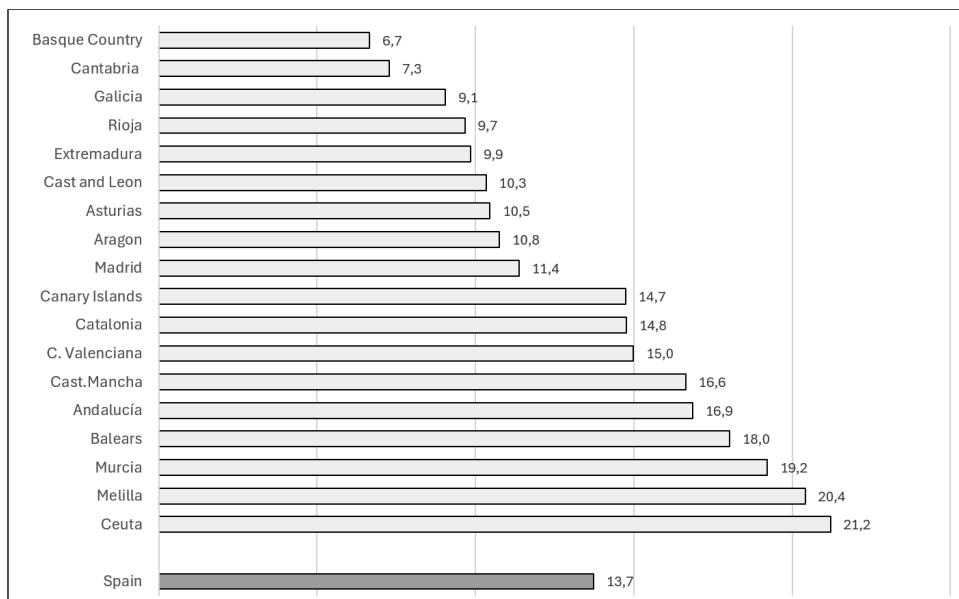
It is also worth highlighting the decisive influence of the mothers' level of studies on early dropout, as shown in Figure R5.2. In 2013, 41.3% of Spanish students whose mothers only had primary education did not continue studying; this figure dropped to 34.1% in 2023. If the mothers had higher education, early dropout was 4.3% in 2013 and 2.4% in 2023. For this reason, the importance of the studies attained by the adult population in explaining educational success in adolescents and young people has been emphasized.

FIGURE R5.2. Early leavers by mother's level of education. Spain. 2022



Source: OECD 2023. PISA 2022

This article has already reiterated the importance of repetition and the difficulties of graduation from ESO. However, it is essential to point out that some Autonomous Communities, with the same state legislative measures, have achieved early school dropout rates below the initial European target: the Basque Country (6.7%) and Cantabria (7.3%), Galicia (9.1%), Rioja (9.7%) and Extremadura (9.9%).

FIGURE R5.3. Early leavers from education-training. CCAA. 2023

Source: Encuesta de Población Activa. I.N.E. Calculado con la metodología establecida por Eurostat
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/publications>

At the opposite extreme, the two autonomous cities exceed 20% and seven autonomous communities are between 14% and 20%.

Educational outcomes in upper secondary education and in higher education

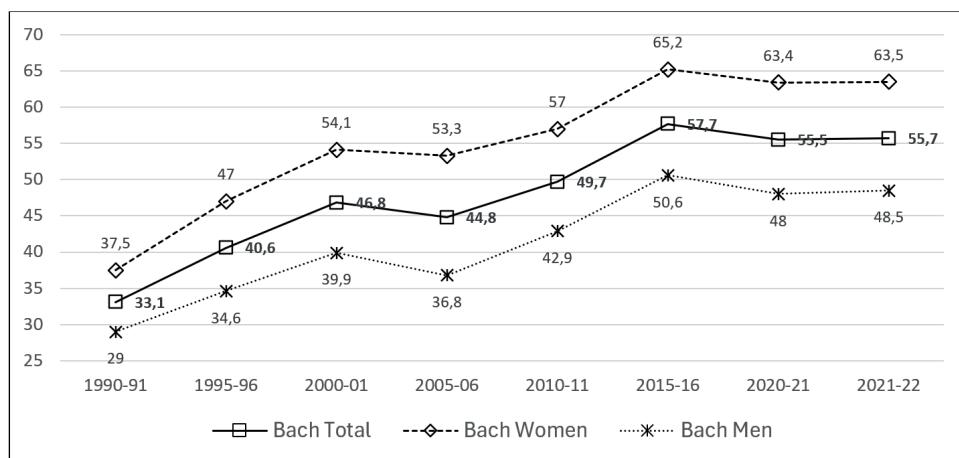
Post-compulsory upper secondary education shows a notable evolution. It is not possible to establish a continuous and homogeneous series between degrees attained in the so-called medium studies of 1970 and those of 1990, since they correspond to different stages in duration and levels attained; nevertheless, the information commented on in Figure ED offers a useful reference; 10% of the young people born in 1950 attained medium studies at the end of the 1960s, a figure that rose to 20% at the end of the 1970s and 30% at the end of the 1980s.

R6 Attainment in Upper Secondary Education (ISCED 3).

The figures for the gross graduation rates in Baccalaureate, Middle Level VET¹¹ and Basic Level VET, corresponding to the period 1990-2022, are presented in indicator R6, figures R6.1, and R6.2. (MEFPD Educa base, 2024f).

The high school graduation rate went from 33.1% in 1990-91 to 46.8% in 2000-2001. Between 2000 and 2005 there was a change in trend, which lowered the rate to 44.8%. From 2005-06 the growth returns until 2015-16, when the Baccalaureate degree rate reached 57.7%. In 2015 it dropped slightly to 55.5% and in 2020-21 the figure was very similar to that of the following academic year. It should be noted that throughout the period there is a difference in favor of the rate achieved by women: 8.5 percentage points higher than that of men in 1990-91 and 15 points in 2020-22.

FIGURE R6.1. Gross rate of population graduating from “Bachillerato” (%)



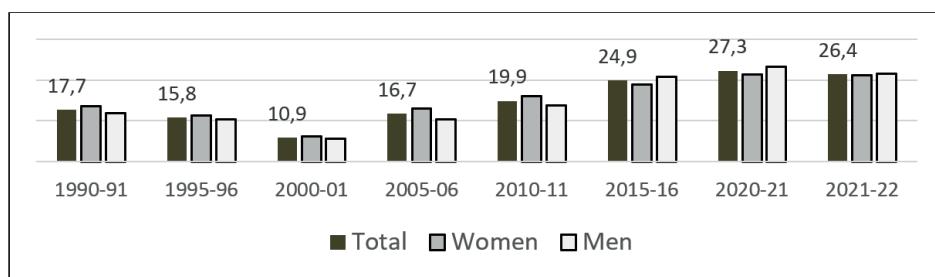
Source: Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios. MEFPD.

The figures for intermediate vocational training begin with a total of 17.7% in 1990-91 and drop to 10.9% in 2000-01. It is necessary to take into account the starting and finishing ages of vocational studies, which changed significantly between the LGE and LOGSE studies. From 2000-01 onwards,

11 Everything related to VET is dealt with in detail in the article by Clara Sanz in this Monograph.

there is a gradual growth in the rates of the new VET until reaching a value of 27.3% in 2020-21 and a slight decrease in the last course with available data¹² Here too there are differences, although smaller, between women and men and, moreover, they change over time, until they practically equalize in 2021-22. We must also take into account the different proportions between male and female students in the different branches of VET.

FIGURE R6.2. Gross rate of population graduating in intermediate vocational training (%)



Source: Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios. MEFPD

Graduation rates in Basic Grade VET, starting in the 2015-16 academic year remains between 3 and 4.7% in the six years considered, with a percentage of women almost double that of men.

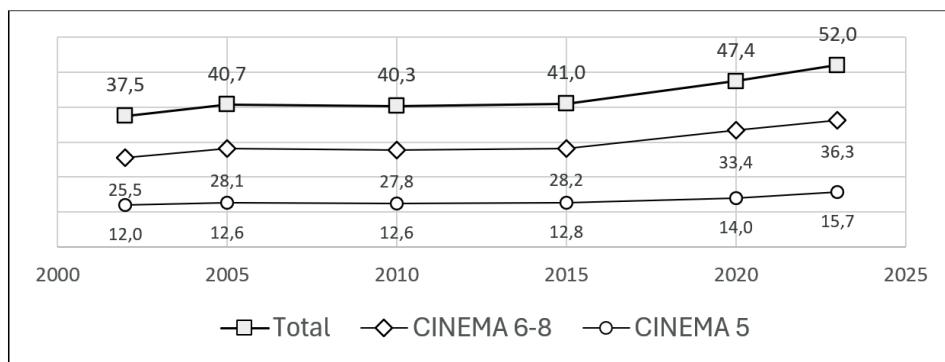
Thus, although the comparison is not rigorous due to the different statistical measures used, in the last 50 years we have gone in the last 50 years from figures of 30% of graduates in “intermediate studies” to figures which, when adding those of the Baccalaureate, those of Middle Level Vocational Training and those of Basic Level Vocational Training, and discounting duplications, are close to the 74% attainment of the population aged 25-34 years in education ISCED 3 presented above in Figure ED2. The labor force survey (INE) estimates that the population aged 20-29 years that had completed at least the 2nd Stage of Secondary Education in 2023 varied from 89.5% in the Basque Country to 67.1 in Murcia, with a state average of 77.8% (R6-Table 3.1. Annex).

¹² See the article by Clara Sanz in this monograph for a better understanding of the meaning of these graduation rates and the differences between the different VET studies, intermediate and higher, in the different periods corresponding to the different educational laws.

R7 Population aged 25-34 with higher education grade (ISCED 5-8)¹³

The European target for 2030 establishes that the percentage of people aged 25-34 with higher education should be at least 45% in 2030¹⁴. This target has been achieved in Spain by 2020, as shown in Figures R7.1 and R7.2. The total figure for higher education is the sum of those corresponding to university education (ISCED 6-8) and ISCED5 higher education.

FIGURE R7.1. Evolution of population aged 25-34 with a higher education grade. Spain (ISCED 5 to 8)

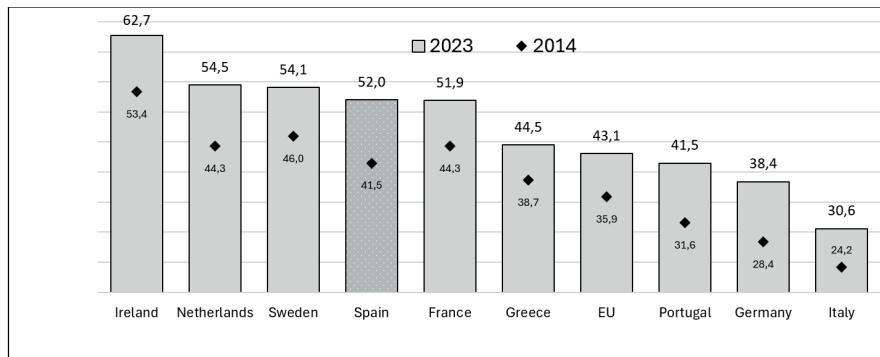


Source: Labor Force Survey (INE). MEFPD

The highest percentage of young people with higher education in the EU is that of Ireland; Spain is close to that of the Netherlands and Sweden and above the EU average, Figure R7.2.

13 This section does not offer degree rates due to the complexity and differences between the different degrees.

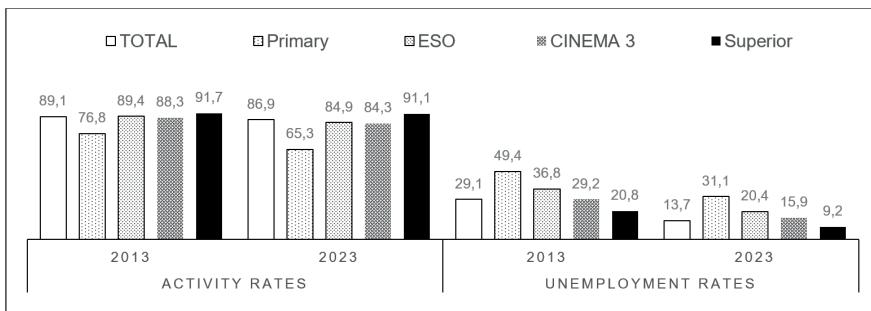
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FIGURE R7.2. Percentage of 25-34 year-olds with higher education

Source: Eurostat (EU Labour Force Survey).

R8 Activity and unemployment rates. Wage indexes

Figure R8.1 presents the activity and unemployment rates. Activity rates are, in the two years considered, lower for young people with only primary education and higher for those with higher education. Unemployment has declined markedly between 2013 and 2023; in the latter year, unemployment affecting young people with only primary education is triple that of those with higher education (MEFPD 2024a).

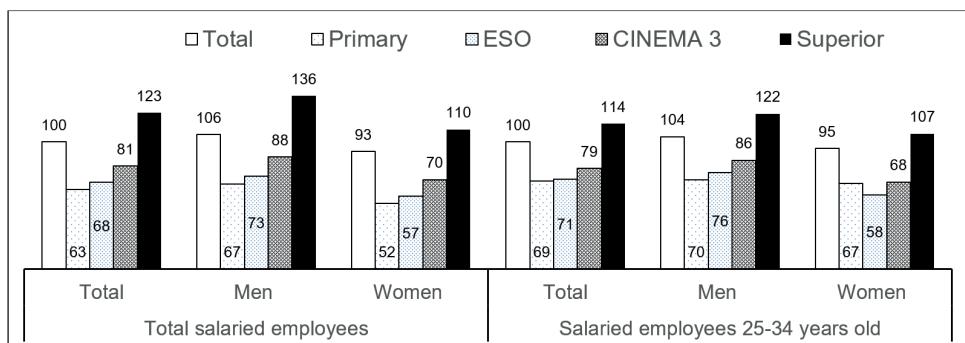
FIGURE R8.1. Activity and unemployment rates of the population between 25 and 34 years of age, by level of education attained

Source: Labor Force Survey, INE. ¹⁵

15 The data in this and the following figure come from the publication *Data and Figures for the 2024-2025 school year* of the Subdirectorate General for Statistics and Studies of the MEFPD.

Figure R8.2 presents the annual salaries, valued on the index 100 that corresponds to the average of the total population and that of wage earners aged 25-34 years. In both populations, the wages of men with higher education (136-114) are higher than those of the rest of men with other levels of education in the two populations considered; and they are also higher than those of all women. The salaries of women with higher education (110-107) are higher than those of the rest of women and men in the two populations without higher education.

FIGURE R8.2. Annual wage indexes, by level of education attained. Year 2022



Source: Living Conditions Survey. INE.

Final consideration

The data for these last two indicators, as well as the evolution of the figures for the rest of the selected educational indicators for the years from 1970 to 2025, provide eloquent evidence of the importance of guaranteeing all children, young people and adults, without exception, the necessary resources so that they can achieve the highest level of education in accordance with their abilities and interests. More and better education for all makes it possible to improve the formation of citizens, that is, it provides individual wealth that, once acquired, cannot be alienated, subtracted or exploited for purposes other than the prosperity of the individuals who enjoy it. At the same time, more and better education for all means greater wealth for the societies in which

they are integrated, greater human capital; education is truly the “wealth of nations and individuals” in the knowledge society of the 21st century.

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ANNEX

Anyone interested in viewing the original charts and tables can request the appendix made available by the author via email at: erc.roca@gmail.com

Changes in the Spanish university (1975-2025): expansion, reorganization and financing

Los cambios en la universidad española (1975-2025): expansión, reorganización y financiación

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Abstract

This article describes the changes that have taken place in Spanish universities over the fifty years since the transition to democracy began in 1975. It focuses on the expansion of university education, the organization of academic degrees, and the financing of universities, including scholarships and study grants for university students. The approach used is the analysis of the main statistical indicators and legal texts approved in relation to these issues. All of this is accompanied by secondary sources that allow for a reconstruction of the evolution of the university and its changes. The article notes that, during the democratic period, the university expanded, the academic degrees were reorganized, and funding increased, including scholarships and study grants. The balance of democracy is clearly positive. However, some areas for improvement are discussed, based on international comparisons and a more detailed analysis of each dimension. Some challenges to be addressed in the future are identified and some university policy proposals are suggested to address them.

Key words: University, Spain, Democracy, University policy, Higher Education, University spending, University degrees.

Resumen

Este artículo describe los cambios acontecidos en la universidad española durante los cincuenta años desde la transición democrática que comienza en 1975. Se centra en las dimensiones relativas a la extensión de la educación universitaria, la organización de las enseñanzas en este nivel y la financiación de las universidades, incluidas las becas y ayudas al estudio para los estudiantes universitarios. El enfoque utilizado es el análisis de los principales indicadores estadísticos y de los textos legales aprobados en relación con estas cuestiones. Todo ello es acompañado de fuentes secundarias que permiten hacer una reconstrucción de la evolución de la universidad y sus cambios. Se constata en el artículo que, en el periodo democrático, la universidad se expande, se reorganizan sus enseñanzas y aumenta la financiación universitaria, también en lo que concierne a las becas y ayudas al estudio. El balance de la democracia es claramente positivo. Sin embargo, se discuten algunos elementos de mejora derivados de la comparación internacional y del análisis más detallado de cada dimensión. Se detectan algunos retos que abordar en el futuro y se sugieren algunas propuestas de política universitaria para atenderlos.

Palabras clave: Universidad, España, Democracia, Política universitaria, Educación Superior, Gasto universitario, Enseñanzas universitarias.

Introduction

The change that the Spanish university has undergone over the last fifty years has been very intense. From the early 1970s to the present day, there has been a shift from a traditional, centralised university model, which prevailed under Franco's dictatorship, to a more modern, decentralised university model, which has been progressively developed since the end of Franco's regime and during the period of democracy. Franco's university legislation dates to 1943, when the University Organisation Act (LOU) was enacted. The state had strong control over the universities, although the professors constituted a body with considerable autonomy and influence on university policy. The university institutions developed a broad training function, although their research work was more limited. From the 1960s onwards, the university began to expand, as it did in other neighbouring countries.

In 1970, in the final phase of the dictatorship, the General Education

Act (LGE) was passed, which represented an important step towards the modernisation of the education system, including the university, although the budget allocation for its implementation was lower than expected. In the democratic period, the University Reform Law (LRU), enacted in 1983, laid the foundations for the new, more modern and decentralised university model, in which the Autonomous Communities (ACs) were given most of the powers in university affairs. With this law the universities were given autonomy, and, among other things, an attempt was made to make university education more accessible to all through a major expansion of places and grants for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Scientific research by the universities was also promoted (Sánchez Ferrer, 1996).

From the early 1980s to the present day, there has been a succession of university laws that have brought about minor changes, although each one has incorporated some defining element of what constitutes the present university system. The Organic Law on Universities (LOU) of 2001 created the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) with the aim of controlling the quality of universities, centres and degrees, as well as acting as a filter for the recruitment of teaching staff. The Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Universities (LOMLOU) of 2007 adapted Spanish university studies to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which arose from the Bologna Declaration of 1999 to unify European higher education; degrees were shortened in the so-called bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees were created. Finally, the Organic Law of the University System (LOSU) of 2023 defined the different categories of university teaching staff that exist today.

Although these laws have created the legal framework within which university policy has operated, the Royal Decrees that have often developed the laws, as well as the budget allocation they have received to develop their regulatory content, must be also considered. It is important to take into account the behaviour of both the ACs, which have most of the powers in university affairs, and the universities themselves, which in the exercise of their university autonomy make many decisions that define university policy (Ball, 2015).

The analysis of the changes that have taken place at university level

is complex, as there are many dimensions involved, such as student access to university, the financing of this level of education, university governance, the selection of teaching staff and university research, to cite just a few examples. For reasons of space, this article focuses on some of these dimensions, without, of course, neglecting the importance of the others¹. In particular, the dimensions that will be addressed are those relating to the expansion of university education, the organisation of university education, as well as the funding for university studies and in grants and study aids. These are the dimensions that most directly affect students (and their families), their access to, progression through and graduation from university.

The aim of the article is, therefore, to analyse the changes that have taken place in the university in the 50-year democratic period between the death of the dictator Franco in 1975 and 2025. Despite the eminently descriptive nature of the text, conceptual and analytical frameworks from both national and international academic literature are used (e.g. Ball, 2015; Ball and Youdell, 2008; Verger, 2016; Verger and Curran, 2014). The situation since around 1960s is shown to give an idea of the starting situation, and of what the context was like in Spain prior to the establishment of democracy. The approach used is, on the one hand, the analysis of different statistical indicators related to these dimensions, and, on the other, of the legal texts approved in relation to these issues. Furthermore, the abundance of secondary sources, which have dealt with shorter periods than the one analysed here, allows us to reconstruct the evolution of the university in democracy and some of its changes.

After this introduction, the following sections refer to each of the selected dimensions. Finally, an assessment of the changes that took place during democracy is presented, the light and shadows of the period are discussed, and some proposals for university policy for the future are presented.

¹ It has not been possible to deal with the research dimension of universities, as this would require a specific article. Their importance has been growing since the second half of the 1980s and can now be compared with that of neighbouring countries.

The expansion of university education

Higher education began to expand from the 1960s onwards. In 1960 there were 81,142 students in the faculties and engineering schools in Spain, giving a gross enrolment rate in higher education of 3.6% of the population aged 20 to 24. In 1970 the number of students at this level increased to 192,139, and the enrolment rate in higher education out of the population of this age group to 7.54%. By 1975, higher education students had risen to 324,036, with an enrolment rate of 12.66% of the population aged 20-24 (Núñez, 2005).

In the democratic period, the number of university students has continued to increase, reaching a figure of 1,762,459 in the academic year 2023-2024, distributed among undergraduate (more than 78%), master's (more than 16%) and doctoral studies. This represents a net enrolment rate of 30.4% of the population aged 18 to 24 in bachelor's or master's studies (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024). Therefore, with the caution imposed by the fact that these are not identical indicators due to changes in the education system over time, in the democratic period (taken since 1975) the number of university students has increased fivefold, and the university enrolment rate has doubled.

From a comparative point of view, Spain has a percentage of the population aged 25-34 with higher education (which includes not only university studies but also higher vocational training) slightly above the average for OECD and EU25 countries; this percentage reaches 50.5% in Spain in 2022, compared to 47.2% for the OECD average and 44.7% for the EU25. However, if instead of a flow indicator, that considers the young population, we use a *stock* indicator, that takes into account the adult population, Spain is at the EU average. Spain has a percentage of working-age adults aged 25 to 64 with higher education of around 40% in 2021, similar to the average of these countries (CRUE, 2024). The explanation for this apparent paradox lies in the fact that Spain started out with a low *stock* of human capital, which is gradually being compensated for by the higher educational level of younger people, until we are at a level like the countries around us.

An important key element to explaining the increase in the number of university students is the gender dimension; in the 1960s and 1970s, men

still went to university to a much greater extent than women. In 1960, the gross enrolment rate of the population aged 20-24 in faculties was 2.84% for the student body as a whole and 4.39% for males. In 1970 these rates were 5.89% and 7.98% respectively (Núñez, 2005). It should be borne in mind that the differences must have been greater since engineering students were overwhelmingly male. Today, after fifty years of democracy, the proportion of men and women has reversed, with more women than men studying at university. In the academic year 2023-2024, women will account for 56.5% of all university students (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024). In other words, a large part of the growth of the university is due to the incorporation of women at this educational level.

The number of universities in Spain has also grown significantly over this period. Given the increase in the number of university students in the 1960s, it became necessary to create new universities from the end of that decade to meet this growing demand. In 1968 there were 12 universities in Spain, by 1970 three more were created, bringing the total to 15, and by 1975 there were 23 throughout the country (Sánchez Ferrer, 1996). During the period of democracy, the number of universities has grown spectacularly, reaching 91 in the academic year 2023-2024 (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024). In other words, the number of universities has multiplied almost fourfold in this period.

To analyse the increase in the number of universities, it is necessary to consider several dimensions that account for the change in university provision over this period. On the one hand, there is the territorial perspective (Verger and Curran, 2014), the distribution of universities in the territory, in the different ACs. Before democracy, before 1975, the universities were in large and important cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Bilbao. In fact, of what later became the 17 ACs, three of them had no university (Balearic Islands, La Rioja and Castilla la Mancha). At present, all the ACs and most of the provinces have at least one university. Despite the obvious differences between the ACs, all of them have a percentage of young people going to university. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the Autonomous Community of Madrid has the highest net enrolment rate in university education (out of the population aged 18 to 24), 44.1%, compared with the Balearic Islands, where

the rate is 10.3% (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024). With the introduction of the State of Autonomies in democracy, and due to the assumption of powers over universities by the ACs, each region gradually acquired at least one university and, in many cases, several.

Another interesting dimension for understanding the increase in the number of universities is their ownership, whether public or private (Ball and Youdell, 2008; Verger, 2016). In 1975, of the 23 universities in Spain, only four were private (the University of Deusto, the Pontifical University of Comillas, the Pontifical University of Salamanca and the University of Navarra). In other words, just over 17% of universities were private, while the majority were public. However, in the academic year 2023-2024, 41 of the 91 universities in Spain are private, which represents 45% of the total (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024). In democracy we can distinguish two periods. The first period, up to the mid-1990s, saw the creation of all the public universities up to the current 50; the last one to be created, in 1998, was the Polytechnic University of Cartagena. In other words, from 1975 to 1998, 27 public universities were created. And a second period, from the mid-1990s to the present day, in which no public universities were created, and almost all the existing private universities were created, up to 41 in the 2023-2024 academic year. The creation of new private universities was not possible until 1991, when a decree was passed establishing the conditions for the creation and recognition of universities and university centres, which developed Article 58 of the LRU of 1983 (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2003). From 1993, when the San Pablo CEU University was created, until the academic year 2023-24, no less than 37 private universities have been created. However, it is important to bear in mind that there are considerable disparities between the different ACs. In most regions, public universities outnumber private universities, except in the case of Castilla y León, the Canary Islands, the Basque Country and the Community of Madrid. In the latter, there are 13 private universities compared to six public ones (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024). Since 2021, several decrees have been passed to regulate the creation and activity of private universities and university centres. As private universities have grown, in some cases obtaining the approval of regional governments after non-binding negative

reports from the central administration, the national government has tightened the requirements for their establishment and operation.

In terms of the share of private university students in the total number of students, the increase has also been noticeable. The percentage of university students in private universities was 3% of the total number of students in 1970 and remained around this percentage until the mid-1990s (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2003). From then on, the percentage of students in private universities started to increase to 25.7% of the total number in the 2023-2024 academic year (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024).

Compared to other countries, Spain has a higher percentage of public university graduates than the EU25 and OECD average for undergraduate and, above all, PhD graduates in 2022. However, with regard to the master's level, the percentage of graduates in public universities with respect to the total number of graduates in 2022 is considerably lower than in these groups of countries; while in the EU25 this percentage of graduates in public universities amounts to 78% and in the OECD to 65%, in Spain it represents 52% of the total number of graduates (OECD, 2024). In fact, the expansion of private universities in Spain has been largely due to the master's level. In the academic year 2023-2024 there are more students in private masters than in public ones; 145,306 versus 143,649 students respectively (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024).

Finally, the third dimension for understanding the expansion of the university is the irruption of distance learning universities. The UNED, a publicly owned distance learning university, was created in 1972 and was the first university that did not require students to be physically present. With the rise of private universities from the mid-1990s onwards, the rest of the distance learning universities were created, all of which are private². In the academic year 2023-2024 there are a total of seven non-face-to-face universities, of which six are privately owned, as no additional public universities have been created. In fact, the number of students in private universities in this modality exceeds those in public universities, the former amounting to 187,066 and the latter to 137,726 students; thus, the percentage of students in private

² The Open University of Catalonia (UOC) is privately owned but was promoted by the Catalan government and is managed by a non-profit foundation.

universities is 57.6% of the total number of students in distance learning universities. The preponderance of non-face-to-face private universities over public universities is particularly noticeable at master's level; while 90,712 students study in distance learning private institutions, only 12,088 students do so in public institutions of the same type (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024).

The reorganisation of university studies

The university in the 1960s offered rather long degree courses (called *licenciaturas*), lasting five or six years, with lectures as the predominant teaching method and the final exam as the unique form of evaluation. Curricula were approved by the ministry, although, as far as subject programmes were concerned, professors had a considerable say in defining them. The LGE of 1970 reorganised the university system by incorporating technical education, such as higher technical schools and some intermediate vocational schools, into university studies in the so-called *escuelas universitarias*. University studies began to be divided into three cycles: the first cycle included the first three years of the degree courses and the studies at the *escuelas universitarias*, which gave access to the diploma. The second cycle comprised the rest of the years, two or three, until the degree was completed, and the third cycle was used to study for a doctorate (Sánchez Ferrer, 2016).

In the democratic period, the LRU of 1983 gave universities more room for manoeuvre in the configuration of the curricula of existing degrees and the creation of new degrees. It facilitated the shortening of degree courses to four, or in exceptional cases, five years, and the adoption of a system of credits and semesters, as opposed to the traditional system of hours and annual courses. Several degrees were allowed to be taught in the same faculty or school, which facilitated the creation of new degrees. In addition, a distinction was made between official degrees backed by the government and valid throughout Spain, which had been offered up to that point, and the

universities' own degrees, which could be offered from that moment onwards and which were only backed by the universities themselves. In the analysis carried out by Sánchez Ferrer (2016) on the impact of the LRU on the reform of degree programmes, it is shown that this law made it easier for universities to create new degrees.

However, the most substantive change that took place during democracy in terms of the organisation of university studies was the LOMLOU of 2007. Inspired by the Bologna Declaration of 1999, which aimed to unify European higher education, this reform reorganised Spanish university studies to make them compatible with the EHEA. Both bachelor's degrees and diplomas became four (in some exceptional cases five) years long and began to be called university bachelor's degrees, constituting general university qualifications. University master's degrees, lasting one year in most cases, were consolidated, providing a more specialised university qualification. From the point of view of content, the practical load of subjects was increased and assessment based on more elements than just the final exam was encouraged.

Following this restructuring of university studies, a process of diversification of studies at this level of education began. First, the number of bachelor's and, above all, master's degrees increased. In the academic year 2007-2008, before its implementation began in the academic year 2008-2009, the number of first and second cycle university degrees was 2,669. In the academic year 2010-2011, after the adaptation to the EHEA, the number of bachelor's degrees was 2,338 and the number of master's degrees was 2,429 (Ministry of Education, 2010). In the academic year 2023-24, the total number of bachelor's degrees offered was 3,322 and master's degrees 4,049 (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024). The increase in the number of degrees has been spectacular in this period. Likewise, the range of degrees on offer has diversified intensively. There are more inter-university bachelor's and master's degrees, even with universities in other countries. Many double degrees and some triple degrees have been created, contributing to the diversification and stratification of the university offer. Some bachelor's and master's degrees are taught in languages other than Spanish, especially in English, or there are bilingual degrees, especially at bachelor's level, which are taught in two languages, normally Spanish and English. For example,

in the academic year 2023-2024 there are 38 bachelor's degrees and 434 interuniversity master's degrees in Spain (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2024).

As for student access to universities, since 1953 students had to pass a Maturity Test at the end of the Pre-university Course (Muñoz Vitoria, 1995). In 1970, with the approval of the LGE, the Maturity Test was removed, and it was established that the only limit to university access should be the capacity of the centres. This meant that for some years all students who completed the COU (University Orientation Course) could enter university. In 1974, however, the university entrance exam was re-established and called Selectivity, which, together with the secondary school academic record, allowed admission to university studies. The purpose of this test was to assess students' ability, not to select a certain number of students from a pre-determined number. If there were more students than places offered in a degree course, both the Selectivity mark and the mark obtained in the secondary education courses would be considered, with a similar weighting. Only in the case of Medicine, from 1977 onwards, was it possible to limit access through a system known as *numerus clausus* (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2003).

At the beginning of democracy and after the LRU of 1983, this system of access to university was maintained, adapting to the changes in the educational system and undergoing some modifications. After several changes in its name, it is now called University Entrance Exam (PAU). Since 2000, the baccalaureate mark has been more important than the university entrance exam mark, 60% for the former compared to 40% for the latter. And since 2014 there has been a voluntary phase that can give the student four additional points, so that the mark is out of 14 instead of 10 points. Originally this system was devised to ensure that students who wanted to enter university have an adequate level. Currently, a small percentage of those who take the test fail it; less than 10% fail. However, this system fulfils the function, not entirely foreseen at the time, of distributing students among different degrees and universities. Students with the best grades have priority in the choice of degrees and universities, which has meant that, in those degrees and universities with an excess of demand, the required entrance grades have risen. This has led to a situation in which some degrees at public universities have

very high cut-off marks for entry, above 12 or 13 points out of 14 (Sacristán, 2023; Cobreros, Gortázar and Moreno, 2023). However, other degrees and universities have lower scores. It should be mentioned here that this system applies to public universities, since private universities establish their own system of access, although students must pass the baccalaureate and the PAU.

An interesting issue is also the extent to which the university offers “second chances” of access, i.e. it allows students who have dropped out of education or have opted for a certain vocational studies to enter university. The first law to address this issue was the LGE of 1970, which gave those over 25 years of age the possibility of accessing university without having completed secondary education (*bachillerato*) and after passing a specific test. In addition, the National University of Distance Education (UNED) was created in 1972 with the aim of enabling students who could not attend classes, many of whom were working, to obtain a university degree. However, at this time, adult education programmes were not very well developed (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2003).

In democracy, these opportunities for alternative access to university began to be developed and consolidated. The General Organic Law of the Education System (LOGSE) of 1990 developed adult education, including access to university without a previous degree after passing a specific test. In addition, it ensured that graduates in Advanced Vocational Training (FPGS) could access certain related university studies (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2003). Since then, the access routes to university have been widened. It has been made easier for certain groups without a university entrance qualification to enter after passing certain tests. There are specific tests for those over 25 and 45 years of age. There are also tests for the over-40s with work experience in some field for access to specific degrees. These groups also have a small percentage of university places reserved for them, as do high-performance athletes and people with disabilities. Graduates in FPGS can access university with the average mark of their studies (over 10 points) and take the voluntary phase of the PAU to raise their mark up to 14 points.

The increase in university funding

Despite the difficulty of comparing education spending figures from the 1970s with those of today, due not only to changes in the economy and the education system, but also to the lack of data disaggregated by educational level in the older series and the heterogeneity of indicators available in the early years, we can get an idea of the evolution of education spending in Spain during this period (Ball, 2015). Data from Sánchez Ferrer (1996) reveal that public funding per student was stagnant in the first half of the 1970s but increased in the second half of the 1970s and early 1980s; the increase occurred especially after 1977 with the Moncloa Pacts, which gave a strong economic boost to the education system in general (Fernández-Mellizo, 2003). In 1985, total expenditure (public and private) on higher education accounted for 0.6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), so public expenditure would be slightly lower. It should be borne in mind that at that time in Spain higher education only consisted of the university, so this figure must be considered as expenditure on university education. Also, the total annual expenditure per student (in dollars adjusted to Purchasing Power Parity or PPP) in public and private higher education institutions - or in other words, university education - in 1985 amounted to 2,131 dollars (Bricall, 2000)³. Over the course of democracy, expenditure on tertiary education has reached 1.4 per cent of GDP in 2021, and annual expenditure per student in university education in 2020 reaches PPP-\$16,751 (INEE, 2024).⁴

The complexity and detail of education expenditure indicators is great. If only public expenditure is considered and if expenditure such as research is excluded, the percentage of public expenditure on university education in 2022 reaches 0.86% (CCOO, 2025). Total annual expenditure per university student in 2020 also drops to 9,404 EUR-PPP if expenditure such as research is excluded (INEE, 2023). Nevertheless, disregarding these methodological issues and considering the entire democratic period, the evolution of the indicators of expenditure on university education is clearly upward. We are

³ The data used in this report are from the OECD.

⁴ The data used are also from the OECD in order to make them comparable with those of the 1980s. It should be noted that these expenditure data include, among other things, research expenditure as university expenditure.

not, however, going to dwell on the evolution throughout the period, in which the crisis of the late 2000s clearly had a negative effect on all education spending, including university education.

In comparative terms we can say that Spain has, in 2021, a total expenditure on tertiary education as a percentage of GDP like the OECD and the EU25; Spain's percentage (1.4%) is slightly below the OECD average (1.5%) and slightly above the 1.3% of the EU25 (INEE, 2024). Using the indicator of public expenditure on higher education institutions (which excludes research) as a percentage of GDP, Spain is slightly below the average of neighbouring countries in 2021; this percentage is 0.96% in Spain and 0.99% in the OECD or EU25 average (CyD, 2024). However, if we consider the annual expenditure per university student in 2020, Spain is clearly below both the OECD and EU averages; while in Spain it is PPP-\$16,751, the OECD average is PPP-\$22,096 and the EU average is PPP-\$21,307 (INEE, 2024). If we consider expenditure figures that do not include research and for higher education (not just university education), in 2019 the annual expenditure per student at the higher level of education was 9,796 EUR-PPP in Spain and 10,775 EUR-PPP in the EU27 average (INEE, 2023). So, despite the complexities of comparison, it seems that Spain lags in terms of public expenditure on university education, especially in terms of funding per student.

As mentioned above, university policy in Spain is decentralised and public spending on universities depends mainly on the ACs (Verger and Curran, 2014). The national figures hide important regional differences. Looking at regional public spending on university policy as a percentage of GDP, in 2021 we find differences of almost one percentage point; Andalusia is the region with the highest percentage (1.3% of GDP) and the Balearic Islands the one with the lowest percentage (0.4%). The rest of the regions occupy intermediate positions (CCOO, 2025). If we consider public expenditure per university student, the regions also show many differences, from 5,362 euros in Madrid to 9,689 euros in La Rioja (CCOO, 2024).

An important element of university funding is financial aid to students, in the form of grants or other study aids. University in Spain in the 1960s was not free, although it was highly subsidised for all students. Students had

to pay tuition fees that represented part of the cost of university education. Scholarships and grants were very scarce at that time; in 1969 only 3% of students in higher education received scholarships. In the LGE of 1970 it was stated that scholarships should be increased. In 1977 the percentage of higher education students receiving a study grant was 7.5 per cent. Scholarships were awarded based on the socio-economic status of the student's family and the student's performance; the latter factor was quite important, which meant that many students from low socio-economic backgrounds were not eligible for scholarships. The amount of scholarships was low. The percentage of public expenditure on university scholarships was 0.01% of GDP in 1982 (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2003).

In the democratic period, scholarships and grants were extended to university students. In the academic year 2022-2023, 24.6% of students enrolled in bachelor's degrees and 14.09% of those enrolled in master's degrees receive a general grant from the General State Administration (AGE) or from the Basque Country, which is the only community responsible for this type of grant. This is an increase compared to the 7.5% of higher education students who had scholarships in 1977. In addition, there are regional and university scholarships (SIIU, 2024). Considering all grants, scholarships and subsidies into account, it is estimated that 40 per cent of tertiary students receive some support (INEE, 2024). Also, public expenditure on university scholarships and grants rose from 0.01% of GDP in 1982 to 0.1% in 2021 (CRUE, 2024).

Comparing the average amount of grants from the 1970s to the present day is a complicated exercise. In general, we can say that the average amount of grants has increased. During the democratic period the scholarship system was changed. From the beginning of the 1980s, specifically in 1983, a regulation on scholarships was approved which gave priority to scholarships in post-compulsory education, especially at the higher level, and which introduced compensatory scholarships, which were given exclusively for the socio-economic situation of the student's family and which tried to compensate for the opportunity cost (lost income) of studying at university for these households with such a precarious economy (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2023). Both the budget and the regulation on grants have been subject to various

adjustments and modifications. Mobility grants, to study at a university in a territory other than that of residence, have been progressively increased. The scholarship budget suffered, like all other education items, after the crisis at the end of the 2000s. At the beginning of the next decade, in 2012, there was a change in scholarship policy, as the academic requirements for obtaining and maintaining scholarships were tightened⁵. Subsequently, these academic requirements have been relaxed. The balance, therefore, despite the ups and downs, is positive in democracy: the percentage of students receiving scholarships has increased, public funding for scholarships and grants has increased, and different types of more generous scholarships have been extended.

However, despite the increase in public spending on scholarships and grants for university studies in Spain, in comparative terms our country lags the average for European countries. The percentage of public expenditure on study aids, which includes grants and loans, is 0.21% of GDP in the EU27 in 2021, compared to 0.1% in Spain (CRUE, 2024). Other types of comparative indicators are difficult to interpret because they depend on tuition fee policy and grant policy design, which differ greatly between countries.

Discussion and proposals for university policy

This article has reviewed the changes that the Spanish university has undergone in the democratic period. Some dimensions of university policy have been analysed, those that are considered to have the greatest impact on students' access to and graduation from university. Leaving aside other important dimensions is the main limitation of this article. Analysing the impact of 50 years of democracy on dimensions not explored in this text is a task that should be addressed in a future publication.

⁵ University fee policy also changed. Not only because of the overall increase in fees, but additionally because the price of the subjects was made dependent on the call for examinations; the price of the successive calls for examinations was increasing.

Table I below shows a selection of the indicators presented throughout the article, in the three dimensions analysed (extension, organisation and funding). It gives an account of the (fairly positive) balance of the changes that have taken place in the Spanish university over half a century.

TABLE I. Balance of changes in the Spanish university over 50 years of democracy

Indicators ^a	Beginning of democracy ^b	Half a century later ^c
<i>Extension of university education</i>		
Nº of students	324,036	1,762,459
Enrolment rate	12.66%	30.4%
% of students in private universities	3%	25.7%
<i>Organisation of university studies</i>		
Degrees structure	Diploma (3 years) Bachelor's degree (5-6 years)	Bachelor's degree (4-5 years) Master's degree (1-2 years)
Number of degrees	2,669 ^d	3,322 bachelor's degrees 4,049 master's degrees
University entrance system	Selectivity (weighs 50%)	PAU (weighs 40%)
Second chances	Access for over 25s UNED	Access from FPGS Access to more groups Validation of work experience
<i>University funding</i>		
Total expenditure as % of GDP	0.6%	1.4%
Total annual expenditure per student (\$-PPP)	2,131	16,751
% of students with scholarships	7,5%	24.6% undergraduate 14.09% master's degree 40% some aid
Public expenditure on scholarships as % of GDP	0.01%	0.1%

Source: **Own elaboration** based on multiple sources cited in the text.

Notes: ^aGiven the complexity of comparing the same indicators, it has been decided to compare the most similar ones. Technical details are given in the text.

^bData range from 1970 to 1985, depending on the availability of each indicator.

^cData refer to the latest available data, between 2020 and 2025.

^dData refers to the 2007-2008 academic year, before the implementation of the LOMLOU.

Without going into the technical complications of studies on the evolution of equality of educational opportunities over time (Fernández-Mellizo, 2014), we can point out that, in general, the previous changes that took place in the democratic period may reduce the impact of socio-economic origin on access and progression at university. The increase in the number of universities and public places, their more balanced distribution throughout the country, the shortening of degree courses (at the bachelor's level), the increase in second chances of access to university, greater university funding, as well as the increase in scholarships and study grants (especially those linked to socio-economic status), are changes that in principle increase the opportunities for socio-economically vulnerable groups at university (Fernández Mellizo-Soto, 2003).

However, Table I also shows some indicators whose evolution invites reflection. The proportion of students in private universities has increased significantly in relation to the total number of students studying at university. The irruption of the private sector into the university system raises doubts about both quality and equal opportunities, given the high prices of their studies. The lengthening of degree courses (from diplomas to bachelor's level) and the consolidation of university master's degrees, which are more expensive than bachelor's degrees, creates a new economic barrier; it should be borne in mind that some master's degrees are compulsory for the practice of a profession. The increase and diversification of university degrees, if excessive, may not only be dysfunctional for the labour market, but also reinforce the socio-economic stratification of the different studies. The university entrance exam is now less important for university access, which may reinforce the bad practices of some centres (especially private ones) that inflate baccalaureate grades, to the detriment of the rest of the students. Due to the lack of public supply of places in some areas, the system for assigning students to different studies is very strained. There are significant regional differences in university funding. The system of scholarships and study grants has incorporated academic performance criteria, both in their award and in their maintenance, which distances it from the intended equality of opportunities. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds who lose their scholarships due to a setback find themselves with increasingly expensive

fees from the second year onwards, which makes it very difficult for them to continue studying.

As a result of the above reflection and of the international comparison made throughout the article for the various indicators, a series of aspects emerge in which Spain has room for improvement. In this respect, several challenges for the future have been identified, in response to which some proposals for university policy are suggested. Firstly, the public university sector should be strengthened by increasing the number of places offered, especially at master's level. The private university sector, especially in the distance or blended mode, should also be monitored to ensure that it offers university education of sufficient quality. Although it is the regional governments that have the leading role in this matter, the central government should try to balance the situation in the different ACs.

Secondly, the very wide range of degree courses on offer requires some reflection, especially double (or triple) degree courses; not only demand but also academic coherence and the employability of graduates, among other elements, should be assessed. Thirdly, public places on certain degrees should be increased to meet the demand and so that the grade for admission is not subject to so much upward pressure. Fourthly, it would be more appropriate to return to a system in which the baccalaureate mark does not weigh more than the standardised test, since the former is more susceptible to being altered by schools. In any case, it would be advisable to implement a system for weighting each school's baccalaureate marks to bring them into line with reality.

Finally, public funding per university student should be increased, especially in some ACs. As for scholarships and study grants, a greater budgetary rise is also needed, as well as a boost to compensatory scholarships for the most vulnerable students. It is necessary to relax the criteria of academic performance in their award and maintenance, so that they fulfil their function of ensuring equal educational opportunities.

We can say, therefore, that the history of the evolution of the university during democracy is a success story, at least in terms of the dimensions studied here. This is not to say that there is no room for improvement in some respects, nor that the Spanish university is not subject to different pressures

that could lead to a reversal. We must be very vigilant to ensure that there are no setbacks in university policy and that progress continues to be made.

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The construction of a decentralized education system

La construcción de un sistema educativo descentralizado

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Abstract

The work presents the process followed in the construction of a decentralized educational system in Spain from the approval of the 1978 Constitution to the present day. Before delving into the details of this evolution, it mentions the antecedent of the Spanish Second Republic, due to the similarity and influence that the 1931 Constitution model exerted on the 1978 Constitution in this regard. Next, it analyzes the constitutional distribution of competencies in the field of education, which has served as the basis for the development of the subsequent process. Special attention is paid to the two fundamental stages of educational transfers, those of 1978-1994 and 1994-2000, during which, over two decades, the current decentralized model was shaped. Finally, it examines the situation of this model and some features of its evolution from the end of the transfer process to the present, presenting it as an established model, although not without tensions.

Key words: educational decentralization, educational competencies, delegation of powers, Autonomous communities, regional cooperation, Spanish Constitution of 1978, Statutes of autonomy

Resumen

El trabajo presenta el proceso que ha seguido la construcción de un sistema educativo descentralizado en España desde la aprobación de la Constitución de 1978 hasta la actualidad. Antes de descender al detalle de dicha evolución, se menciona el antecedente que supuso la Segunda República española, por la similitud y la influencia que ejerció en este sentido el modelo de la Constitución de 1931 en la de 1978. A continuación, se analiza el

reparto constitucional de las competencias en materia de educación, que ha servido de base para el desarrollo del proceso vivido con posterioridad. Se presta una atención especial a las dos etapas fundamentales de transferencias educativas, las de 1978-1994 y 1994-2000 en las que, a lo largo de dos décadas, se fue configurando el vigente modelo descentralizado. Por último, se analiza la situación de dicho modelo y algunos rasgos de su evolución desde la finalización del proceso de transferencias hasta la actualidad, presentándolo como un modelo asentado, aunque no exento de tensiones.

Palabras clave: descentralización educativa, competencias en educación, transferencia de competencias, comunidades autónomas, cooperación territorial, Constitución española de 1978, Estatutos de autonomía

Some preliminary remarks on a complex issue

As Manuel de Puelles rightly states, “there is possibly no administrative problem that has been the subject of more controversy than that of decentralisation”¹ (Puelles, 1994, p. 13). There is no doubt that it is a complex phenomenon, starting with the polysemy of the term that designates it. Indeed, although at first sight the contrast between centralisation and decentralisation may seem clear, depending on the place in an administration or organisation where decision-making power is concentrated, the reality is rather more complicated.

On the one hand, and speaking of public administrations, a proper distinction must be made between decentralisation and deconcentration. While the former involves the transfer of competences to other different public entities, the latter refers to the delegation of functions within the same entity, and both the transfer and the delegation may be territorial or functional. For example, the transfer of competences from the State to the Autonomous Communities constitutes genuine decentralisation, which includes legislative, regulatory and executive powers, while the territorial organisation of certain public services by means of provincial directorates or local delegations constitutes deconcentration. And although both cases are transfers of services,

¹ Quotes in Spanish have been translated into English specifically for this version. The Spanish version of this article keeps the original quotes in Spanish.

their scope and rank are obviously greater in the first case than in the second.

On the other hand, given that in the case of decentralisation we are talking about the transfer of competences to other different entities, we must distinguish which ones we are referring to specifically. A first area of transfer of competences is that relating to the level which in Spain we call autonomous and which in other countries may be called by a different name, although they are always intermediate territorial entities, of a regional nature, with one configuration or another. A second area is that of local authorities, which may also be the recipients of the transfer of services. For example, in several countries (such as the United Kingdom or the United States), local authorities of this type play an important role in the organisation and provision of education services. A third area of possible transfer of competences is that of the institutions providing the service themselves, such as schools or universities, which are not always in the same situation in terms of the competences attributed to them (the level of transfer of responsibilities to the latter is generally higher).

Decentralisation can therefore take various forms. There are countries such as France or Portugal, with a high degree of state centralisation, but with a wide margin of school autonomy, and others such as Spain or Switzerland, with a high degree of decentralisation to the autonomous communities or cantons, but with limited school autonomy. In general terms, there is a plurality of situations in terms of educational decentralisation, which led Manuel de Puelles, in a now classic study, to distinguish several models of organisation of educational systems: centralised, intermediate decentralisation, federal decentralisation, federal and communal decentralisation, and communal and academic decentralisation (Puelles, 1994).

As we shall see in more detail in the following pages, the Spanish case is characterised by a wide decentralisation in education towards the Autonomous Communities, very restricted towards the local entities and limited towards the educational institutions (much wider towards the universities than towards the schools and centres of other educational levels). Furthermore, it should be stressed that the choice between centralised or decentralised organisation of education is a response to a plurality of factors, among which the historical tradition and forms of political organisation stand out, which serve as a substratum and foundation for one or other model (which are never pure but adapted to national idiosyncrasies). Moreover, it must be borne in mind that existing models are not static, but dynamic, and

change over time. In this dynamic of change, tensions between centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, which are also changing, play a major role. And to complete this complex picture, decentralisation is never an abstract question, something that is chosen by weighing up the pros and cons beforehand but is fundamentally a political choice made at a particular moment in time and for particular motivations.

Thus, after having presented this complex panorama, we can move on to an analysis of the process of educational decentralisation in Spain over the last half century. As we shall see, the transfer of powers to the Autonomous Communities occupies a prominent place in this process, but it is not the only one, so some mention, however brief and specific, will have to be made of the other dimensions mentioned.

The frustrated antecedent of the Second Republic

As is well known, Spain has had a long history of regional conflicts. The persistent (albeit often minority) demands for political decentralisation were even reflected in the establishment (albeit ephemeral) of the federal republic in 1873 and 1874. Focusing our attention on more recent times, the influence exerted by the Second Republic, whose 1931 Constitution served as inspiration for the 1978 Constitution, is particularly noteworthy.

José Luis de la Granja deals very accurately with the question when he states that “the Monarchy of Alfonso XIII was incapable of solving regional problems by means of political autonomy [...] since this question [...] could only be solved within the framework of a democratic regime, as was the Second Spanish Republic” (Granja Sainz, 2022, pp. 371-372). The path adopted to solve the historical problem of the regions and nationalities was that of autonomy, as a result of a political agreement between the Catalanist and Republican forces, which took shape in the Pact of San Sebastián (1930), and which would later be generally recognised in the 1931 Constitution. Moreover, on 21 April 1931, just a week after the proclamation of the Republic, the old institution of the Generalitat was restored as a pre-autonomous body, which began the drafting and processing of the Statute of Catalonia, finally approved by the Cortes in 1932. The situation was very different in the Basque Country, due to the division and polarisation between its political forces, with a strong

Catholic and conservative presence. Although the 1931 Constitution opened the general way for the drafting and approval of the statutes of autonomy of the various regions, the Basque Country's statute only reached the Cortes in July 1936, when the Galician draft was also submitted to the Cortes after having been the subject of a popular plebiscite². Those statutes that were then just getting under way for Andalusia, Aragon, Valencia and Castile came to nothing. If this process, which was interrupted by the military coup d'état, had continued, we could have come closer to the model that almost half a century later would have been outlined in the 1978 Constitution.

Some of the debates generated by the territorial question in the Republican period had to do with the model of State that was defended from different points of the parliamentary spectrum, opposing autonomy and federalism. As José Luis de la Granja states, “after the religious problem [...] the question of the form of the State and its territorial organisation was the most difficult one in the constitutional debate of 1931” (Granja Sainz, 2022, p. 377).

The solution that was found to resolve that controversy consisted of seeking an intermediate and novel path between the unitary State and the federal State, which was given the name of “integral State”, according to the formulation included in Article 1 of the 1931 Constitution: “The Republic constitutes an integral State, compatible with the autonomy of the Municipalities and Regions”. This concept of a “regionalisable” integral State was the result of a compromise between the Republican-Socialist majority and the Catalan minority, and was harshly criticised by the less autonomist sectors, as well as by such distinguished deputies as José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno. In fact, as José Luis de la Granja assumes, “if there had not been the urgency of finding a solution to the Catalan question, which had been raised since 14 April 1931, it is possible that the Second Republic would have been unitary. [...] the integral state was much closer to the unitary than to the federal” (Granja Sainz, 2022, p. 381).

The debate on the territorial question was immediately reflected in the discussion of the articles on education, where other issues such as secular education or the unified school also occupied several parliamentary sessions (Tiana Ferrer, 2022). In this specific area, the discussion focused mainly on

² The three Autonomous Communities that had plebiscized statutes before 18 July 1936 were considered “historical” for the purposes of the decentralisation process promoted in the 1978 Constitution.

two complementary aspects: state or regional responsibility for education and the use of Castilian and regional languages in education. As can be seen, these are two issues that have generated recent debates and that occupied their own place in the constitutional text of 1978, to which I will refer later.

The fact that article 46 of the constitutional project (later number 48 in the final text) began by stating that “the service of culture is an essential attribution of the State” gave rise to some positions which inferred from this formulation that it was an “indeclinable” function, which could not be delegated to the autonomous regions. Consequently, there should be a duplication of educational establishments in these regions, some dependent on the State government and others on the regional authorities. This principle would be particularly applicable in the university field, with many of the debates focusing on the place of the University of Barcelona in the new situation. Against this position, the Constitutional Commission, through Fernando Valera, replied that the fact that education was an essential function of the State did not imply “that it could not share the exercise of this function with other private and public bodies and entities that could collaborate with the State” (DSCCRE, nº 59, 20 October 1931, p. 1811), since the autonomous regions were also part of the State.

The other issue debated concerned the languages of instruction. The advocates of a centralised system proposed making education in Castilian compulsory and obliging the State to maintain the educational establishments it had in regions with another language. Other, more conciliatory Members of Parliament called for the autonomous regions to provide education in Castilian to those pupils who so requested, without there being any duplication of schools. With the aim of intervening in this discussion, Claudio Sánchez Albornoz defended an amendment presented by several Castilian and Catalan deputies proposing to combine teaching in regional languages with the study of the Castilian language and its use as a teaching tool in all educational establishments, as they considered that “only by granting the maximum freedoms and the maximum respect for regional languages can we all feel at ease within this State that we are building together” (DSCCRE, no. 61, 22 October 1931, p. 1887), which would be accepted by the Constitutional Commission and incorporated into its opinion.

As can be seen, some of the issues that have survived to the present day concerning the decentralisation of education were already raised in the

republican period. It was then that the first steps were taken to organise an education system with a certain degree of decentralisation, which could well have opened a path that would have led us more quickly and peacefully to our recent times. But the coup d'état of 18 July 1936, the war that resulted from its initial failure and Franco's harsh repression left that project as a precedent, interesting, of course, but ultimately frustrated.

The distribution of educational competences in the 1978 Constitution

After the political setback of Franco's regime in terms of the decentralised organisation of the State, the period of the Transition saw a rapid recovery of territorial demands, of different signs and intensity. In both Catalonia and the Basque Country, nationalist, autonomist and pro-independence political groups regained presence and strength, as did Galicia, Andalusia and even the Canary Islands, albeit with less intensity. Consequently, the territorial question occupied a prominent place in the process of drafting the new constitutional text, and even decentralisation came before the approval of the Constitution, with the constitution of several pre-autonomies in 1977 and 1978. Although it is not the purpose of these pages to analyse the way in which this process developed, it should be remembered that Title VIII (Territorial Organisation of the State) of the 1978 Constitution had a rather open, unfinished wording, which drew a picture of a State that some historians have also called "regionalisable" (which connected with the experience of the Second Republic), with many questions still to be specified in subsequent decisions and regulations.

The 1978 Constitution laid the foundations for the distribution of competences in various areas, including education. Articles 148 and 149 set the limits of this distribution by establishing the competences that could be assumed by the Autonomous Communities and those that correspond exclusively to the State. With regard to the former, it should be pointed out that education does not appear among those set out in Article 148. The

only competence that bears any relation to education is “the promotion of culture, research and, where appropriate, the teaching of the language of the Autonomous Community” (CE, Art. 148.1.17). However, Article 149 establishes that “matters not expressly attributed to the State by this Constitution may correspond to the Autonomous Communities, by virtue of their respective Statutes”, while affirming that “competence over matters which have not been assumed by the Statutes of Autonomy shall correspond to the State, whose regulations shall prevail, in the event of conflict, over those of the Autonomous Communities in all matters which are not attributed to the exclusive competence of the latter” (CE, Art. 149.3).

For its part, Article 149, among the exclusive competences of the State, includes a generic one, consisting of “the regulation of the basic conditions that guarantee the equality of all Spaniards in the exercise of their rights and in the fulfilment of their constitutional duties” (CE, Art. 149.1.1), and another specific one on education, consisting of the “regulation of the conditions for obtaining, issuing and homologation of academic and professional qualifications and basic rules for the development of Article 27 of the Constitution, in order to guarantee compliance with the obligations of the public authorities in this area” (CE, Art. 149.1.30). In addition, the State is also attributed the determination of the bases of the statutory regime of civil servants, which affects teaching civil servants (CE, Art. 149.1.19) and statistics for State purposes, which includes those relating to education (CE, Art. 149.1.31). This is the general framework from which the new distribution of competences in education was developed.

Given this wide margin of uncertainty regarding the attribution and distribution of educational competences and bearing in mind that those not attributed to the Autonomous Communities correspond to the State, it should not be surprising that the drafting of the Statutes of Autonomy, starting with the first to be processed (those of the Basque Country and Catalonia), involved intense negotiation. As a result, a compromise was reached, which seems reasonable, between the central power’s claim to extend its sphere of action as far as possible and the desire of the autonomous administrations to exercise the broadest possible powers in the field of education. The formula that would finally be incorporated in almost all the Statutes, and not only in the first ones approved, consisted in attributing to the Autonomous Communities the regulation and administration of education in all its extension, levels and grades, modalities and specialities, without prejudice to the provisions

of Article 27 of the Constitution and the organic laws that develop it, as well as the powers attributed to the State by Article 149.1.30, and the high inspectorate necessary for its fulfilment and guarantee (Embid Irujo, 1999, p. 34). With slight nuances, this is the formula that appeared in the first Statutes of Autonomy and was replicated in subsequent ones, and which demarcates the respective competences of the State and the Autonomous Communities.

After 1978, the Organic Law regulating the Right to Education (LODE, 1985) attributed to the State the following competences in the field of education: a) the general organisation of the education system; b) the general programming of education in the terms established in the law itself; c) the establishment of minimum curricula (“enseñanzas mínimas”) and the regulation of the conditions for obtaining, issuing and homologation of academic and professional qualifications with state validity; d) high inspectorate and other powers to ensure compliance with the obligations of the public authorities (LODE, first additional provision, point 2)³. As various constitutionalists have stressed, some of the competences attributed exclusively to the State do not entail an unlimited capacity for regulation and management but are limited to the approval of basic regulations which must subsequently be developed and implemented by the regional administrations. It can therefore be said that these are to a large extent concurrent or shared competences, since they are not exercised by the State or by the Autonomous Communities to the full extent.

Thus, the provisions included in the 1978 Constitution, in the various Statutes of Autonomy and in the LODE defined the Spanish model for the distribution of competences in the field of education. It is a model that is still basically in force, based on a redistribution of the territorial structure of the State and a constitutionally based political decentralisation.

³ This provision had previously appeared, albeit in a narrower formulation, in the Organic Law regulating the Statute of Schools (LOECE, 1980). It was subsequently repealed from the LODE and incorporated into the Organic Law on Education (LOE, 2006) as Article 6 bis by the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE, 2013) and subsequently reworded by the Organic Law amending the Organic Law on Education (LOMLOE, 2020).

The first period of education transfers (1978-1994)

Between 1979 and 1983, the Statutes of Autonomy were approved for all the Autonomous Communities, although not all of them received education transfers during this period, but only the seven mentioned below. The first to receive them were the Basque Country and Catalonia. These two, as well as the others that were to follow the “fast track” (CE, art. 151), i.e. Galicia and finally Andalusia after their referendum on autonomy, had a broad initial autonomy and could aspire to higher levels of self-government and more quickly. They immediately began the transfer of their educational competences, the beginnings of which the then Minister José Antonio Ortega Díaz-Ambrona recounts with grace (Ortega Díaz-Ambrona, 2020, pp. 264 ff.). And this was also the case of the Canary Islands and the Valencian Community, two communities with simple initial autonomy that should have followed the “slow path” (CE, art. 143) and received fewer competences, but for which organic laws were passed in 1983, as provided for in article 150.2 CE, which allowed them to reach a similar situation to the previous ones. Navarre approved its Statute of Autonomy applying the provisions of the 1st additional provision of the CE for the foral regime and received its competences in 1990.

The beginning of the transfer process generated some competence disputes that on several occasions reached the Constitutional Court. The rulings of this high body were decisive in adjusting the initial distribution of competences, especially in those areas where there was a lack of definition or potential overlapping. Without attempting a systematic study, which can be found in the work of some authors (Gámez Mejías, 2010, pp. 179-192), it is worth mentioning that some rulings contributed decisively to establishing the constitutional doctrine on the distribution of competences in the field of education. For example, an early judgment determined that there are some state competences that are indeclinable, but others that are transferable (STC 6/1982, 22 February). The former are “the basic conditions that guarantee the equality of Spaniards in the exercise of rights and the fulfilment of constitutional duties [...] as well as the specific one that concerns the conditions for obtaining, issuing and validation of qualifications”, which does not prevent “the normative competence for the development of Article 27, also within the framework of basic State legislation, can be transferred to the autonomous powers” (legal basis 2). From this derives the possibility of

transferring to the Autonomous Communities the complete management and execution in the field of education (as was done in practice). That ruling and a subsequent one clearly established that most state powers are of a regulatory nature, not executive or management (STC 6/1982, 22 February, STC 48/1985, 28 March), with only the basic rules for the development of Art. 27 CE “being those that mark the insurmountable limit for the autonomous provisions” (STC 137/1986, 6 November). This means, in fact, a very broad freedom of organisation for the autonomous communities in matters of education. And we can also cite a series of rulings that considered the State’s competence in matters of academic qualifications and diplomas to be indisputable, which applies unequivocally to “qualified professions”, i.e. those whose exercise requires a specific qualification (STC 42/1981, 22 December), although “not all work activities, trades or professions in the broadest sense are or constitute qualified professions” (STC 82/1986), and the decision as to whether or not a profession is qualified is a matter for the State legislator (STC 83/1984).

Following these rulings and some others of the same tenor, the question of the distribution of responsibilities in the field of education was considerably clarified. As Manuel Gámez summarises the situation: “In short, the role of the state administrative organisation is reduced to the drafting of basic regulations, the recognition and validation of academic qualifications and high inspectorate” (Gámez Mejías, 2010, p. 203).

In this first period of transfers, the first mechanisms of coordination and territorial cooperation were also articulated and implemented. These mechanisms quickly became necessary, given that the new organisation should combine the equality of all citizens in the full exercise of the right to education, regardless of their place of residence, with the existence of two successive levels of political decision-making.

A first mechanism consists of the High State Inspectorate, which was already mentioned in the first Statutes of Autonomy, as we have seen. Although the existence of a common basic regulation constitutes a fundamental element of coordination of State education policy, it could be insufficient if there were no mechanism capable of ensuring compliance with it. This, and no other, is the purpose of the High Inspectorate. In the first regulation of its functioning (Royal Decree 480/1981), which was appealed by the Basque Country, the Constitutional Court ruled affirming the constitutionality of this new figure (STC 6/1982, 22 February), which from then on found its proper

place among the mechanisms of coordination and territorial cooperation. However, it should be remembered that Royal Decree 480/1981 did not grant the High Inspectorate any capacity for initiative or resolution proposals that would allow it to effectively monitor compliance with State competences in educational matters by regional legislation, and the figure of High Inspector was not attributed the appropriate rank to be able to assume this responsibility for effective monitoring. The result has been that, in practice, the only function of the High Inspectorate consists of analysing the educational regulations developed by the Autonomous Communities and, consequently, its work is reduced to alerting the Ministry to any alleged breach of the distribution of competences between the State and the Autonomous Communities.

It should also be pointed out that the High Inspectorate is an often-misunderstood body, given its name, which is so close to the traditional educational inspection services, which supervise aspects such as the functioning of schools, teaching practice or the management function, and which are the responsibility of the Autonomous Community authorities. As stated in the current education regulations, the aim of the high inspectorate is to “guarantee compliance with the powers attributed to [the State] in matters of education and the observance of the applicable constitutional principles and rules and other basic rules which develop Article 27 of the Constitution” (LOE, Art. 149). Among its functions are those of verifying compliance with the requirements established by the State in the general organisation of the education system, compliance with the conditions for obtaining qualifications and diplomas and the inclusion of minimum common curricula (“enseñanzas mínimas”) in the regional ones, as well as ensuring compliance with the basic conditions that guarantee the equality of all Spaniards in the exercise of their rights and duties in the field of education and verifying the adequacy of the granting of subsidies and scholarships to State criteria (LOE, art. 150.1). The High Inspectorate is reserved for the control of compliance with state regulations, but it does not function as a kind of supraregional educational inspectorate, in the style of the former Central Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science. Although there may be calls for its direct intervention in schools, it does not have the competence to carry out such a task. An important part of its work consists of analysing the educational regulations developed by the Autonomous Communities in order to ensure that they are in line with basic state regulations, and to provide the means

to demand compliance when non-compliance is observed. In addition, the High Inspectorate services carry out the functions of representing the State's educational interests in their respective territories.

A second element of coordination that was also implemented in this first period of transfers was the Sectoral Conference on Education, which brings together the heads of the Ministry and the regional ministries responsible for this area in the Government and in the various Autonomous Communities. It is a body that exists in all sectoral areas and which, over time, has become the main forum for deliberation and coordination of education policies.

The functioning of the Sectoral Conference on Education was already established in the LODE, with the aim of debating the general programming of education and prior to the deliberation to be carried out by the State School Council on this issue. It also provided, in fairly general terms, that "the Conference shall meet as often as necessary to ensure the coordination of educational policy and the exchange of information" (LODE, art. 28). Subsequently, these initial, very generic provisions have been extended and refined to form the complex body with multiple tasks that it is today. As an example of this broadening of tasks, suffice it to point out that the LOE provides that "the reference in the articles of this Law to prior consultation with the Autonomous Communities is understood to be made within the Sectoral Conference" (LOE, 18th additional provision), making it in fact the fundamental forum for inter-territorial consultation and debate.

The Sectoral Conference on Education has gradually developed an operational structure that enables it to deal in depth and in detail with the issues that fall within its remit or that are submitted to it. Thus, it has several committees: the General Education Commission, which brings together the Deputy Ministers of Education or equivalent positions and acts in practice as a permanent forum for debate and cooperation between the Ministry and the Autonomous Communities; and other committees, dedicated to issues such as personnel and human resources, academic organisation, vocational training, European educational programmes or educational statistics, which bring together the ministerial and Autonomous Community heads in each of these fields. The regular functioning of these commissions has been very beneficial for the development of the education system. Perhaps the only drawback is that their functioning, regularity and dynamics depend to a large extent on the willingness to coordinate expressed by the Ministry of Education itself, which

is the secretariat of the body.

The second period of transfers in education (1994-2000)

The transfer of competences for education to the remaining ten Communities had to wait a few more years. This was influenced by the process of educational reform taking place in Spain, which began with the publication in 1987 of the *Proyecto para la reforma de la enseñanza* (MEC, 1987) and ended in 1990 with the approval of the Ley orgánica para la Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE, 1990). Once the timetable for the implementation of the new law was approved in 1991, the process was resumed.

The political circumstances were favourable to accelerate the transfers from then on, since in 1992 the PSOE (socialist party) and the PP (conservative party) signed autonomous pacts aimed at raising the level of competences of the autonomous regions in the slow lane. That same year, Organic Law 9/1992 was passed on the transfer of competences regulated in Article 150.2 CE, and on 24 March 1994 a set of organic laws were passed to reform the Statutes of Autonomy of the “slow track” autonomous communities. Following this operation, the decentralisation process, which had been at a standstill for almost a decade, was once again given impetus.

The main consequence of the Autonomy Pacts of 1994 was the end of the existence of two types of autonomous communities in terms of the extent of their competences in education. From that moment on, the differences between the first seven and the remaining ten disappeared, which was a very significant turning point in the decentralisation process. The influence of the 1996 elections and the constitution of a PP government without an absolute majority made it easier to maintain the pace of the transfer process, which was completed in 2000. From this point onwards, all the Autonomous Communities had broad and fairly similar competences in the field of education, a situation which is still in force today. In total, as can be seen, the process of decentralisation was spread over two decades, so it can be said that it was not rushed.

There were also some conflicts of competence during this period that

ultimately reached the Constitutional Court. One of the most notorious and complex, which has yet to be applied in practice, was the one concerning study grants and aids, whose ruling, as relevant as it was complicated (as it had three dissenting votes), established that there is a clear difference between the basic regulation of this type of service, which is the competence of the State and includes elements such as the amounts and requirements, and the management of such services, which is the responsibility of the regional administrations (STC 188/2001, 20 September). As Manuel Gámez points out, “the reference to the principles of cooperation between administrations in the Judgment is legally unimpeachable, but very complicated to put into practice, which has made its implementation extremely difficult” (Gámez Mejías, 2010, p. 190). This judgement serves as an example of the complexity and difficulty of articulating in practice some of the fundamental principles of the decentralisation system, even though they are inalienable. It is also a good example of the evolution of the dialectic between centralisation and decentralisation over time.

In this second period, a third instrument for coordination and territorial cooperation was put in place, consisting of the adoption of a system of general evaluation of the education system. This was a novel mechanism for the time, similar to that of other nearby countries and to the model for establishing indicators and reference levels that the European Union would adopt from the beginning of the 21st century onwards. Although there had been some previous national evaluations, such as the one promoted by the Centre for Educational Research and Documentation (CIDE) of the Ministry of Education and Science on the Experimental Reform of Secondary Education, and participation in international studies, such as the International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP), the implementation of the new evaluation system was carried out by the National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (INCE), created by the LOGSE and which began its work in 1993 (Tiana Ferrer, 1995). The INCE had, among other governing and working bodies, a Governing Council on which the seven Autonomous Communities that had received the transfer of competences in education at that time were represented. INCE’s work would later be continued by its successors, the National Institute for the Evaluation and Quality of the Education System (INECSE), the Evaluation Institute (IE) and the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE), although its trajectory and work programme have fluctuated in terms

of orientation and intensity, making it difficult to achieve its ultimate objective (Tiana Ferrer, 2014). In the period following the completion of the education transfer process, a fourth coordination instrument was adopted, the so-called territorial cooperation programmes, which will be referred to in the following section.

A well-established model although not free of tensions

After the completion of the transfer process in the year 2000, we can consider the model of distribution of competences designed in the 1978 Constitution to be established⁴. Since then, there have been 17 Autonomous Communities that are in full use of their competences in the field of education, which, as we have seen, are quite wide-ranging. Despite this decentralised organisation, the generalisation of which has taken place over two decades, it is a mistake to speak of seventeen different education systems. As Antonio Embid states, “despite the profound competences of the Autonomous Communities in matters of education, those of the State are by no means forgotten [...] and there are [...] possibilities of State intervention which [...] are by no means negligible in our legal system. There are not and cannot be, therefore, seventeen autonomous education systems but a single national education system, which has obvious legal consequences from the point of view of State intervention and its forms” (Embido Irujo, 1999, p. 41). Therefore, we should rather speak of a single education system (given that it has the same structure throughout the Spanish territory stages, minimum common curricula, common basic regulations and state coordination bodies), although with different autonomous specifications.

And speaking of autonomous specifications, reference should be made to the period of approval of autonomous education laws that would open up after the approval of the LOE in 2006. Indeed, this legislative milestone served as an incentive for the drafting of regional laws aimed at organising the education system in various autonomous communities, within the framework set by state regulations. Previously, the Autonomous Communities had passed laws regulating their school councils, and some of them had also passed laws on other matters, such as public schools (Basque Country), adult education

⁴ For a full list of the regulations and dates on which education transfers took place, see Bonal, Rambla, Calderón and Pros (2005, p. 45).

(Galicia, Valencian Community, Balearic Islands, Aragon and Castile and Leon) and artistic education (Aragon). However, from 2006 onwards, a process of approval of regional laws began, aimed at regulating the whole of the education system in their territory. Andalusia was a pioneer in this process, passing its education law in 2007. It was followed by Cantabria in 2008, Catalonia in 2009, Castilla-La Mancha in 2010, Extremadura in 2011, the Canary Islands in 2014, the Balearic Islands in 2022 and the Basque Country in 2023. In addition to these comprehensive laws, other regional laws have been passed which regulate partial aspects, but which are of less interest than the previous ones, although some of them, such as the so-called Madrid Master Law of 2022, have been the subject of strong political controversy. The drafting of some of these regulations has been related to the new wave of reform of the Statutes of Autonomy that we have been experiencing in recent years. A good part of them have been the object of broad consensus, although there has been no lack of controversy in some cases.

At least in passing, it should be pointed out that decentralisation in the field of education has not reached all the administrations or all the agents involved in education in the same way. Thus, while relevant competences have been transferred to the Autonomous Communities, the same cannot be said of the provinces or town councils, nor of the schools themselves. In comparison with other countries, the limited competences of local authorities in education and even more so the limited degree of autonomy of schools are striking, especially considering that this is a factor that all international studies relate to the quality of education (Sancho Gargallo, 2015). Although some have argued that, at this point in the transfer process, it would be time to proceed with a progressive decentralisation of part of the educational competences to local governments (Bas Adam, 2005), the reality is that we are far from achieving this. The experience of the LOE and the LOMLOE allows us to affirm that it is the Autonomous Communities and the nationalist political parties who are most opposed to such decentralisation. As Antonio Viñao considers, the Spanish education system has gone from being centralised to polycentric (Viñao Frago, 1994). Consequently, it can be said that the Spanish education system is indeed decentralised, but mainly in terms of the responsibility that the Autonomous Communities have in its development and management, and not so much in terms of the participation of other administrative levels or at the school level.

As indicated in the previous section, it is worth noting that a new instrument for territorial coordination and cooperation has recently been introduced and is being widely used. These are the so-called territorial cooperation programmes, which began to be developed in 2005 and were included in the LOE: “the State shall promote territorial cooperation programmes with the aim of achieving general educational objectives, reinforcing students’ basic competences, encouraging pupils’ knowledge and appreciation of the cultural and linguistic wealth of the different Autonomous Communities, as well as contributing to inter-territorial solidarity and territorial balance in the compensation of inequalities” (LOE, art. 9.1). The procedure for initiating them is relatively simple: the Ministry of Education designs an initial proposal for an action programme, which is discussed, refined and finally approved by the Sectoral Conference on Education. Participation is voluntary for each Autonomous Community and funding is shared under the terms established. The participation of each Autonomous Community in each programme is set out in an agreement signed with the Ministry of Education and monitored by a joint commission. The important financial report drawn up for the LOE served as the budgetary basis for the development of the first programmes, some of which, such as the Programa de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo (PROA), have continued to exist to the present day, albeit with various modifications and updates. The implementation of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (Next Generation EU), approved by the European Union in 2020 to react to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, has boosted the development of new and important territorial cooperation programmes in the field of education.

On the other hand, in the years that have elapsed in the 21st century, some controversies have been noted in Spain derived from the parallel rise of recentralising positions and the parallel expansion of other more decentralising ones, which propose the extension of autonomous competences in education (Bonal, Rambla, Calderón and Pros, 2005, p.227) or even new configurations of the territorial structure of the State following a federal or confederal type model (Tiana Ferrer, 2016). Among the former, we find demands from political sectors, generally conservative, who consider that the autonomy process has gone too far and would like to correct this course. This controversy has been felt in several areas, two of which are worth highlighting. Firstly, the attribution to the State of the competence to set minimum teaching standards

(including minimum timetables for the different subjects, according to STC 87/1983, 27 October), which had been interpreted as minimum elements that the Autonomous Communities had to incorporate into their own curricula, was reinterpreted. Thus, the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE) of 2002 preferred to speak of “common teachings (enseñanzas communes)” (González Vila, 2004), whose aim would be to “guarantee a common education for all students and the validity of the corresponding qualifications” (LOCE, art. 8.2), a change that had already been advanced in the controversial *Dictamen sobre la enseñanza de las humanidades en la educación secundaria* promoted in 1998 by the Minister Esperanza Aguirre. Further on, the LOMCE would organise a distribution of subjects with some of them, the so-called core subjects, which would have a curriculum set by the central government, while others would be configured by the autonomous regions. In these moves, there was an express desire to recentralise the curriculum, which continues to be present in some political sectors. Secondly, the question of the language used in education has been raised on several occasions, an issue which is linked to the aforementioned debates of the Republican period. From the approval of the LOMCE to that of the LOMLOE, the debate has focused on several occasions on the question of the vehicular language, which has caused rivers of ink to flow, heated speeches and frontal attacks, and which has been the subject of the recent STC 34/2023, of 18 April, on the LOMLOE, which endorses the position held by the LOMLOE, although it continues to be frequently criticised by conservative political sectors.

One last aspect worth mentioning refers to another cliché that is frequently heard about the effect of decentralisation carried out in this long period. There is no shortage of those who consider that the transfers in education have produced a divergence effect in Spanish education, a progressive distancing of the situation from each other. However, the data do not support this impression, however widespread it may be. Indeed, when the indicators included in one of the chapters of this monograph are broken down by autonomous community and their evolution over time between 2000 and 2025 is analysed, it can be seen that the trend towards convergence is stronger than towards divergence. In other words, when the Autonomous Communities have assumed their competences, they have generally strengthened the education system in their territories, which has led to greater equality of

conditions, processes and results⁵.

It is true, however, that there are still notable inequalities between the Autonomous Communities in several respects, especially in terms of educational outcomes. But we should not forget that some of the current territorial differences in the results obtained in PISA correspond to those that existed 150 years ago in literacy or schooling rates (Martínez García, 2018), which obliges us to be cautious in the analysis of this reality and not to make false attributions (such as blaming them simply on the decentralisation of education). In any case, this is an evolution that must be followed closely in order to understand its predominant trends, and it must also be acknowledged that convergence has not been achieved in all aspects, although it has been achieved in most of them. It seems, therefore, that this is good news, even if the political debate tends to obscure its outlines. It is true that behind this debate on the convergence or divergence of education in the Autonomous Communities lies the question of the financing of education in the Spanish decentralised political model, which is associated with notable differences in education spending and investment per student. However, this is an issue that requires a singularised analysis, which goes beyond the limits of this article.

By way of conclusion

As we come to the end of these pages, it must be concluded that the process of decentralisation has occupied a good part of the history of Spanish education in the last quarter of the 20th century. And this reality continues to be current, generating debates and sometimes controversies. This is logical, since it is a process that has been part of a broader and deeper process of transformation of the territorial structure of the State, which is not a minor task. We are well aware that these transformations are dynamic, experience advances and setbacks, provoke discussions and force many situations to be rearranged and many inertias to be broken. Education is no exception to this general rule, as we have seen in these pages. But over and above these complex dynamics, I believe it

⁵ The studies carried out in this respect at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, promoted by Miguel Recio, whose valuable unpublished work entitled *Desigualdad territorial en educación y gestión de las competencias educativas por las CC.AA.* (latest version dated April 2025) I have had the opportunity to consult, confirm this trend of convergence, which contradicts many cliched ideas and not a few prejudices (in the textual sense of the word).

is justified to point out that the Spanish model of educational decentralisation has been applied gradually and cautiously and has finally proved to work quite efficiently, even if it will require further adjustments in the near future. Even if the formal process of decentralisation can be considered completed, its consolidation will require more time and adjustments, which can certainly help to consolidate it. This is a task that lies ahead.

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From Secondary Pathway to Strategic Option: Half a Century of Transformation of Vocational Education and Training in Spain (1975–2025)

De vía secundaria a opción estratégica: medio siglo de transformación de la Formación Profesional en España (1975–2025)

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Abstract

Since the enactment of the General Education Law in 1970 and culminating in the 2022 Vocational Training Act (Organic Law 3/2022), Spain's Vocational Education and Training (VET) system has evolved from a secondary educational pathway into a strategic pillar for the education system and labor market. Over the past fifty years, VET has undergone profound legislative, pedagogical, and structural transformations, in response to growing demands for skilled labor and the need to reduce early school leaving and improve youth employability. This article presents a systematic review of the development of VET in Spain in relation to the broader educational reforms introduced since the democratic transition. It pays special attention to the influence of successful European models (such as Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands) and to the policy recommendations of international organizations including the OECD, UNESCO, and CEDEFOP. The study analyzes major advances—such as the expansion of Dual VET, the modularization of curricula, and the integration of digital training technologies—as well as ongoing challenges like negative social perceptions, territorial disparities, limited business cooperation, and inadequate career guidance. The findings highlight that VET has played a key role in reducing dropout rates and aligning professional qualifications with technological and economic shifts. However, to fully consolidate its role as a high-quality and prestigious educational route, Spain must

adopt a long-term strategy that ensures adequate funding, equitable regional access, enhanced early-stage vocational guidance, and stronger links with the business sector.

Keywords: Vocational Education and Training, Dual VET, school dropout, employability, educational reform, Spanish education system

Resumen

Desde la aprobación de la Ley General de Educación en 1970 hasta la entrada en vigor de la Ley Orgánica 3/2022, la Formación Profesional (FP) en España ha transitado de ser una vía educativa secundaria a consolidarse como una opción estratégica para el sistema educativo y el mercado laboral. Durante estas cinco décadas, la FP ha experimentado importantes transformaciones normativas, metodológicas y estructurales, en respuesta tanto a las exigencias del tejido productivo como a los retos derivados del abandono escolar temprano y de la escasa empleabilidad juvenil. Este artículo ofrece una revisión sistemática de la evolución de la FP en España en el contexto de los cambios educativos impulsados desde la Transición democrática hasta la actualidad, con especial atención a la influencia de los modelos europeos (Alemania, Suiza, Países Bajos) y a las recomendaciones de organismos internacionales como la OCDE, la UNESCO o CEDEFOP. Se analizan los avances más significativos —como la expansión de la FP Dual, la flexibilización curricular y la digitalización de la formación—, así como los desafíos aún presentes: la percepción social desfavorable, la desigual distribución territorial, las dificultades de coordinación con las empresas y la limitada orientación profesional. El estudio pone de manifiesto que la FP no solo ha contribuido a reducir el abandono escolar, sino que también ha permitido mejorar la cualificación de los jóvenes, adaptando los perfiles profesionales a los cambios tecnológicos y económicos. No obstante, para consolidar su función como vía formativa de calidad y prestigio, se requiere una estrategia a largo plazo que incluya una financiación suficiente, políticas de equidad territorial, un refuerzo de la orientación desde etapas tempranas y una mayor implicación del sector empresarial.

Palabras clave: Formación Profesional, FP Dual, abandono escolar, empleabilidad, reforma educativa, sistema educativo español

Introduction

Since the enactment of the General Education Act (Ley General de Educación, LGE) in 1970, the Spanish education system has undergone profound transformations at all levels. The death of Francisco Franco in 1975 and the subsequent democratic transition marked the beginning of a new era of reforms that also impacted Vocational Education and Training (VET), a sector traditionally relegated to a marginal and low-prestige role within the educational structure. Over the past fifty years, VET has shifted from being perceived as a “second-tier track” to becoming a strategic alternative in addressing youth employability, early school leaving, and productive transformation.

Historically, VET was structured around technical training programs that differed significantly from general education. It was characterized by a hierarchical orientation, subordinated to the needs of industrial development, with minimal curricular integration and few mechanisms for upward mobility toward higher education. Although the General Education Act (1970) introduced formal improvements by establishing training levels and an organizational framework, it failed to alter the social perception of VET, which continued to be viewed as a secondary or “second-chance” option for students with lower academic performance (Grande Rodríguez, 2013).

The approval of the 1978 Constitution ushered in a more inclusive and democratic understanding of the right to education, paving the way for a series of structural reforms. Beginning in the 1980s, legislative measures such as the LODE (1985) and, most notably, the LOGSE (1990), aimed to enhance the social and institutional recognition of VET, better integrate it with general education, and facilitate transitions across different levels of the education system. Nevertheless, these reforms were not free of tensions and contradictions, and progress varied depending on the autonomous community, the local business fabric, and changes in government (González & Martínez, 2019).

Since then, VET has been the focus of successive legislative reforms and strategic plans aimed at improving its quality, aligning its offerings with the evolving demands of the labor market, and strengthening its practical

orientation. The recent enactment of Organic Law 3/2022 on the organization and integration of VET constitutes the most ambitious effort to date to consolidate a modern, modular, competence-based system that is closely connected to productive sectors (BOE, 2022; MEFP, 2023a).

The significance of this historical process is particularly evident when examining key indicators. According to Eurostat (2023), Spain has reduced its early school leaving rate from 31.7% in 2008 to 13.9% in 2022, although it still remains above the EU-27 average of 9.6%. Numerous studies have shown that the expansion of VET—especially in its dual modality—has been one of the most influential factors in this improvement (OECD, 2023; CaixaBank Dualiza & Orkestra, 2023).

Simultaneously, the employability of VET graduates has improved significantly over the past two decades, although notable disparities persist between modalities, regions, and sectors. Dual VET, implemented broadly since 2012, has achieved insertion rates above 85%, considerably higher than those of traditional VET programs, according to data from the Vocational Training Observatory (CaixaBank Dualiza & Orkestra, 2023).

This article forms part of the monograph “Educational Transformation: Half a Century after Franco’s Death” and aims to analyze the evolution of Vocational Education and Training in Spain between 1975 and 2025. Through a systematic review of academic literature, institutional reports, and official statistics, this study reconstructs the legislative, curricular, and political trajectory of VET during this period, assessing its achievements, limitations, and future challenges. Ultimately, the article seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of one of the most dynamic and strategic pillars of the Spanish education system...

Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach with the aim of analyzing the legislative, institutional, and social transformations that

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain has undergone from 1975 to 2025. This methodology was chosen for its suitability in synthesizing large volumes of information, identifying historical patterns, and comparing educational policies over time (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2017; Snyder, 2019).

The analysis was organized into four thematic dimensions, which structure the results of the article:

1. Legislative and policy evolution of VET in Spain.
2. Curricular and methodological transformations.
3. International influence and European models.
4. Current diagnosis and future perspectives.

This thematic structure enables the articulation of historical analysis with contemporary and future challenges of VET, providing an integrated and critical perspective on its transformation since the end of the Franco regime

Legislative and Historical Framework of Vocational Education and Training in Spain (1970–2025)

The regulatory development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain has been closely linked to the political and social processes that have shaped the education system over the past five decades. From the General Education Act of 1970 to the current Organic Law on the Organization and Integration of Vocational Education and Training (2022), a series of reforms have progressively transformed VET, both in its structural configuration and in its social and economic function.

VET During Late Francoism and the Democratic Transition

The General Education Act (Ley General de Educación, LGE) of 1970 introduced a formal structure for Vocational Education and Training (VET) within the education system, although it remained separate from the

traditional academic pathway. It established a two-tier VET system—first and second levels—designed to meet labor market needs, with a pronounced division between general and technical education. While the law represented a technical advancement compared to the previous system, VET continued to be perceived as a lower-prestige track, particularly among students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Grande Rodríguez, 2013).

The approval of the Spanish Constitution in 1978 laid the foundations for a more equitable and inclusive structure of the education system, including VET. However, it was not until the mid-1980s that significant changes began to take shape. The LODE (1985) marked a first step toward the consolidation of a democratic education system, recognizing the freedom of teaching and regulating the network of public and publicly funded private schools—provisions that also affected the delivery of VET in diverse settings (González & Martínez, 2019).

Between the approval of the LGE (1970) and the LODE (1985), Vocational Education and Training in Spain underwent significant structural and methodological transformations. The LGE established a VET model divided into two levels—First Level Vocational Training (FPI) and Second Level Vocational Training (FPII)—with curricula that combined general education, basic training, and specialized vocational instruction. However, these remained clearly separated from traditional academic education (Grande Rodríguez, 2013). This structure reflected a technocratic approach focused more on operational skills than on the comprehensive development of students.

Although VET was formally integrated into the education system, there remained a notable disconnect between training provision and the real needs of the labor market (Mena, Fernández-Enguita & Riviere, 2010). Moreover, curricular designs continued to lag behind the most advanced pedagogical approaches, hindering the adaptation of instruction to dynamic contexts and to student diversity. It is noteworthy that, while the Bachillerato and COU (university preparation course) focused exclusively on general education, VET combined general, basic, and specific content, thereby reinforcing its distinct identity within the system.

These factors help explain why the reforms introduced later with the

LOGSE would mark a turning point in the conception and role of VET in Spain.

From the LOGSE to the LOE: Integrating VET into the Education System

The LOGSE (1990) was the first law to comprehensively address the structure of Vocational Education and Training (VET) within a unified framework. It established intermediate and advanced vocational training cycles, integrated VET into post-compulsory secondary education, and introduced a model more closely aligned with general education (Martínez García, 2009). This law marked a turning point, as it was the first to propose a modular, competence-based training structure.

As part of broader efforts to reduce early school leaving, the LOGSE also introduced the Social Guarantee Programs. These programs targeted young people who had not obtained the Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education and offered them an initial basic vocational qualification aimed at facilitating their entry into the labor market or their reintegration into the education system. Although limited in scope and less systematically structured than later programs, they served as the direct precursors of the Initial Vocational Qualification Programs (Programas de Cualificación Profesional Inicial, PCPI) implemented under the LOE (Marhuenda, 2006).

The drafting of the LOGSE was preceded by a participatory process involving the creation of Professional Working Groups (Grupos de Trabajo Profesional, GTP), a notable innovation in education policy. These groups, composed of teachers and experts from the business sector, played an active role in defining the new vocational cycles, allowing professional criteria to inform curriculum design beyond purely pedagogical considerations. Thanks to their involvement, professional profiles, expected learning outcomes, and technical requirements for each training cycle could be more precisely defined (Marhuenda, 2006).

During the 1990s, in parallel with the implementation of the LOGSE, the General Council for Vocational Training approved the National Vocational Training Programs, which were instrumental in shaping the future National

Qualifications System. These programs defined the core components of the system: the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, professional certificates, procedures for recognizing prior learning, and mechanisms for coordinating formal education with training for employment. They laid the groundwork for a competence-based training model more closely aligned with the European context and labor market demands (Marhuenda, 2006).

In the same structural reform trajectory, the National Institute for Qualifications (Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones, INCUAL) was established in 1999 by Royal Decree 375/1999. Its mission was to support the General Council for Vocational Training in developing the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, the cornerstone of the new competence-based training approach. In collaboration with the education and labor administrations, INCUAL facilitated articulation between formal education and employment training, laying the foundations for the current National Qualifications System (Martínez-Morales & Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2020).

Although short-lived, the LOCE (2002) introduced certain quality control mechanisms into the education system, but it failed to produce significant changes in VET due to its limited implementation (González & Martínez, 2019).

With the LOE (2006), vocational training cycles were consolidated as the main route into formal VET, career guidance was strengthened, and the possibility was opened to design Initial Vocational Qualification Programs (PCPI) for young people at risk of dropping out of school (BOE, 2006). These programs built upon the aims and spirit of the earlier Social Guarantee Programs developed under the LOGSE, also aimed at providing an initial qualification for those who had not completed compulsory education, although with a less structured curriculum and limited projection into the formal system (Marhuenda, 2006).

Recent Reforms: LOMCE, LOMLOE, and the New VET Law

The LOMCE (2013) retained the general structure of the LOE but did not introduce major changes to Vocational Education and Training (VET). Its focus was primarily on reorganizing the compulsory education stages and

reinforcing the system's evaluative approach, while VET development remained largely in the background, except for the creation of Basic VET (Formación Profesional Básica) as a replacement for the Initial Vocational Qualification Programs (PCPI) (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2023a).

The LOMLOE (2020) introduced improvements in educational equity and personalized learning. With regard to VET, it fostered stronger links between the education system and the labor market, laying the groundwork for the subsequent reform (BOE, 2020).

Finally, Organic Law 3/2022 on the organization and integration of Vocational Education and Training represents the most comprehensive reform of the Spanish VET model to date. This law establishes a unified and integrated VET system that is modular, competence-based, aligned with the national employability strategy, and places particular emphasis on Dual VET as a compulsory and progressively implemented modality (BOE, 2022). Furthermore, the law promotes structured collaboration among educational institutions, companies, and public administrations, with the aim of consolidating a more flexible system that is responsive to technological changes and aligned with regional and sectoral development (CaixaBank Dualiza & Orkestra, 2023).

Table 1 provides a summary of regulatory developments in Spain and their impact on vocational education and training.

TABLE 1. Summary of Regulatory Developments in Spain

Year	Law	Impact on Vocational Education and Training (VET)
1970	General Education Act (LGE)	Introduced a basic structure for VET, separate from general education.
1985	Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE)	Established basic rights and defined the network of public and publicly funded schools.
1990	Organic Law on the General Organization of the Education System (LOGSE)	Integrated VET into secondary education; introduced vocational training cycles.
2002	Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE)	Briefly implemented; technocratic focus with limited impact on VET.

2006	Organic Law on Education (LOE)	Consolidated vocational training cycles and promoted links with the labor market.
2013	Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE)	Modified previous structure with no significant changes in VET.
2020	Organic Law Amending the LOE (LOMLOE)	Introduced equity, competency-based curriculum, and promoted Dual VET.
2022	Organic Law on the Organization and Integration of VET (LOFP)	Restructured VET into a modular, competence-based system; progressive mandatory Dual VET.

Pedagogical and Curricular Transformations in Vocational Education and Training

Over the past five decades, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain has undergone not only legislative changes but also profound pedagogical and curricular reforms. This evolution has been driven by the aim of granting VET a distinct identity within the education system, shifting from a rigid, technocratic model to one that is more flexible and modular, focused on the development of professional competences and the employability of students.

From Technical Curricula to Modular Structures

During the Franco regime, VET was characterized by a closed, hierarchical structure with limited connection to general education. The curriculum was focused on the acquisition of specific technical skills, with little to no cross-disciplinary integration and virtually no opportunities for transition to higher education. This organization reflected an industrial and utilitarian logic that subordinated training to economic development and reinforced the perception of VET as a track confined to certain social and occupational profiles (Grande Rodríguez, 2013).

With the enactment of the LOGSE (1990), a key transformation was introduced: the structuring of VET into intermediate and advanced training cycles organized into training modules. This shift enabled greater flexibility, facilitated the recognition of prior learning, and opened the path toward more integrated training. Additionally, the inclusion of modules such as Career

Guidance and Labor Relations (Formación y Orientación Laboral, FOL) and in-company training (Formación en Centros de Trabajo, FCT) strengthened the professional dimension of the curriculum (Martínez García, 2009).

The Competence-Based Approach

One of the most significant changes in recent decades has been the introduction of the competence-based approach, initially incorporated through the LOGSE (1990) via the modular structure of intermediate and advanced vocational training cycles. This law marked a shift toward training oriented around learning outcomes and qualifications—initially in a partial manner, and now established as a core pillar of the new training model. The competence-based approach aims to ensure that students acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills, professional attitudes, and the ability to transfer what they have learned to real-world work contexts (OECD, 2023; CEDEFOP, 2023).

Organic Law 3/2022 on the organization and integration of VET consolidates this evolution by establishing a modular curriculum oriented toward learning outcomes, with cumulative partial accreditation. This system allows students to obtain official certification for completed modules, even if they do not finish an entire training cycle (BOE, 2022).

Assessment, Guidance, and Dual Training

In parallel with curricular transformation, significant methodological changes have also taken place. Assessment has evolved from being exclusively final and based on rote memorization to incorporating formative and competence-based approaches, promoting continuous improvement in learning processes (UNESCO, 2022).

Academic and career guidance—historically a weak component of VET—has gained increasing importance within a broader framework of personalized learning. However, it remains one of the unresolved challenges, particularly in the stages preceding the selection of educational pathways

(CaixaBank Dualiza & Orkestra, 2023).

Another major pedagogical advancement has been the consolidation of Dual VET, which combines classroom instruction with practical training in companies. This modality strengthens the acquisition of competences in real-world settings and facilitates labor market integration, while also contributing to a more active, collaborative, and contextually grounded learning methodology (Navarro & Gil, 2023; García-Pérez & Marhuenda, 2023). Although Dual VET has gained prominence since 2012, its origins can be traced back to the LOGSE (1990), which first introduced the Work-Based Learning Module (Formación en Centros de Trabajo, FCT). This mandatory module, with specific assessment criteria, was completed at the end of the in-school training and involved a placement in a real professional environment. The FCT represented a foundational step in linking formal education with the labor market and constitutes the direct precursor of the current Dual model promoted by Organic Law 3/2022 (Marhuenda, 2006).

European Models and International Influence

The evolution of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain cannot be fully understood without considering the European context and the international influences that have driven structural, curricular, and methodological reforms in recent decades. Since Spain's accession to the European Union in 1986, the country has actively participated in educational convergence processes promoted by institutions such as the Council of the European Union, the OECD, and CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), all of which have played a decisive role in the modernization of the Spanish VET system.

Dual VET and the Central European Model

Among the models that have served as key references are those of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria—countries with well-established dual systems in which students alternate between classroom instruction and workplace

training. In these countries, over 60% of VET students choose this modality, with employment insertion rates exceeding 90% (OECD, 2023; CEDEFOP, 2023).

Dual Vocational Education and Training is characterized by close collaboration between the education system and the business sector, the existence of shared regulatory frameworks, mixed public–private funding, and the strong social recognition of VET as a first-choice educational pathway. This model has been gradually adapted in Spain since 2012 and has been legally consolidated through Organic Law 3/2022, although its implementation remains uneven across different regions (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2023).

France and Integrated Pathways

The French case presents a mixed model in which initial VET, continuing VET, and apprenticeship programs (apprentissage) coexist within an articulated and flexible system. VET qualifications are embedded in a national qualifications framework that enables mobility across educational pathways and recognizes prior work experience (Navarro & Gil, 2023).

This approach has influenced the modular structure and competence-based orientation adopted by the Spanish VET system—particularly through the creation of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications and the recognition of cumulative partial accreditations, both of which are central pillars of the current Spanish model.

The role of CEDEFOP and OCDE

CEDEFOP has been one of the most influential European institutions in the transformation of VET, promoting since the early 2000s an agenda focused on lifelong learning, mobility, employability, and quality. Through reports, recommendations, and the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), it has fostered the harmonization of VET systems across EU Member States (CEDEFOP, 2022).

The OECD, for its part, has contributed with comparative studies that position VET as a key driver of labor market integration, social cohesion, and economic competitiveness. Several of its reports have highlighted the positive impact of VET on reducing early school leaving and the importance of aligning curricula with emerging productive sectors (OECD, 2023).

Recent Influences: Digitalization and Sustainability

Contemporary international frameworks such as the European Pact for Skills, the 2030 Agenda, and the European Green Deal are introducing new priorities into VET systems: digital skills, sustainability, circular economy, resilience, and entrepreneurship. Spain has begun to integrate these approaches through pilot projects, new training modules, and national strategies; however, it still lags behind the levels of integration seen in Nordic countries such as Finland or the Netherlands, where digitalization and the personalization of learning pathways are significantly more advanced (UNESCO, 2022; Eurydice, 2023). (Table 2)

TABLE 2. Comparison of VET Modalities in Europe

Country	Predominant Modality	Employment Insertion Rate (%)	System Characteristics	Key Features
Spain	Traditional VET and Dual VET	~68% (traditional), ~85% (dual)	Developing, mixed model	Growing Dual VET; territorial disparities. Modular and competence-based.
Germany	Dual VET	>90%	Established dual system	Company-based and classroom training. Strong business involvement. High social prestige.
Switzerland	Dual VET	>90%	Mandatory dual system	3 days in company, 2 in school. National recognition. Progression accreditation.

France	Mixed (initial VET + apprenticeship)	~70–80%	Articulated system	National Qualifications Framework. Common alternance model. Modular recognition.
Netherlands	Flexible modular VET	~80%	Personalized system	Tailored pathways. Strong integration of transversal and digital competences.
Finland	Personalized and digital VET	~80–85%	Learner-centered system	High autonomy. Work placements. Strong focus on formative assessment.

Current Diagnosis of Vocational Education and Training in Spain

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain is currently undergoing a phase of consolidation and transformation. The most recent legislative reforms—particularly Organic Law 3/2022—have laid the groundwork for a unified, modular model that is more closely aligned with labor market needs. However, the effective implementation of this new system still faces significant challenges, including territorial equity, stronger links with the productive sector, enhanced career guidance, and the modernization of teaching methodologies.

Enrollment Trends and Student Profile

VET has experienced sustained growth in enrollment over the past decade. According to data from the Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional. (2023), more than one million students were enrolled in VET programs during the 2022–2023 academic year, representing 12% of all non-university students.

The greatest increase has occurred in advanced-level programs (Grado Superior), which have grown by 77% over the last decade, followed by intermediate-level programs (Grado Medio) with a 52% increase, and Basic VET (Formación Profesional Básica) with a 28% increase (CaixaBank

Dualiza & Orkestra, 2023). This upward trend is partly due to the growing social recognition of VET and the improved employment prospects for graduates compared to those who leave the education system after completing compulsory schooling.

Labor Market Insertion: Advantages and Gaps

One of the most reliable indicators of VET's success is the rate of labor market insertion, particularly in the Dual modality. Graduates of intermediate-level VET (Grado Medio) have an employment rate of 63% within one year of completing their studies, while this figure rises to 85% for those who followed the Dual VET pathway (VET Observatory, 2023). In advanced-level programs (Grado Superior), employment rates can exceed 90% in fields such as IT, healthcare, or mechatronics.

However, there are significant regional disparities: autonomous communities such as the Basque Country, Navarre, and Catalonia lead in the implementation of Dual VET and employability outcomes, whereas other regions offer more limited provision and demonstrate weaker connections to the local economic fabric (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2023).

Inequitable Access and Social Perception

Although Vocational Education and Training (VET) has gained greater social prestige in recent years, persistent stereotypes continue to frame it as a secondary option compared to the Baccalaureate or university education. This perception particularly affects students from more vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds, who often choose VET by default rather than out of genuine interest or vocation (Sánchez & Ruiz, 2021).

Moreover, access to VET varies significantly across regions: in some autonomous communities, there are waiting lists, a lack of specialized programs, or limited alignment with strategic productive sectors. These disparities hinder the potential of VET to serve as a tool for educational

equity (Consejo Económico y Social, 2023; Observatorio de la Formación Profesional, 2023).

Emerging Challenges: Digitalization, Sustainability, and Innovation

In the coming years, VET in Spain will face several cross-cutting challenges:

- **Digital transformation:** Adapting to the digital economy requires the integration of digital skills modules across all training cycles.
- **Sustainability:** The ecological transition calls for new technical profiles in renewable energy, circular economy, and environmental management.
- **Methodological innovation:** Teachers must be trained in active learning methodologies, entrepreneurial competences, and the use of digital simulators.

Although the new legal framework acknowledges these challenges, implementation is still at an early stage and largely depends on the resources available in each autonomous community (CaixaBank Dualiza y Orkestra, 2023).

Current and Future Challenges for Vocational Education and Training

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain has made significant progress in recent decades, consolidating itself as a strategic educational pathway for youth employability and productive modernization. Nevertheless, structural, pedagogical, and organizational challenges persist, limiting its development and broader social acceptance. These challenges are particularly pressing in the current context of technological transformation, ecological transition, and growing social inequality.

One of the major structural challenges of the Spanish VET system is the effective integration between educational VET and occupational VET—also known as vocational training for employment or continuing education. Although the LOGSE laid the groundwork for a more comprehensive articulation of the system, in practice, two distinct subsystems remain: one managed by educational authorities, aimed at school-age learners and formal qualifications; and another managed by labor authorities, focused on the (re) qualification of the active population.

Despite important advances—such as the creation of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, the development of professional certificates, and procedures for accrediting work-based competencies—Spain is still far from achieving true integration that would fully harness the training potential of the system. Opportunities for employed or unemployed individuals to access training modules within the formal education system remain limited. It is essential to move toward a truly flexible, modular, and interconnected model that promotes lifelong learning (Marhuenda, 2006; Martínez-Morales & Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2020).

Territorial Inequality and Opportunity Gaps

One of the main ongoing challenges is the uneven implementation of VET across Spain's autonomous communities. While some regions—such as the Basque Country and Navarre—have made strong commitments to Dual VET and its alignment with strategic economic sectors, others offer limited and outdated training options (Consejo Económico y Social, 2023; Observatorio de la Formación Profesional, 2023). This territorial disparity generates significant gaps in access, quality, and professional opportunities for students.

According to Observatorio de la FP (2023), 70% of students enrolled in Dual VET are concentrated in just five regions, highlighting the urgent need for a cohesive national policy to ensure the right to quality training provision regardless of place of residence.

Technological Modernization and Digitalization

The emergence of artificial intelligence, automation, and the digital economy demands the continuous updating of training programs. The cross-sectoral digitalization of all productive areas requires that VET incorporate content related to programming, data analysis, cybersecurity, and digital systems maintenance—even in qualifications traditionally not associated with technology (OECD, 2023).

Although the 2022–2025 Strategic Framework for VET includes the creation of more than 200 new qualifications and specialization courses, its effective implementation depends on teacher training, technological resources, and infrastructure that are not yet guaranteed in all institutions (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2023).

Linking VET with the Productive Sector

Despite legislative progress, structured collaboration between training centers and companies remains a major challenge. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack the capacity to host apprentices or to contribute to the design of training programs. According to CaixaBank Dualiza (2023), only 4.2% of VET students in Spain were enrolled in Dual VET in 2022, compared to 66% in Germany and 71% in Switzerland.

Encouraging business participation through tax incentives, technical support, and reduced administrative burdens is essential to consolidate Dual VET as a viable option for a broader range of students.

Teacher Training and Innovative)

Además, la formación continua del profesorado no siempre responde a las demandas del entorno productivo. Se necesita una estrategia coordinada entre administraciones educativas y el sector empresarial para asegurar que la actualización docente esté alineada con los cambios del mercado laboral.

Teacher Training and Innovative Methodologies

Pedagogical innovation requires well-trained and up-to-date teaching staff capable of applying active methodologies, project-based learning, integrating sustainability, and personalizing learning pathways. However, many VET instructors come from technical fields without initial training in pedagogy, which poses challenges for the effective implementation of competence-based approaches (González & Martínez, 2019).

Moreover, continuous professional development for teachers does not always align with the demands of the productive sector. A coordinated strategy between educational authorities and the business sector is needed to ensure that teacher training is in step with labor market transformation.

Social Prestige and Academic Guidance

Despite recent progress, VET continues to carry a secondary social image when compared to the Baccalaureate or university education. This stigma is especially pronounced in Basic VET, which is sometimes perceived as a “second-chance” pathway for students with lower academic performance (Sánchez & Ruiz, 2021).

Early academic and career guidance, along with public awareness campaigns, are essential to highlight the opportunities offered by VET—particularly in emerging sectors with high labor demand such as automation, renewable energy, or software development.

Proposals and Recommendations for Strengthening Vocational Education and Training

After five decades of legislative, pedagogical, and institutional development, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain stands at a critical juncture—an opportunity to consolidate its role as a cornerstone of both the education system and the country’s economic and social development. Achieving this

goal requires advancing a comprehensive strategy that enhances VET's social prestige, ensures equity, and aligns effectively with the challenges of the 21st century. The following are evidence-based proposals drawn from both national and international experiences.

Ensure an equitable and territorially balanced training offer

It is essential to develop a national map of training needs and professional profiles to guide the planning of VET programs according to labor market demand by sector and region. This planning should include:

- The creation of new training cycles in rural areas or industrial zones undergoing transformation.
- Support for training-related mobility (housing, scholarships, transportation).
- Promotion of distance or hybrid learning modalities in regions with limited access.

Territorial equity must be understood as a fundamental right of students to access high-quality training regardless of their postal code.

(Consejo Económico y Social, 2023).

Strengthen Dual VET and Collaboration with the Business Sector

Expanding Dual VET requires a more ambitious policy framework including tax incentives, regulatory simplification, and technical support for companies—especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Recommended measures include:

- The progressive extension of the Dual modality to all training cycles, as envisioned by Organic Law 3/2022.
- The creation of intermediary roles (e.g., company tutors, Dual VET

coordinators).

- The establishment of sectoral working groups for the joint definition of professional profiles, standards, and shared training projects (CaixaBank Dualiza, 2023).

This collaboration should be based on a co-governance model involving public administrations, companies, and educational institutions.

Investment in Educational Innovation and Teacher Training

ET requires a network of centers for technological and methodological innovation, equipped with up-to-date infrastructure, advanced connectivity, and specialized staff. In parallel, it is essential to implement a comprehensive, continuous professional development plan for teachers, focused on:

- Active methodologies (project-based learning, flipped classroom, simulation).
- Digital and green competences.
- Competence-based assessment and personalized learning.

Training programs should be tailored to the specific needs of each professional field and include opportunities for work-based placements in companies (González & Martínez, 2019)

Strengthen Vocational Guidance and the Social Prestige of VET

Career guidance should begin in the early stages of education (end of primary and start of secondary school) and provide accurate, engaging, and up-to-date information about the opportunities offered by VET. Key recommended measures include:

- Specific training for guidance counselors on VET pathways.
- Institutional campaigns highlighting success stories and professional career opportunities.
- Development of digital guidance platforms with interactive pathway

simulators.

Restoring the self-esteem and public image of VET also requires its active presence in educational discourse, media narratives, and national talent development strategies (Sánchez & Ruiz, 2021)

Promote a VET System Aligned with 21st-Century Challenges

VET must be positioned as a key driver in the ecological transition, digital transformation, and social cohesion. To achieve this, it is necessary to:

- Incorporate content related to sustainability, circular economy, equality, and human rights.
- Design micro-credentials and specialization programs in emerging sectors.
- Develop flexible lifelong learning pathways that facilitate professional requalification and reentry into education for adult learners (CEDEFOP, 2023).

Discussion and Conclusions

- The evolution of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Spain over the past half-century has paralleled the social, political, and economic changes that have shaped the country's recent history. From its initial configuration under the 1970 General Education Act to its full integration as a strategic educational option through Organic Law 3/2022, VET has moved from marginalization to institutional recognition—although it has not yet achieved a level of prestige comparable to that of the Baccalaureate or university education.
- This article has demonstrated that VET has played a key role in three major areas:
- **Reducing early school leaving**, particularly through the diversification of educational pathways and the implementation of Dual VET.

- **Improving youth employability**, through a gradual alignment between training competences and labor market demands.
- **Responding to digital, ecological, and demographic transformations**, by progressively incorporating new professional profiles, active methodologies, and modular training structures.
- Nevertheless, major challenges remain. Uneven implementation across autonomous communities, difficulties in establishing stable partnerships with the business sector, limited investment in pedagogical innovation, and the persistent perception of VET as a “second-tier” option continue to constrain its transformative potential.
- From a comparative perspective, the most successful European models (e.g., Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands) share several structural elements that have not yet been fully established in Spain: territorially balanced planning, institutional–business co-governance, strong social recognition of vocational pathways, and personalized guidance beginning at early stages.
- In this regard, the recent structural reform of VET—competence-based, focused on learning outcomes, modular in design, and with a strong push toward Dual VET—represents a historic opportunity. However, its success will depend on:
 - The political will to allocate sufficient resources and infrastructure.
 - The effective involvement of the productive sector.
 - The deep transformation of career guidance systems and teacher training.

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Curricular change processes in Spain: from LOGSE to LOMLOE¹

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

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 suggestions². 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

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 initiative⁴ – 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

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 curriculum 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 Communities⁶.

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

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 *Programming* 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 agree⁷ 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

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 LOMLOE¹⁰.

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 132.1) 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 practices¹¹.

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

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 PIRLS¹² and TIMSS¹³ 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) continues¹⁵.

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

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 matrices¹⁷ 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

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 reports¹⁸ 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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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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Advances in the education of students with special educational needs

Avances en la educación del alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the progress made in the education of students with special educational needs over the past fifty years. This refers to the group of students traditionally served under what is known as special education, whether in special schools or in mainstream schools. Rather than focusing on specific disability conditions and/or developmental problems, this analysis is supported by the systemic ecological approach to development, which considers all manifestations of diversity and the various educational contexts in which students live and grow.

First, the evolution of Spanish society's culture and values regarding individual differences over this period is analysed, along with their impact on legislation and public policy (macrosystem). Then, the contribution of various actors, both internal and external, and the network of community services to the education and development of students with special educational needs is addressed (mesosystem). Finally, changes in educational practices (microsystem) are described, highlighting the shift from exclusion to the recognition of every student's right, regardless of individual conditions, to be welcomed and enrolled in mainstream schools. Attention is given to issues such as access, assessment of special educational needs, educational planning, levels and types of support, transitions, family participation, and the initial and ongoing training of teachers. The article concludes with reflections on the threat posed to the progress of inclusive education by the rise of neoliberal and conservative policies.

Key words: inclusive education, rights, students with special educational needs, special schools, assessment, support levels, family participation, initial training, ongoing training.

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es dar cuenta de los avances en la atención al alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales a lo largo de los últimos cincuenta años; nos referimos al colectivo de alumnos y alumnas tradicionalmente atendidos en lo que se conoce como educación especial, sea en centros de educación especial sea en centros ordinarios. Para ello, más que centrar el discurso en las distintas condiciones de discapacidad y/o problemas del desarrollo, nos puede ayudar en el análisis servirnos del enfoque ecológico sistémico del desarrollo, que contempla a todas las manifestaciones de diversidad y a los distintos contextos educativos en los que viven y se desarrollan los alumnos y alumnas. En primer lugar, se analiza la evolución de la cultura y de los valores de la sociedad española respecto de las diferencias individuales en estos años y su impacto en la legislación y en las políticas de la administración (macrosistema). A continuación, nos ocuparemos de la contribución de los distintos agentes, internos y externos, y del entramado de servicios de la comunidad, a la educación y desarrollo del alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales (mesosistema). Finalmente, se describen los cambios en las prácticas educativas (microsistema) desde la exclusión hasta el reconocimiento del derecho de todo el alumnado, sin importar sus condiciones particulares, a ser bienvenido y escolarizado en los centros ordinarios; se prestará atención a cuestiones como el acceso, la evaluación de las necesidades educativas especiales, la propuesta educativa, los niveles y medidas de apoyo, las transiciones, la participación de las familias, y la formación inicial y continuada del profesorado. Acabamos con algunas reflexiones sobre la amenaza que supone para el progreso de la educación inclusiva, el avance de las políticas neoliberales y conservadoras.

Palabras clave: educación inclusiva, derechos, alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales, centros de educación especial, evaluación, niveles de apoyo, participación de las familias, formación inicial, formación continuada.

Introduction

In this monograph dedicated to the changes in education over the past five decades, we focus on the progress made in the educational response to students with special educational needs (SEN), traditionally referred to as “special education” students. Undertaking a historical review in just a few pages is no easy task, given the many variables and dimensions involved. Therefore, we are compelled to adopt a synthetic writing style for the different sections, which, in fairness, would each merit a more detailed analysis.

A first issue concerns the methodological approach to be followed. That is, whether the narrative should be limited to disabilities traditionally recognised by the scientific community (intellectual, hearing, motor, etc.) or whether it is more appropriate to focus the analysis on the common aspects

that, in one way or another, are present across different disabilities and/or developmental problems. A cross-cutting perspective seems more appropriate and more sensitive to the elements shared by all manifestations of human developmental diversity.

The ecological systems approach to development (Bronfenbrenner, 1987), apart from being consistent with the most robust positions in developmental science and, therefore, its possible conditions, offers a framework within which we can pursue our objective and organise the discussion. Thus, we will first analyse the evolution of Spanish society's culture and values concerning people with disabilities and/or developmental problems during this period, and their impact on legislation and public policies (macrosystem). Next, we will address those elements of the mesosystem that influence the education and development of students with SEN, such as the various actors within the education system—both internal and external to schools—and the network of services (social, health, etc.) available in the community. Finally, we will focus on the changes that have taken place in educational practices (microsystem), from exclusion from the education system in the mid-twentieth century to the recognition of the right of all students, regardless of their individual conditions, to be welcomed into mainstream schools and to achieve the general curriculum objectives with the necessary support. Attention will be paid to issues such as access, the assessment of SEN, educational planning, levels and measures of support, transitions, family participation, and the initial and ongoing training of teachers.

The article concludes with a reflection on the threat posed to the progress of inclusive education by the advance of neoliberal and conservative policies, which occupy significant positions of power around the world.

Disability in Society and Legislation

Exclusion, Institutionalisation, and Ableism

The way society perceives people with disabilities today—and the treatment they receive—is the result of a slow and gradual evolution shaped by various interrelated factors of different natures. Indeed, advances in research (in the

fields of education, psychology, various fields of medicine, law, and sociology), increased awareness of human rights, greater recognition of the abilities of people with disabilities, the efforts of advocacy organisations, and the stance taken by international bodies, governments, and educational authorities have all positively influenced how disability is currently understood (Giné et al., 2021).

However, the situation of people with disabilities (PWD) since the mid-20th century has been marked by exclusion, institutionalisation, and ableism. PWD were segregated from society and confined to large residential institutions or hospitals. The care they received was primarily custodial in nature and stemmed from a charitable approach to public intervention, in which welfare considerations took precedence over any social or educational goals which, in many cases, were not even contemplated. Starting in the 1960s, as concern grew over the detrimental effects of institutionalisation, some professionals, mainly from the medical field, began to recognise the need to move beyond assistance and medicalisation to provide some form of education or training. This support was organised around the medical-rehabilitative model and based on principles of specialisation. Disability was understood as an individual “problem,” an illness requiring some form of rehabilitative therapy provided by a specialist.

This initial interest in the education and training of people with disabilities, both in concept and in practice, aligned with a therapeutic and rehabilitative model. It gave rise to what became known as “therapeutic pedagogy,” which shaped the educational response provided in institutions that gradually, mainly during the 1970s and 1980s, began to adopt the structure of schools, thus initiating greater sensitivity to the educational needs of these individuals.

Within the logic of the clinical model, the prevailing belief was that the best way to support people with “impairments” was through specialised centres (known as “special education schools”), separate from mainstream schools and often physically distant from the wider community. The consequences of using the medical model (Giné et al., 1989) and its emphasis on specialisation are evident and continue to this day. This model influenced both the assessment (diagnosis) of developmental problems and the subsequent guidance and “treatment.” From the standpoint of assessment, it was believed that the most effective way to determine educational support was to measure the severity of the condition (deficit) using intelligence quotient tests. These tests, however, bore little or no relation to the actual context in which the individual lived and

was educated, and typically led to categorisation into diagnostic labels created for this purpose. The classification of people based on deficits (borderline, mild, moderate, severe, and profound), and the associated labelling aimed at identifying the causes of presumed disorders, has had and continues to have profound effects on the organisation of what is known as “special education” and on societal expectations. Indeed, deficit-based categorisation and labelling act as a major burden on the education of these individuals, as they inevitably shape the expectations of all those who interact with them. This emphasis on limitations reinforces negative perceptions, promotes their devaluation, and significantly restricts their development. This is what is referred to as *ableism*, a social prejudice against people with disabilities that inevitably leads to discrimination.

Commitment to the Right to Education and Inclusion

When discussing the evolution of how disability is understood, it is important to remember that change takes time, is rarely linear, and often retains traces of past conceptions and practices that seemed to have been overcome. In Spain, the commitment to inclusive education for people with disabilities began in the 1980s with policies promoting integration and has continued to the present day. This shift has been guided by the principle of normalisation and marked by the predominance of the educational model over the clinical one. In fact, the most advanced countries moved away from policies offering “special” and segregated treatment for this group and instead embraced the principle of normalisation in the design and provision of services, including education, for people with developmental problems. A key turning point was the Danish Mental Retardation Act of 1959, which set out the goal of “creating for people with mental retardation a life as close to normal living conditions as possible.”

In this process of progressively recognising the rights of people with disabilities, a major milestone was the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly, in 1971, of the “Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons.” Its first article states that “the mentally retarded person has, to the maximum degree of feasibility, the same rights as other human beings”. This declaration had previously been signed in 1968 by the International League of Societies for the Mentally Handicapped (Giné et al., 2021).

The principle of normalisation, first laid out in the Danish legislation, served as a driving force for the profound transformation of beliefs, policies, and practices concerning people with developmental problems in

Western societies. Wolfensberger (1986, p.15) defined this principle as “the use of culturally valued means to enable people to lead culturally valued lives”. In other words, these individuals should be seen and treated based on what society values and aspires to for all, whether in education, health, employment, culture, or community life. What society sees as desirable for its citizens should also be seen as desirable for people with disabilities and/or developmental problems. The deinstitutionalisation movement, promoted in the United States by family associations in the 1960s and in Italy through Law 118 of 1971, played a crucial role in the gradual transformation of policies and services for people with disabilities.

In the field of education, the principle of normalisation had two main effects: on the environment in which educational activity takes place, and on the process and content of education. Ultimately, it introduced what came to be known in Spain in the 1980s as *school integration* and laid the groundwork for a new concept of special education based on support rather than deficit. Developmental problems began to be understood as indicators of the type of support individuals need to progress. As a result, schools were expected to adapt their educational responses to the individual, and therefore diverse, characteristics of all students, including those with developmental challenges. In short, these students would share the educational process with their peers from their local neighbourhood, town, or city in the common school.

The principles of normalisation and integration informed legislation and policy in many countries and international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In Spain, a milestone in special education was the enactment of Law 14/1970, of August 4, the General Law on Education and Financing of the Educational Reform. Although it preceded the profound changes of the following decade, it was the first time the right of students with disabilities to be educated in special education schools and special classrooms within mainstream schools was recognised (Articles 49-53). The full adoption of the principles of normalisation, integration, sectorisation, and individualisation came with Law 13/1982, of April 7, on the Social Integration of the Disabled (LISMI, 1982) in terms of general policies; and in education, first with Royal Decree 334/1985, of March 6, regulating Special Education, along with regulations issued by Spain's autonomous communities; and later, with Organic Law 1/1990, of October 3, on the General Organisation of the Educational System (LOGSE, 1990).

The Salamanca Statement and UNESCO's Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994 and signed by 92 governments and 25 international organisations, represents one of the most important landmarks in the transformation of education for people with disabilities in many countries at the end of the 20th century. It introduced the bet in favor of *inclusive schooling*, a more decisive and coherent commitment to the educational model and the recognition of the rights of people with disabilities, and conceptually distinct from school integration. Whereas integration focuses on the individual who must adapt to the system, inclusion shifts the emphasis to the school context, which must welcome all students, regardless of their characteristics or conditions, and tailor its educational approach and resources to their particular needs. Ultimately, the Salamanca Statement was pioneering in affirming that inclusive schools are the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes and foster cohesive societies.

Since the Salamanca Statement, many initiatives have been undertaken by countries and international organisations to promote quality education for all students. Progress has been evident (ALANA, 2016), although uneven both between and within countries. Similarly, the gap between legal frameworks and the reality of schools remains significant. For an overview of the state of inclusive education, the reports of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2013; 2015) are useful references.

The education laws that followed LOGSE (Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education (LOE); Organic Law 8/2013, of December 9, for the improvement of educational quality (LOMCE); and Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29, amending the LOE (LOMLOE) reaffirm the principle of equity as a fundamental pillar of Spain's education system. This principle is embodied in a vision of inclusive education aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination, including those based on disabilities or behavioral challenges. In particular, the current LOMLOE mandates the inclusion of students with SEN in the mainstream education system, promoting the active participation of all students without distinction. The LOMLOE places special emphasis on addressing diversity at all educational levels as a core principle, which involves ensuring the personal, material, and technological supports necessary for the participation and academic success of all students, especially those with special needs, through individualised support plans.

Finally, Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), ratified by the Spanish government in

2008 and cited in the preamble to the LOMLOE, recognises the right of persons with disabilities to education. To fulfil this right, states must ensure an inclusive education system at all levels.

Nonetheless, as Ainscow and Miles (2008) argue, achieving inclusive education requires that policy be accompanied by effective classroom practices. These authors analysed progress since the Salamanca Statement and found that, while the idea of inclusion has gained widespread acceptance, its practical implementation remains complex and highly context-dependent. Moving toward inclusive education requires, among other things, policies (including resource allocation and teacher training) that align with inclusive principles; community involvement in creating welcoming schools; streamlined support services; and the development of learning environments where every student feels valued and supported in achieving shared educational goals.

The Contribution of Services to the Education of Students with Special Educational Needs

Over the past fifty years, Spanish society, through initiatives led either by public authorities or by organisations (mostly parent associations), has supported the education of students with SEN through a network of services (educational, social, and healthcare) and supports, that have taken many forms and evolved in line with the prevailing conceptual frameworks of each era.

This section focuses on analysing the most significant advances within the education system, both at the level of schools and among various actors, internal and external, who are organised as support services.

The Progressive Transformation of Special Education Schools into Resource Centres for Inclusion

Undoubtedly, the most important advance concerns the purpose and function of special education schools (SES), in light of the growing adoption of the principles of integration and, later, inclusion.

As noted in a previous study (Giné et al., 2005), the 1970s and 1980s saw a wave of initiatives aimed at establishing SES for children and young people with disabilities and/or developmental disorders. These were launched

by both public authorities and parent associations, often created to promote the education of their children. With the prevailing clinical model, the administration, families, and society supported a policy of creating schools under the principle of “the more specialised, the better.” This gave rise to specific schools for people with intellectual, physical, hearing, and visual disabilities, as well as for those with social adjustment difficulties, among others. Combined with a lack of leadership and planning by the Ministry of Education, this led to a network of schools that was difficult to coordinate and showed clear duplication and gaps across regions and autonomous communities. Moreover, the refusal of mainstream schools (MS) to accept these enrolments, along with other factors, contributed decisively to the formation of a parallel system of SES, which quickly became entrenched.

The LISMI (1982) established normalisation of services for persons with disabilities as a guiding principle. The decrees issued by the Ministry of Education and Science (1985) and by the Autonomous Communities translated this principle into policies promoting the integration of students with disabilities and/or developmental issues into mainstream schools, to the extent possible. This decision caused considerable disruption in the field of special education (institutions, professionals, and families), triggering a crisis of identity and self-esteem among SES professionals and administrators that, in some ways, still persists. These professionals saw the students they were trained to teach redirected to mainstream schools, while SES were left with students with the most significant support needs; students whose care and education, in the view of many teachers, did not align with their expertise or job roles. Furthermore, integration policies gradually led families and society at large to view SES as undesirable, with the risk of becoming isolated enclaves on the path to extinction.

This perceived threat, widely shared among professionals and families, intensified following the Salamanca Statement (1994). The inclusive education policies adopted by over a hundred countries, including Spain, posed a serious risk to the continued existence of SES. Additionally, SES felt abandoned by the authorities, who appeared to prioritise financial, human, and material resources for promoting inclusion. In response, SES gradually recognised the need to “reinvent” themselves and redefine their role within the educational system in light of the “new” inclusive education framework. On one hand, SES sought to retrain and renew their educational offerings to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, students with various disabilities and greater support needs in learning, communication,

relationships, and daily living (including a significant increase in students with autism spectrum disorder, behavioural disorders, and health problems). On the other hand, both the government and SES themselves acknowledged that these schools could become assets in promoting inclusion, thanks to their expertise, experience, and educational resources. The potential of SES needed to be harnessed to help mainstream schools respond effectively to the SEN of the students they were now enrolling.

This process contributed to a new vision that gave renewed meaning to SES, leading to experiments in various forms of collaboration with local mainstream schools, including “shared schooling.” However, shared schooling had its limitations and often generated dissatisfaction on both sides. Generally, these were isolated experiences that revolved around a specific child, classroom, and the teachers involved, but they did not offer a sustainable or comprehensive pathway for the future of SES or for true inclusion. A more systemic transformation was needed, one that would position SES as effective support structures for mainstream schools, helping them welcome students with SEN and promote their participation and academic success, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the fourth additional provision of the LOMLOE.

In summary, some initiatives carried out in Spain (DINCAT, 2020; Manzano-Soto et al., 2021) demonstrate the efforts being made by SES and the changes needed to guide their transformation into resource centres for inclusion:

- Embracing a social and ecological understanding of human development and, therefore, of possible disorders, as well as of educational processes.
- Focusing efforts on creating opportunities in classrooms, schools, and communities to foster the participation of all students in meaningful activities, including educational ones. The aim should not be to “correct” the difficulties of certain individuals, but to empower environments by improving professional practices, classroom and school organisation, and the availability and diversity of learning materials that are sensitive to the range of needs in the classroom.
- Recognising that participation goes beyond mere physical presence in schools; it means ensuring all students feel welcomed and valued, are actively involved in classroom and school activities, and can achieve the expected curriculum outcomes.

- Ultimately understanding that inclusive education is not just a special education policy or practice, but a commitment to building an education system and schools that, through differentiated levels of support, guarantee effective teaching and high-quality professional practices for all students.

That said, progress in transforming SES into resource centres for inclusion remains limited, uneven across Spain's autonomous communities, and challenging, due to significant resistance from many SES and their families, who have not generally been supportive of the proposal outlined in the LOMLOE's fourth additional provision.

Support and Guidance Services

To promote the inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream schools, the educational authorities established support and guidance services, initially external, which provided assistance to schools in a sectorized manner. Since support and guidance services are the focus of another article in this monograph, it would be redundant to explore this topic in depth here. We will simply acknowledge the crucial role these services have played in advancing inclusive education.

The Role of the Community

One area where progress deserves to be highlighted is in the relationship between services traditionally associated with special education and the broader community.

Due to the exclusion and limited visibility of people with disabilities, already discussed at the beginning of this article, their interaction with the community was rather testimonial and marked by a form of tolerance tinged with compassion. Integration and inclusion policies increased the presence of people with disabilities in educational institutions and, by extension, in community life and recreational spaces. When combined with international policies promoting mainstreaming and growing social acceptance of diversity, particularly in the media, this contributed to a broader "normalisation" of the lives of people with disabilities within Spanish society.

This more favourable social response made it inevitable for special education organisations to open themselves up to the community, establishing

partnerships with various local services and entities (municipal councils, cultural centres such as libraries and theatres, leisure and sports facilities).

Inclusive education cannot be confined to mainstream schools and classrooms alone; its ultimate goal is to promote the presence and participation of students with disabilities in the wider community. In this sense, building “welcoming communities” requires municipalities to create inclusive spaces and networks beyond both special and mainstream schools, enabling students to interact with peers of different backgrounds, needs, abilities, and behavioural patterns. Exposure to human diversity helps all students to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses. Students, and, more importantly, society, come to understand that everyone is valuable, and deserves respect and recognition for their unique qualities (Uthus & Qvortrup, 2024).

The School Context and the Educational Proposal

The education of students with SEN within the school context is primarily shaped by the treatment they receive (their interactions with adults and peers), which is mediated by the values and beliefs conveyed through professional practices. Changes in how students are treated have evolved in line with a better understanding of disability, as discussed in the first section of this paper. We now turn to the advances made in professional practices over recent decades.

Due to the complexity and scope of this topic, a thorough analysis of professional practices goes beyond the limits of this article. We are therefore obliged to prioritise certain areas and provide a concise overview, even at the risk of omitting important issues. The dimensions of professional practice analysed here reflect those commonly addressed in international studies (UNESCO, 2020) and can be summarised as follows: (1) access; (2) assessment; (3) educational planning and support; (4) transitions; (5) family participation; and (6) initial and ongoing teacher training.

Access

Policies and practices related to the access of students with SEN to education, and more specifically, to mainstream schooling, have undergone a radical

shift in recent years. The core development has been the recognition of these students' right to education and to enrolment at all levels of the education system (LOMLOE; UN, 2006), though full realisation of this right remains a work in progress.

Although the General Education Act (1970) already allowed for the enrolment of students with disabilities in special education units within mainstream schools, in practice these units typically served students from the school itself who had learning and/or behavioural issues. Students with disabilities were denied access and were routinely referred to SES.

It was not until the publication of integration decrees and the Salamanca Statement (1994) that the enrolment of students with SEN in mainstream schools was truly normalised. Gradually, both legal frameworks and school admission practices adapted to the increasing diversity of student needs. From early childhood education to primary school, the percentage of students with SEN has steadily grown, despite resistance and disagreements from some schools and families, and a lack of enthusiasm and commitment from education authorities. Overall, the landscape of access to education for these students has changed dramatically, contributing decisively to their recognition and social inclusion, although a significant number still remain in SES.

Trends in enrolment¹ confirm this shift. From 1975 to 1985, there was a notable increase in students enrolled in SES. In the following decade, this number dropped by two-thirds (down to 28,536 students; 0.5% of the school population), while inclusive education grew to 92,100 students (1.6%). Since 1996, the number of students with SEN in mainstream schools has continued to rise, reaching 2.8% of the school population by the 2022-2023 academic year (including students with needs not linked to disability). However, this increase has not resulted from a decline in CEE enrolment, which has remained steady at around 0.5% of the school population, though the number of students has grown (41,521).

Assessment

The most significant advance in assessment lies in a shift of focus, from the individual to the context. For decades, under the clinical model, assessment (diagnosis) relied on psychological testing to identify student deficits, resulting

¹ Source: Annual statistics on non-university education in Spain from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

in diagnostic labels that were linked to specialist treatment and placement in special schools.

In the past two decades, the social and ecological approach on assessment has gained ground. This approach focuses on the interaction between the student's characteristics (especially competencies) and the demands of their environment, as well as on the supports available to help them function more effectively. Here, support strategies aim to bridge the gap between a person's current abilities and the expectations placed on them in different life settings (school, community, work, etc.). For this reason, identifying the supports a student need for learning and development has become the central goal of what is now known as *inclusive assessment* (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2007).

The primary aim of inclusive assessment is to inform planning and teaching practices that support student learning. It is also used to understand why learning may not be occurring as expected, and to identify, both at the individual and contextual level, the barriers that hinder academic progress. According to Simón et al. (2024), inclusive assessment has three main objectives: (1) to explore the student's characteristics (strengths, interests, motivation, and challenges); (2) to understand the demands and characteristics of the educational context, including curriculum, learning opportunities, school organisation, classroom and school activities, and barriers (whether physical or attitudinal); and (3) to identify available supports. As a result, assessment is oriented towards building environments tailored to the student's learning profile.

That said, the transition from one model to another has been neither easy nor uniform. For instance, the statements required by education authorities often continue to focus solely on diagnosing deficits using IQ scores or developmental indices derived from psychological tests, without meaningful consideration of the school context where the student learns and lives.

The reality is complex and the demands of education authorities do not help because they are often victims of their own bureaucracy and the need to have statistics for classification. In short, the demands of education authorities regarding assessment often do not align with the principles of inclusion and may become yet another barrier. There is still a long way to go, but the direction forward is clear.

Educational Planning and Support

The shift in perspective, from the individual to the context, has also led to significant improvements in professional practice. We will examine these practices based on whether they take place in a mainstream school or a SES, though there is considerable overlap.

In mainstream schools, support for students with SEN was initially characterized by the leading role of specialist teachers who, based on assessments conducted by external guidance teams, developed individualised learning plans. These plans were usually implemented in one-on-one or small group sessions outside the regular classroom. This approach was marked by low expectations and minimal involvement from the student's main classroom teacher, who often considered the student's education to be the responsibility of the special education teacher and the speech therapist. While students might share playgrounds and dining rooms with peers, they often had little interaction and were left feeling isolated.

It is worth asking whether forty years of individualised attention through individualised learning plans have truly improved inclusion (values and practices) in schools. Unfortunately, we cannot be very optimistic, as many teachers still hold attitudes such as: "This student is not for me; I'm not trained for this."

However, in the past decade, new and promising approaches have emerged; approaches that emphasise the importance of the context and a social model of development. Thinking in terms of student strengths and capabilities, rather than limitations, leads to higher expectations and more personalised, relevant learning goals. These changes affect not just teaching but also curriculum design and the organisation of learning spaces. The focus shifts from one-on-one interventions to establishing tiered levels of support within the classroom through universal measures, while also providing additional and intensive supports as needed. The classroom tutor becomes responsible for all students, while specialists collaborate to implement inclusive strategies (co-teaching, cooperative learning, peer tutoring) and provide targeted support when necessary.

In SES, the dominant approach has traditionally been deficit-based and focused on specialization, assuming that the more individualised and specialised the attention, the better the outcome. Classrooms in SES were usually organised by age or severity of impairment. Advances have been driven by inclusion policies and the growing awareness of the need for

transformation. As professionals in SES experimented with shared schooling arrangements with mainstream schools, their practices evolved. They began incorporating curriculum content aligned with mainstream standards, diversified their activities, and became more open to community engagement.

Transitions

Transitions are critical moments in every student's education, especially for the most vulnerable students and their families (Simón et al., 2024). Three key transitions occur: from early childhood to primary education; from primary to secondary; and from secondary to adult life or employment. Success or failure depends on the interaction between three factors: student characteristics, family involvement, and professional practices.

The most decisive factor in the transition from early childhood education to primary school is the choice between enrolling in a SES or a mainstream school. Choosing a mainstream school has proven to be a major step forward in recent decades, helping to move beyond a view of early intervention as merely a step toward special education and placement in a SES. Parental involvement in this decision has also increased over the years.

The transition from primary to secondary education, which for many authors is the most challenging (van Rens et al., 2018), has also improved, though many issues remain unresolved. The automatic progression of students from SES into special vocational training and, eventually, sheltered workshops has been largely overcome. In recent decades, the range of educational options in post-secondary education has expanded and become more flexible, especially in vocational training and transition to adulthood programmes. However, a major unresolved issue persists: many students are sent back to SES at the end of primary school due to the lack of secondary level inclusion resources and training. Rather than continuing in mainstream settings with the necessary supports, they are segregated again.

In the transition from secondary education to employment, the most notable progress has been the stronger link between vocational training and the offer of training programs more directly associated with competitive employment.

Family Participation

Family participation has improved significantly in recent years, although much remains to be done. The shift from a “for parents but without parents” model to one that includes spaces for dialogue and participation—beyond what is mandated in formal school governance structures—has been a noteworthy development.

Although not yet fully embraced, parents—both individually and as part of associations—are increasingly seen as valuable contributors, both in SES and in inclusive education. In particular, the active involvement of parents has helped the other families in mainstream schools become more familiar with and appreciative of diverse abilities among students.

Still, with a strong belief in the importance of all life contexts in a child’s education, it is essential to further explore and adopt forms of family collaboration that also improve educational practices at home.

Initial and Ongoing Teacher Training

Professional practices are inevitably shaped by the conceptual frameworks acquired through university training and throughout one’s career.

Both initial and ongoing teacher training have seen important changes. However, these changes have not always led to significant or sustained improvements in professional competencies for addressing student diversity. Curriculum reforms in the 1990s and the Bologna Process had a positive impact on initial teacher education in terms of values, content, and sensitivity to diversity and vulnerable students. Additionally, since the LOGSE (1991), education authorities have invested heavily in teacher professional development. More recently, the LOMLOE (2020) has marked another step forward by calling for a review of initial training content, emphasising the need to incorporate competency-based curricula, diversity, sustainability, and practical teaching based in learning by doing.

However, despite the efforts made in the reform of the initial training to promote inclusive education, it does not seem that these efforts have contributed decisively either to definitive changes in beliefs and attitudes or to the acquisition of context-based knowledge and strategies that allow new teachers to understand the needs of students and to act accordingly. One possible explanation is the overly fragmented treatment of problems that are systemic in teacher training programmes and in some subjects, as well as the

persistent disconnect between theory and practice.

Moreover, although initial training promotes collaborative and team-based skills, essential for tackling complex educational challenges, these skills are often not applied in practice, likely due to school culture and organisational structures that do not facilitate collaboration.

Finally, the many and varied ongoing training initiatives have not always translated into improved practices or stronger professional teams, perhaps because individual training needs and administrative certification requirements have taken precedence.

A Final Reflection

This article is being written under the shadow of the recent rejection by the United States government of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies, and the potential consequences this decision may have on the progress of inclusive education in the Western world, already weakened in countries where far-right parties have come to power. If the path toward inclusive education has been slow and challenging, conservative policies are unlikely to provide support.

One example comes from a recent article by Taneja-Johansson et al. (2024) on the situation in Sweden. Once known for its egalitarian education system and low rates of classification of students with special needs, Sweden is now seeing higher classification rates and a more segregated school system due to policy changes. These shifts in policy and practice have transformed Swedish education, moving it away from the “one school for all” principle that had long characterised the Nordic countries (Taneja-Johansson et al., 2024).

As a conclusion, we echo the words of Uthus and Qvortrup (2024), which also resonate in our own country: despite a long tradition and ambition for inclusive education, inclusion remains more of an ideology than a reality. Students with SEN are still largely excluded from the community—both socially and academically. The shortcomings are attributed to the difficulties and lack of success in creating adapted and differentiated teaching practices in mainstream classrooms (Uthus & Qvortrup, 2024). As we have seen, addressing this requires the commitment of governments, through policies

aligned with the UN Convention (2006), as well as the engagement of service providers, professionals, and families in schools.

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The Leadership of Schools in Spain. Analysis of Regulations and Evidence¹

La dirección de los centros educativos en España. Análisis normativos y evidencias

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the evolution of the Spanish regulatory framework between 1970 and 2020, about the professionalisation of managerial roles, and to draw some conclusions concerning policies focused on school leadership. The introduction outlines the special consideration given internationally to school leadership and its role in student outcomes and school improvement. The importance of the professionalisation of managerial roles is then considered to establish the conceptual framework. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the various education laws enacted in Spain during this period. To ensure a consistent comparison, a uniform analytical framework has been employed, inspired by international practices and comprising three criteria and eight sub-criteria related to professionalisation. Empirical evidence is then examined in relation to the case of the Autonomous Community of Navarre and its anomaly concerning the professionalisation of school leadership. The discussion of both types of results highlights the weaknesses of the Spanish model. The most innovative approaches to the professionalisation of school leadership are found in the LOPEGCE and the LOCE. The study concludes with several recommendations for the future of school leadership in Spain, including the pursuit of a clear and balanced school leadership model, inspired by the modern concept of a profession and aligned with international consensus on the complexity and challenges of school leadership and its implications; the incorporation of available empirical evidence; and the recognition of progress made in other developed countries towards the increasing professionalisation of managerial roles.

1

This study is, in part, indebted to López Rupérez (2024).

Key words: Leadership. Educational establishments. Educational legislation. Educational policy. Educational management.

Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como finalidad principal analizar la evolución del marco normativo español entre 1970 y 2020, en lo concerniente a la profesionalización de la función directiva, y extraer algunas de sus consecuencias en materia de políticas centradas en la dirección escolar. En la introducción se describe la consideración especial que se atribuye internacionalmente a la dirección de los centros educativos y a su papel en los resultados de los alumnos y en la mejora escolar. La importancia de la profesionalización de la función directiva es considerada, a continuación, a fin de focalizar el marco conceptual. Seguidamente, se efectúa un análisis comparado sobre las diferentes leyes educativas aprobadas en España en dicho periodo. Al objeto de asegurar una comparación homogénea, se ha empleado un mismo patrón de análisis, inspirado en las prácticas internacionales y compuesto por tres criterios y ocho subcriterios relativos a la profesionalización. Se consideran después las evidencias empíricas aplicadas al caso de la Comunidad foral de Navarra y a su anomalía en materia de profesionalización de la dirección escolar. La discusión de ambos tipos de resultados subraya las debilidades del modelo español. Las visiones más innovadoras en materia de profesionalización de la dirección escolar corresponden a la LOPEGCE y a la LOCE. Se concluye con algunas recomendaciones que miran al futuro de la dirección escolar en España, tales como la búsqueda de un modelo de dirección escolar explícito, equilibrado e inspirado en la idea moderna de profesión que se alinee con el consenso internacional sobre la complejidad y la dificultad de la dirección escolar y sus consecuencias; que incorpore la evidencia empírica disponible; y que valore los avances producidos en otros países desarrollados, en el sentido de una profesionalización creciente de la función directiva.

Palabras clave: Liderazgo. Establecimientos de enseñanza. Legislación educacional. Política educacional. Gestión educacional.

Introduction

The acknowledged importance of the impact of school leadership quality on the quality of schools has progressively been consolidated over decades on an empirical basis. Its direct and indirect effects are regarded as significant in both academic and institutional circles. For instance, the OECD (2017)

has highlighted a series of channels through which leadership influences the reality of schools in the following terms:

“School headteachers play a key role in managing schools. They can shape teachers’ professional development, define the school’s educational goals, ensure that teaching practice is directed toward achieving goals, suggest modifications to improve teaching practice, and help resolve problems that may arise in the classroom or among teachers” (p. 120).

This influence, which spreads in a “cascading” manner and ultimately reaches all students in educational institutions, explains the international importance currently attributed to policies focused on school leadership.

There are two types of evidence that, due to their convergence, underpin this broad consensus and merit emphasis: qualitative or observational evidence, primarily linked to the effective schools movement (Purkey and Smith, 1983; Lezotte, 1991); and evidence derived from quantitative estimates of the association between leadership quality and school performance (Leithwood *et al.*, 2019).

Regarding the first, it is worth recalling Hechinger’s (1981) description, in which he states:

“I have never seen a good school with a bad headteacher, nor a bad school with a good headteacher. I have seen poor schools transform into good ones and, regrettably, outstanding schools rapidly decline. In every case, the rise or fall could be easily traced to the quality of the headteacher” (p.33).

That qualitative perception aligns with the impressions of inspectors and senior officials in the Spanish educational administration, who, with responsibilities in the management of educational institutions, have had the opportunity to closely observe schools and their development.

However, the effective school’s movement, employing naturalistic methodologies, has identified through numerous empirical studies (Klitgaard and Hall, 1973; Purkey, 1983; Lezotte, 1991) the common characteristics of schools that succeed in achieving good results in socially disadvantaged environments. These attributes are known as “correlates” and are distinguished

by their consistency and universality; that is, they are repeatedly observed in both primary and secondary schools, on both sides of the Atlantic, and across both the first and second generations of research (Lezotte, 1991). The quality of leadership, specifically in the form of pedagogical or instructional leadership, remains a constant piece of this puzzle.

The second type of evidence comes from purely quantitative analyses, most often linked to studies examining the association between leadership quality—or specific aspects or dimensions of it—and school success, measured by student performance in standardised tests. Reviews and meta-analyses on this issue are available in the literature (Uysal and Sarier, 2018; Robinson *et al.*, 2009; Leithwood *et al.*, 2004), yielding varying results regarding the strength of the relationship between these two variables. Estimates generally fall within an approximate range of 10 to 20%, depending on factors such as the type of school, the dimension of leadership under examination, and the country. In the case of Spain, the strength of this association has been estimated at 18.8% for secondary schools when academic outcomes are measured using the PISA 2015 assessments (López Rupérez *et al.* 2020).

There are examples of studies that straddle both types of evidence. Such is the case of the research conducted by Bryk *et al.* (2010), who took advantage of a naturally occurring situation—one not specifically designed for that purpose—created by a reform affecting public schools in Chicago, which granted schools greater autonomy in appointing their headteachers. As the authors conclude (Bender *et al.*, 2006):

“Only 11% of schools with weak leadership achieve substantial improvement in reading. (...) The probability of achieving significant improvements in mathematics is seven times higher in schools with strong leadership than in those with weak leadership” (p. 24).

A significant observation comes from the empirical analysis conducted by E. A. Hanushek and colleagues (Hanushek *et al.*, 2016) on the school system of the State of Texas. The authors conclude that improving the quality of headteachers yields benefits even greater than those obtained by improving the quality of teachers, in the sense that it comparatively affects a much larger number of students.

The central objective of this study is to analyse the evolution of the Spanish regulatory framework between 1970 and 2020 from the perspective of the professionalisation of school leadership and to draw the appropriate lessons for policies focused on school leadership. For this reason, we will highlight the importance of the professionalisation of leadership, stemming from the special consideration given internationally to the management of educational institutions and its role in student outcomes and school improvement.

Next, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the various Spanish education laws enacted during this period. To ensure a consistent comparison, we will employ a uniform analytical framework comprising three main criteria and eight plausible sub-criteria related to professionalisation. Subsequently, we will examine the evidence applied to the case of the Autonomous Community of Navarre and its anomaly concerning the professionalisation of school leadership, and we will discuss the findings obtained from both approaches. Finally, we will conclude with some reflections on the future of school leadership in Spain.

The importance of professionalising the management role

The demand for greater professionalisation of school leadership is one of the key elements of a broad international consensus, firmly established for several decades in multilateral organisations with responsibilities in education (Delors *et al.*, 1996; Pont *et al.*, 2008a and 2008b).

The recognition of the complexity of leadership roles, based on task analysis (Leithwood *et al.* 2019; Fullan, 2014), together with extensive empirical evidence of its impact on student achievement and school quality (Sammons, 1995; Leithwood *et al.*, 2004; Leithwood *et al.*, 2019; López Rupérez *et al.*), explains why most developed countries have upheld a vision of school leadership through the lens of professionalisation. UNESCO itself

has recently reaffirmed this perspective (UNESCO, 2024) due to its connection with the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015).

National and international studies agree in recognising that the responsibilities of school leadership constitute a distinct activity from teaching. Leadership roles require a set of conceptual, methodological, and technical skills that are specific to the position and not necessarily required for teaching. While school leadership must certainly be built upon a solid foundation of teaching experience, it also demands its own professional competencies.

Professionalising school leadership, therefore, means incorporating that set of knowledge, skills, and experiences—specific to leadership roles—within the framework of a mature profession. This requires defining an explicit and well-structured model that enables an adaptive evolution in response to contextual changes, guided by a constructive regulatory approach.

The Australian Council of Professions (2004) articulated a robust and contemporary vision of the concept of a profession in the following terms:

“A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards, present themselves as such to society, and are accepted by it as possessing specific knowledge and skills, organised within a widely recognised learning framework and derived from research, training, and high-level education; and who are prepared to apply that knowledge and exercise those skills in the interest of others.”

In this definition, the characteristic features of well-established professions are easily recognisable, and it highlights the importance attributed to three key components: expert knowledge—organised and transferable—specific to the profession; the professional or practice-based community; and ethical obligations.

The professionalisation of an activity leads not only to improved performance and its consequent impact but also, as a result, to its social recognition. As we have noted elsewhere (López Rupérez, 2014):

“The social acceptance of a profession, its recognition, and prestige are linked, in one way or another, to the ability of its members to effectively

apply an organised body of knowledge and skills in the practice of their profession and in solving the characteristic problems it entails. The essence of a successful professional practice lies in the effective utilisation of this expert knowledge base” (p.76).

These two aspects of professionalisation—prestige and organised knowledge—reinforce each other, creating a virtuous cycle that, considering the available evidence, is one of the key tools for advancing the education system as a whole. Given this, it is unsurprising that, despite the distinct cultural traditions of the United States and France, both have chosen to assign school leadership a specific professional status, separate from teaching and, therefore, not temporary. In other words, according to both models, a school leader, even if they originate from the classroom, will never return to it (López Rupérez, 2024).

Ultimately, the professionalisation of school leadership ensures, with a high degree of certainty, the quality of school management—understood in a broad sense—and its impact on the overall quality of the education system.

The evolution of regulatory frameworks regarding the professionalisation of school management in Spain: 1970-2020

An analysis of the historical background of legislation on school leadership in Spain, prior to the period between 1970 and 2020—which will be examined later—reveals a distinct regulatory approach across different educational stages. For instance, the Law of 26 February 1953 on the Organisation of Secondary Education (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 1953)—also known as the *Ruiz Giménez Act*, after the Minister of Education who promoted it—established in Article 27 a direct appointment process for the leadership of secondary education institutes, determined by ministerial designation.

However, the development of the consolidated text of the Primary Education Act (1945), through Decree 985/1967 of 20 April, established

the Regulations for the School Headteachers' Corps for this educational stage (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 1967). This decree created the School Headteachers' Corps and defined rigorous, objective, and professionalised procedures for accessing leadership roles, based on a two-step sequence: first, a selection process through competitive examination (*oposición*), followed by initial training for the selected candidates.

This differentiated approach was later rectified through two legislative measures: the first, introduced by the General Education Act (LGE, 1970), which abolished the School Headteachers' Corps; and the second, contained in the Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE, 1985), which unified the procedures for accessing leadership positions and, as a general rule, eliminated the direct appointment process.

A pattern for comparative analysis

With the aim of facilitating a consistent comparative analysis of the successive regulatory frameworks in Spain from the perspective of the professionalisation of school leadership, we will rely on a plausible analytical framework, inspired by international practices and structured in the form of criteria and sub-criteria, as defined in **Table I**.

TABLE I. An Analytical Framework for the Comparative Study of the Professionalisation of School Leadership in Spanish Legislation

Criteria	Sub-criteria
Access to school leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appointment to the position ○ Initial training. ○ Accreditation for the exercise of leadership functions.
Professional practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Authority. ○ Responsibility.
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continuous training. ○ Performance evaluation. ○ Career progression.

Source: López Rupérez (2024).

The General Education and Educational Reform Financing Act (LGE, 1970)

In the implementation of the LGE, two decrees were issued concerning school leadership: the first, Decree 2957/1972 of 3 October, which abolished the School Headteachers' Corps and regulated its integration into the Corps of General Basic Education Teachers, or alternatively, allowed members to remain in the abolished corps; the second, Decree 2655/1974 of 30 August, which regulated the exercise of leadership functions in National Colleges of General Basic Education. The procedure of direct appointment remained in place for access to leadership roles in National Institutes of Secondary Education.

Taking Decree 2655/1974 as a reference, the analysis of the corresponding regulatory text allows for the following characterisation, in accordance with the framework described in Table I.

Access to school leadership

In accordance with Article Three, Section One, *appointment to the position* is made by the Director General of Personnel, upon the recommendation of the Provincial Delegates of the Department, following a report from the respective Technical Education Inspectorates and after consulting the Teaching Staff Assembly and the Advisory Council of the School.

To be appointed as the Headteacher of a National College of General Basic Education, candidates must belong to the Corps of General Basic Education Teachers, be assigned to the school, and have completed a minimum of three years of service in state schools at this level (Article Three, Section Two).

Furthermore, regarding the *initial training* sub-criterion, Article 110.3 of the LGE stipulates that candidates must undergo “*special educational training and periodic retraining, which will qualify them to permanently exercise leadership functions.*”

With regard to the *accreditation for the exercise of leadership functions* sub-criterion, no such requirement was established, despite the fact that the

previous model entailed a stronger professionalising requirement—namely, membership in a specific management corp.

Professional practice

The conditions of professional practice, as described in Article Two, focus more on *responsibility* than on the exercise of *authority*. This section of the decree states that “the headteacher shall be responsible for guiding and organising the activities of the school, as well as for coordinating its teaching staff. Additionally, the headteacher shall serve as the President of the Teaching Staff Assembly and the Advisory Council.”

Professional development

Of the three sub-criteria assigned in Table I to this comparative criterion, only continuous *training* is mentioned, referred to as “periodic retraining,” as established both in the law and in the decree. There is no reference to *performance evaluation*, nor is *career progression* considered. A limit of five years is set for the exercise of leadership functions, after which the headteacher fully returns to teaching duties.

In summary, the LGE represents a setback in the professionalisation of school leadership compared to the previous regulatory framework. This is not only due to the abolition of the School Headteachers’ Corps and the consequent reduction in access requirements but also because the mandatory combination of leadership and teaching, as established by the law, diminishes the time dedicated to effective school management. Some authors (Mayorga, 2007) have referred to this regression, citing the conclusion reached in the Final Report of the Evaluation Commission on the General Education and Educational Reform Financing Act (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 1976), which identified the “lack of professionalised leadership” as a factor with negative effects on schools (Evaluation Commission on the General Education and Educational Reform Financing Act, 1976).

The Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE, 1985)

The LODE is the first law to develop the provisions set out in Article 27 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Within this broad regulatory framework, it establishes the rules governing school leadership in public schools and publicly funded institutions.

Access to school leadership

Article 37 sets out all matters related to *appointment to the position*, which can be summarised as:

- The headteacher of the school shall be elected by the School Council and appointed by the competent Educational Administration.
- Candidates must be teachers at the school with at least one year of service at the institution and three years of teaching experience.
- The election shall be decided by an absolute majority of the members of the School Council.
- In the absence of candidates, if no candidate secures an absolute majority, or in the case of newly established schools, the relevant Educational Administration shall appoint a provisional headteacher for a period of one year.

Regarding the sub-criterion of *initial training*, and unlike the previous law, the LODE does not include any explicit reference to it, nor to any form of *accreditation* as a requirement for exercising leadership functions.

Professional practice

The responsibilities of the headteacher are outlined in Article 38. These encompass both individual *authority* and *responsibility*, as follows:

- Officially represent the school.
- Enforce compliance with laws and current regulations.

- Direct and coordinate all school activities in accordance with prevailing regulations, without prejudice to the competencies of the School Council².
- Lead all staff assigned to the school.
- Convene and preside over academic events and meetings of all the school's governing bodies.
- Authorise expenditures in line with the school's budget and manage payments.
- Endorse official certifications and documents of the school.
- Propose appointments for leadership positions.
- Implement the decisions of the governing bodies within their scope of authority.
- Any other responsibilities assigned by the relevant organisational regulations.

Regarding the tenure of these specific functions, it is established that:

- The headteacher's term of office is three years.
- The headteacher may be dismissed or suspended before the end of this term if they seriously fail to fulfil their duties, following a reasoned report from the School Council and after hearing from the individual concerned.

Professional development

The law does not address professional development, neither in its limited form as *continuous training* nor in its broader sense, which would include training, *performance evaluation*, incentives, and *career progression*. Like the previous LGE, leadership is considered a temporary function, and vertical mobility is not envisaged in this law, nor is continuous training. In this context, it is not surprising that, as an unintended consequence of the law, more than half of headteacher appointments at that time were extraordinary

² The school board selects the principal and designates the management team, resolves conflicts, imposes sanctions, approves the budget, evaluates the annual general programme, approves the internal regulations, and supervises the general activity of the school in both administrative and educational aspects.

(López Rupérez, 1994).

Organic Law on Participation, Evaluation and Governance of the Schools (LOPEGCE, 1995)

This new law—like the previous one, introduced by a socialist government—is considered an extension, in terms of schools, of its predecessor, the LOGSE (1990). It represented a step forward in the professionalisation of the leadership role, which, given the context and its regulatory background, can be considered significant³.

Access to school leadership

In terms of the *headteacher's appointment*, this law (arts. 17 and 20), while maintaining the elective procedure assigned to the School Council, first established in the LODE, introduces as a novelty the requirement to present their merits, a “leadership programme,” and the composition of the governance team that would form their candidacy. Additionally, the duration of the term was extended from three to four years.

Regarding the sub-criterion of *initial training*, it introduced the requirement of prior *accreditation* before exercising the leadership role (art. 19). This was a comprehensive process that, in addition to completing a training programme organised by the educational administrations, required a positive assessment both in other leadership or coordination positions and in the classroom.

Professional practice

The LOPEGCE adds, from the very law, competences for the headteacher that were not present in the previous law (art. 21), among which it is worth highlighting, in the realm of *authority*, the ability to appoint the rest of the leadership team; and, in terms of *responsibility*, to carry out, by delegation,

³ For a description of the objectives of the Law, see *The Impact of Laws in 50 Years of Education* (Marchesi, A.) in this special issue.

the hiring of works, services, and supplies.

Although the School Council retains much of its competences, it no longer appoints the leadership team. And while it sets guidelines, it no longer supervises the general activity of the centre in administrative and teaching aspects.

Professional development

In terms of professional development, undeniable progress is made in the sense of increasing professionalisation. Thus, programmes for *continuous training* to improve the qualifications of the leadership teams are contemplated (art. 25), and for the first time in Spanish legislation, the *evaluation of performance* in the leadership function is introduced (art. 34). Regarding the sub-criterion of *professional career*, although no articulated career is foreseen for headteachers – only a vague reference is made to “economic and professional compensation” (art. 25.4) – and leadership remains a temporary function, a robust incentive is introduced in the form of the partial consolidation of the salary supplement linked to the leadership function, following a positive performance evaluation (art. 25.5).

Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE, 2002)

This was the first educational law from a government led by the Partido Popular. The alternation in the national government, which occurred after the law had come into effect, allowed for its application to be delayed by using a Royal Decree that regulated the implementation schedule. Through this legislative mechanism, it was replaced by another law without being fully implemented. Nonetheless, due to its design, it formally served as a reference for greater professionalisation of school leadership, and in some specific respects, it provided an additional push in that direction.

Access to school leadership

Regarding the sub-criterion *Appointment for the position* the elective approach previously implemented by the School Council is replaced by a selective one, through a merit-based competition among career civil servant teachers from the educational bodies and regulations corresponding to the institution (art. 87).

This selective process is managed by a Commission – introduced in Spanish educational legislation – made up of representatives from the educational administrations and, at least 30%, representatives from the respective school (art. 88).

The prior requirement for *accreditation* and its various components, present in the previous law, is eliminated. However, it is replaced by a subsequent requirement, consisting of the successful completion of an *initial training* programme for the selected candidates. This programme is organised by the educational administrations and includes a theoretical training course related to the tasks assigned to the managerial role, along with a practical period (art. 88).

Furthermore, the requirement of having a permanent assignment at the centre is removed to link the exercise of the managerial function to the candidate's demonstrated professional competence and to make mobility possible, facilitating other policies, such as compensatory ones.

Although the duration of mandates is reduced to three years, the possibility of extending them through the renewal mechanism is introduced, even at different institutions.

Professional practice

The headteacher's competencies are expanded, compared to the provisions of the LOPEGCE (art. 79), in terms of both *authority* and *responsibility*. Regarding the first of these sub-criteria, it is envisaged that headteachers will be granted the necessary autonomy for management (art. 92.1), within a new framework in which the School Council retains much of its competencies, but with a focus not as a governing body, but as a consultative participation body.

As for the second, the focus is on encouraging collaboration with families, institutions, and organisations, fostering an orderly school climate, promoting improvement plans, and initiating internal evaluation processes within the institution, among other things.

Professional development

In terms of professional development, continuous training is provided through mandatory management training courses, so that headteachers can update their technical and professional knowledge (art. 92).

As for *performance evaluation*, its link to incentives is maintained (art. 94.3), as was established in the previous law, and it is also associated with the acquisition of the “headteacher category”, after a positive evaluation at the end of their mandate (art. 89).

Finally, in relation to the sub-criterion of *professional career*, alongside the possibility of accessing the permanent “headteacher category”, there is an option to exempt, either partially or completely, the management team—especially the headteacher – from direct teaching, depending on the characteristics of the school (art. 92.4); it also provides for the continuation of the managerial role after the mandate, by participating in a new selection process; and it foresees a degree of vertical mobility, for the “provision of positions in the public teaching service, as well as for other professional purposes within the educational sphere as established by the educational authorities” (art. 94.2).

Organic Law of Education (LOE, 2006)

This new educational law, passed by a socialist government, introduced several changes compared to the provisions of the LOCE (Law on Education Quality). These changes represented, to some extent, a return to the model established in previous socialist laws, although some of the elements introduced in the two preceding laws were preserved.

Access to school leadership

Regarding the sub-criterion of *appointment to the position*, the selection committee model introduced by the LOCE is maintained, but the proportion of representatives from the centre is increased—at least sixty-six percent (art. 135) compared to thirty percent of the previous law—to such an extent that, in practice, it returns to the philosophy of an elective model inspired by the LODE.

The law reintroduces the requirement of having at least one full school year of seniority at the centre, as well as the submission of a leadership project that includes, among other elements, objectives, action lines, and their evaluation (Article 134). The duration of the term is also reinstated at four years. Candidates from within the same centre are given preference (Article 134.1.c). Beyond the knowledge of the center itself that this measure may favor, it is made difficult by it. to transfer proven leadership knowledge and experience to centres that need it most.

Regarding *initial training*, the mandatory completion of the training programme by selected candidates is maintained, but candidates with two years of experience in a leadership role are exempt from the entire initial training, not just the *practicum* as was the case under the LOCE (Article 136), neglecting the importance of systematic knowledge of the conceptual basis and best practices.

Similar to what was established in the LOCE, the *prior* requirement for *accreditation to exercise the leadership function*—present in the LOPEGCE and somewhat inspired by Anglo-Saxon models—is eliminated in favour of the French model, albeit without the competitive examination (López Rupérez, 2024).

Professional practice

In relation to the LOCE, regarding the competencies of the headteacher (Article 79), the task of pedagogical leadership is added, and the reference to greater management autonomy for headteachers to drive and develop improvement projects is removed. The School Council regains its role as a governing body, as established in the original LODE law, along with most of the competencies laid out in that law, except for the election of the headteacher

or the appointment of the leadership team, for example. However, the Council now has the possibility of drafting proposals and reports on the functioning of the school and the improvement of management quality (Article 127). In conclusion, *authority* is reduced while *responsibility* is increased.

Professional development

The issue of *continuous training* is not addressed in the law. However, *performance evaluation* is considered in similar terms to those established in the two previous laws. As for the *professional career*, the category of headteacher is eliminated (Article 139); the possibility of exempting the headteacher, either partially or fully, from direct teaching is closed; and the possibility of continuing with the exercise of the leadership function through participation in new competitions is also closed. The possibility of a certain degree of promotion is partially maintained (Article 139.2), although it is neither structured nor sufficiently specified.

Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE, 2013)

Contrary to what might have been expected, in this second law of a government from the Popular Party, there is no clear recovery of the advancements described in the LOCE, in terms of greater professionalisation. Instead, a middle-ground and somewhat conceptually confused formula is adopted.

Access to school leadership

Regarding the *appointment for the position* (art. 88), the model of the Selection Committee is maintained, but the participation of the Administration in the composition of the Committee is increased (between 50 and 70 percent) compared to the previous law, in a direction like that established in the LOCE.

The preferential consideration of candidates from the centre, which was present in its predecessor, the LOE, is removed.

Concerning the sub-criterion of *initial training*, the exemption from training for two years of experience in the managerial role is eliminated, and the prior requirement of having completed an official training course on the development of the managerial role is reinstated (art.134), which is closer to the *accreditation for the exercise of leadership functions* introduced in the LOPEGCE, but less robust.

Professional practice

Regarding the LOE, additional competencies are attributed to the headteacher (art.132) that were previously assigned to the School Council in its predecessor, and it is specified that, in carrying out “quality actions,” the school headteacher will have extensive autonomy (art.122bis). The responsibility of exercising pedagogical leadership and promoting innovation and the development of plans to achieve the objectives of the educational project is removed. The School Council reduces its competencies compared to the LOE, although it is still considered a governing body (art.127). It can be said that, in comparison to its predecessor, the *authority* and corresponding *responsibility* of the headteacher are increased.

Professional development

Essentially, the status quo of the previous law is maintained in this regard.

Organic Law Amending the LOE (LOMLOE, 2020)

This a law occurred because of political alternation and that its responsible parties are the same as those behind the LOE suggests that this new law would reflect a certain preservation of that model.

Access to school leadership

Regarding the sub-criterion for the *appointment to the position*, the requirements for access to school management (Article 134) established in the LOE are maintained, and the proportions in the composition of the selection committee are restored, reducing the administration's participation to less than a third of its members (Article 135). However, a serving school headteacher is introduced into the selection committee. Candidacies from faculty members within the school are once again particularly valued.

Concerning the *accreditation* for the management function, no strict procedure is established in this regard, although a mandatory *initial training* programme is reinstated after the selection process. However, exceptions to this training requirement are considered in some cases (Article 136.6), while the responsibility for determining the training requirement is delegated to the educational administrations (Article 134.1.c).

Professional practice

Regarding the headteacher's competencies (Article 132), most of those outlined in the LOE are reinstated, although some additional responsibilities are added, such as promoting experiments, pedagogical innovations, and educational programmes; fostering the qualification and training of the teaching staff; and designing the planning and organisation of the school's teaching activities, among others. Therefore, the *responsibilities* of the headteacher are increased, but compared to the LOMCE, the headteacher's *authority* is reduced.

Professional development

Regarding the sub-criterion of *continuous training*, the law includes the completion of update modules for the performance of the headteacher's duties. Otherwise, the provisions established in the LOE (Article 139) are maintained verbatim.

Empirical evidence applied to the case of the Autonomous Community of Navarre

The Autonomous Community of Navarre constitutes a unique case in Spain regarding the professionalisation of the leadership role, which, in this analytical context, deserves special consideration.

In 2020, we published a quantitative study on leadership in Spain in the British journal *Leadership and Policy in Schools* (López Rupérez *et al.* 2020). The study was based on the development of four partial indicators, corresponding to different dimensions of leadership in schools. The calculation of these indicators relied on responses to the 2015 PISA questionnaire directed at school headteachers, and the results from the meta-analysis by Robinson and colleagues (Robinson *et al.*, 2009). These partial indicators were integrated into a weighted composite indicator regarding the quality of school leadership (LI). The study also examined, among other aspects, the distribution of this integrated indicator across different autonomous communities. Figure I show the territorialised results.

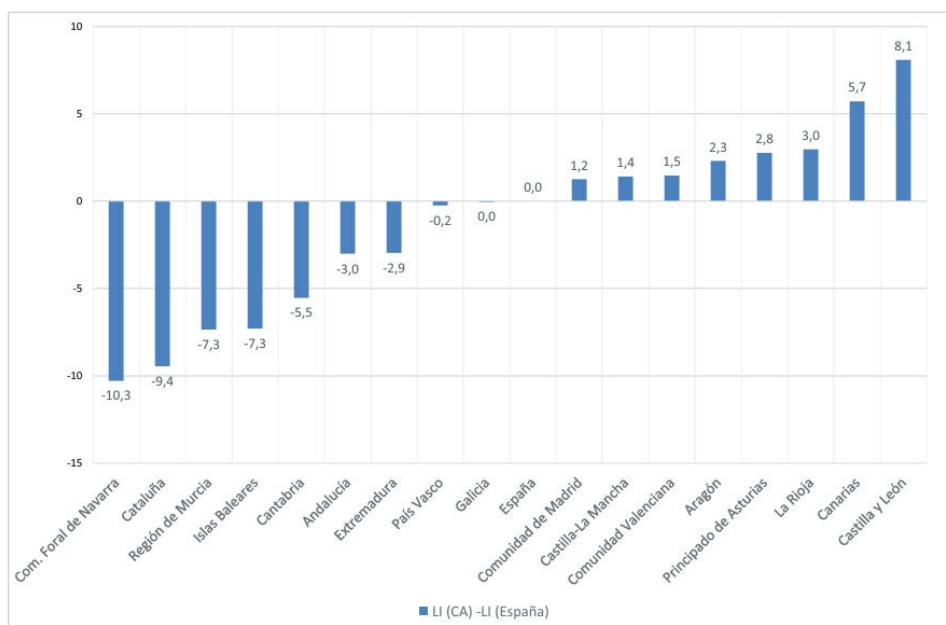
Although the results on the quality of leadership in public secondary education schools across Spain were not good the Autonomous Community of Navarre ranked very poorly on the LI indicator, coming in last place, 9.8 percentage points below the national average.

This study did not aim to provide an explanation for these results. For example, in the extreme case of the Autonomous Community of Navarre, further research, likely qualitative in nature, would have been necessary to gain a deeper understanding of this situation.

Sometime later, the study came to the attention of the Association of High School Headteachers of Navarra (ADIZE), which invited me to present it at their 2023 Meeting in Pamplona. The previous conversations with the attendees and organizers, as well as the subsequent public discussion with high-ranking officials of the Navarra educational administration, provided me with relevant information, at least to formulate a notably plausible explanatory hypothesis. It turns out that the corresponding educational administration had dispensed with the consolidation of the salary complement, associated with the continued and successful exercise of the management function. To have

suspended this incentive in the territory was very likely the reason why a very large majority of the principal appointments were being made through the extraordinary procedure.

FIGURE I. Deviations of the values of the integrated leadership indicator LI, compared to the sample value for Spain for public secondary education centres, by autonomous communities



Source: López Rupérez *et al.*, (2020)

This led to a designation which, in addition to the potential dissatisfaction it could cause in many cases, prevented thinking ahead about a leadership project, its development, and implementation supported by a suitable leadership team chosen for that purpose. Furthermore, the performance evaluation that should have been positive for the consolidation of the salary supplement was left in suspense. Thus, the following factors were aligning, with a more than likely negative result on the quality of leadership: the non-voluntary nature of the appointment; the improvised planning and

consequently improvised leadership action; the elimination of accountability linked to performance evaluation; and the various interactions between these factors.

One of the positive effects of the ADIZE Meeting has been that the Autonomous Community of Navarra, after decades of neglecting this element of professionalisation of the leadership function, has rectified, and in the sixth final provision of its budget law (B.O.E of 26 March 2024), it amends the Foral Legislative Decree of 30 August 1993, which approves the consolidated text of the Statute of Personnel at the service of the Public Administrations of Navarra, introducing the mentioned incentive and its conditions.

Discussion and conclusions

Table II synthesises the regulatory evolution analysed above, with 0 representing the baseline or reference level; + indicates progress in professionalisation compared to the previous law; = signifies the absence of substantial changes compared to the previous law; and - represents a regression in professionalisation relative to the previous law. It clearly shows, for example, the lack of stability in the model, except for performance evaluation, linked to incentives and introduced in the LOPEGCE. The progressive nature of responsibilities does not always align with the necessary increase in authority to carry them out. The most innovative views in the search for a new balance that strengthens the professionalisation of school leadership undoubtedly belong to the LOPEGCE and the LOCE. It is to their contributions that this weak constructive dynamic observed in the overall analyses can be attributed.

TABLE II. Evolution of Spanish legislation on the professionalisation of school leadership from 1970 to 2020.

Criteria	Sub-criteria	LGE	LODE	LOPEGCE	LOCE	LOE	LOMCE	LOMLOE
Access to school leadership	-Appointment to the position	0	-	=	+	-	+	-
	-Initial training	0	-	+	+	-	+	=
	-Accreditation for the exercise of leadership functions	0	=	+	-	=	=	=
Professional practice	-Authority	0	-	+	+	-	+	-
	-Responsability	0	+	+	+	+	+	+
Professional development	-Continuous training	0	-	+	=	-	=	+
	-Performance evaluation	0	=	+	=	=	=	=
	-Career progression	0	=	=	+	-	=	=

Note: 0 represents the reference level; + denotes progress in professionalisation compared to the previous law; = indicates no substantial changes compared to the previous law; - signifies a regression in professionalisation compared to the preceding law.

From the evolution of Spanish basic legislation on school leadership in public schools between 1970 and 2020, it can be inferred that there has been a lack of an explicit and well-articulated model, whose pillars—often unclear and lacking a well-founded justification—must be identified by the researcher through an interpretation of the laws. This poor practice, which at times borders on arbitrariness or a tacit ideological influence and moves away from a rational approach to educational policies, has hindered the development of a calm and well-founded debate as a precursor to political agreement.

For instance, from the perspective of the regulatory frameworks, there has been a seesawing between models of initial training depending on whether it occurs before or after the selection process, with no effort made to rationally justify the preference for one over the other. The same can be said regarding selection versus election as the process for appointing a headteacher, where in the latter case, an underlying ideological conception can be sensed, albeit hidden under a formal convergence around the novelty of the Commission introduced by the LOCE.

In the modifications made concerning the powers or competencies of the headteacher, the series of shifts characteristic of a conflict between a more

professionalising vision of the headteacher role and one more focused on preserving the School Council's original character as a governing body has predominated in all laws since democracy was reestablished. This is especially reflected in the School Council model and the fluctuating proportions in the composition of the selection committee, as well as in the shifts in the relative importance between the Administration and the School Council/Staff, depending on the political stance of the law.

In such a key area as the management of leadership talent through professional development, it can be observed that, while the evaluation of the headteacher's performance has become consolidated over time, no professional career model has been established. Vertical mobility, or promotion, is only addressed in some laws and is presented as a vague ideal whose development, after so many decades, is still to be formulated and implemented. Horizontal mobility is only hinted at in the LOCE.

Continuous professional development is referenced in various regulations, though its prescriptive nature has not been clearly established in all legislative processes. Only the consolidation of the recognition of the salary supplement linked to the headteacher role is firmly established, serving as a valuable extrinsic incentive for headteachers, with a notable repercussion on the quality of leadership in public schools, as evidenced by the analysis of the Navarra case on an empirical basis, to the point of prompting a regulatory correction in the right direction.

Beyond the validation of the diagnostic tool used in the referenced case—due to its capacity to detect the undesired effects of this procedural anomaly—the analyses have highlighted that neglecting certain elements of professionalisation is associated with a decline in the quality of headteacher functions, likely having a negative impact on the results that these same students in Navarra could have achieved under more favourable leadership conditions in their schools.

The comparative analysis also draws attention to the fact that, more than half a century ago, and in a pre-democratic social and political context, the General Education Law benefited from both a White Paper and an evaluation of its effects (Comisión de Evaluación de la Ley General de Educación y Financiamiento de la Reforma Educativa, 1976). The absence of these best practices in the vast majority of laws passed during democracy aligns with the opinion of a prestigious and diverse panel of experts, who have considered the failure to base policies “on knowledge, empirical evidence, and research”

as one of the main weaknesses of governance within the Spanish education system (López Rupérez, 2021).

It is worth adding to the above a notable territorial dispersion in the criteria for the regulatory development, by the Autonomous Communities, of the basic State legislation as the Federation of Associations of High School Headteachers has highlighted (FEDADI, 2022).

In view of all the above, it can be concluded that Spain faces the important task of finding a balanced school leadership model inspired by the modern idea of a profession; one that takes into account the international consensus on the complexity and difficulty of school leadership and its consequences; incorporates available empirical evidence; values the progress made in other developed countries towards the growing professionalisation of the headteacher role; and, finally, does not hinder the use of proven effective school leadership—but rather promotes it—as a fundamental tool for educational compensation. This is one of those evidence-based policies, accepted internationally, that would contribute to increasing the real equality of opportunities within the Spanish education system.

The political agreement, essential for promoting substantial and sustainable advances, must be based on an explicit model that serves as the foundation for a calm analysis and public deliberation—as befits a pluralistic society—in which serving headteachers are involved.

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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, psycho-pedagogical 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 Preschools 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 these 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 psycho-pedagogical 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 profession¹. 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 degree²; 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.

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 guidance³ 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 education⁴

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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Climent 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)⁵. 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

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 excellent 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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Evolution of textbooks in Spain over the last fifty years

Evolución de los libros de texto en España en los últimos cincuenta años

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Abstract

Since the enactment of the General Education Law of 1970, textbooks in Spain have undergone significant transformations, shaped by a combination of factors including changes in curricular content and teaching models, the diversification of regional curricula, the removal of prior authorization requirements, the consolidation of large publishing groups, and modernization in design. Significant changes have also occurred in the authors and illustrators of school textbooks. They have evolved into teams of teachers, experts in their respective disciplines, as well as teams of professionals specializing in photography, illustration, and design. Editorial renewals are influenced by the restructuring of the main text and the increasing prominence of visual content. The text moves away from its linear form, adopting concise formats; illustrations increase in number, size, and diversity; and the prevalence of paratextual elements for conveying information, such as tables, charts, maps, and diagrams, significantly rises. Their design and structure have gradually evolved to address new pedagogical needs and demands, integrating more visual and interactive approaches that facilitate content comprehension and promote a more dynamic, contextualized learning experience. Despite ongoing political shifts and the succession of various educational laws,

textbooks have demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to political, social, economic, and technological contexts. However, the use of school textbooks remains a subject of debate: some educators employ them passively, while others adopt an active and critical approach. The critical approach is essential for effectively selecting, adapting, and applying instructional resources—including textbooks—in the classroom, as well as for teaching students to read, comprehend, and interpret evolving texts.

Key Words: Textbooks, Curriculum, Publishers, Authors, Textuality

Resumen

Desde la promulgación de la Ley General de Educación de 1970, los libros de texto en España han experimentado transformaciones notables, moldeadas por una combinación de factores que incluyen los cambios en los contenidos y modelos curriculares de enseñanza, la diversificación de los currículos autonómicos, la eliminación de la autorización previa, la consolidación de grandes grupos editoriales y la modernización en el diseño editorial. También se han producido importantes cambios en los autores e ilustradores de los textos escolares, que han evolucionado hacia equipos de profesores expertos en sus campos disciplinares, y equipos de profesionales de la fotografía, la ilustración y el diseño. En las renovaciones editoriales influye la reestructuración del texto principal y el creciente protagonismo del contenido visual. El texto se aleja de su forma lineal, adoptando formatos breves; la ilustración incrementa en número, tamaño y naturaleza, y aumenta la presencia de elementos paratextuales de transmisión de la información como tablas, gráficos, mapas, diagramas. Su diseño y estructura han ido evolucionando para responder a las nuevas necesidades y demandas pedagógicas, integrando enfoques más visuales e interactivos que facilitan la comprensión de los contenidos y fomentan un aprendizaje más dinámico y contextualizado. A pesar de los cambios políticos constantes y la sucesión de distintas leyes educativas, los libros de texto han demostrado una extraordinaria capacidad de adaptación a los contextos políticos, sociales, económicos y tecnológicos. No obstante, el uso de los textos escolares se debate entre el uso pasivo de algunos docentes, y el uso activo y crítico de otros. El enfoque crítico es crucial para seleccionar, adaptar y aplicar recursos didácticos—incluidos los libros de texto—en el aula de forma efectiva, pero también para enseñar a leer, comprender e interpretar textos cambiantes.

Palabras Clave: Libros de texto, Curriculum, Editoriales, Autores, Textualidad

Introduction

In this article we will deal with the changes that school textbooks for infant, primary and secondary education in Spain have undergone over the last 50

years,¹ approaching them from four perspectives: on the one hand, we consider how textbooks, as supports for the official curriculum, have been transformed in terms of their contents and didactic proposals throughout this period, becoming more complex with the proliferation of regional curricula. On the other hand, we review the path towards the liberalisation of administrative control over textbooks. This aspect is closely related to the following one: the consideration of the school textbook as a commercial product. The textbook is part of a large market that has developed considerably in the last half century, giving publishers an important influence on textbook policy and on the very definition of the school curriculum. Fourthly, we look at aspects of textbook writing and production, examining the evolution of textbook authorship and editorial design. By analysing these four approaches: curricular content, administrative control, commercial product, and editorial design and production, we cover several of the functions of textbooks that Manuel de Puelles detailed at the beginning of the 21st century: symbolic, by representing official knowledge; pedagogical, by transmitting basic knowledge; political, by including content that is regulated by the public authorities; and commercial, by having an economic entity (Puelles 2000, p. 6).

The beginning of the modernisation of school textbooks in Spain

Although our study aims to describe the changes that have taken place in school textbooks and in the publishing market since the General Education Law of 1970 (LGE), our analysis begins in the mid-1960s, when the first changes that would crystallise in the following decade were announced. Analysing these years of the so-called “late Francoism” is essential for an accurate understanding of the evolution of the school text in Spain up to the

¹ In this article we will not deal specifically with school textbooks in digital format. We will limit ourselves to analysing the basic school text used by pupils, which has the same content, images, composition, *activities, etc.* in both paper and digital formats. A different issue is the numerous complementary materials for teachers and pupils that publishers publish only digitally.

present day.

The starting point for the modernisation of textbooks in Spain is to be found in the work of the *Centro de Documentación y Orientación Didáctica de Enseñanza Primaria* (CEDODEP) [Center for Documentation and Didactic Guidance for Primary Education], created in 1958 (Tiana, 1998, pp. 158-166). This Documentation Center initiated research and proposed technical standards for a new approach to textbooks. The initiatives were fundamentally based on a critique of the recurrent use in Spanish schools of the traditional encyclopaedia, which brought together in a single volume all the content to be taught at the different levels, with a memorization-based and limiting perspective for any didactic reform. Encyclopaedias, together with other textual genres such as extensive reading books or primers for teaching reading, which survived, partly due to economic needs, since the 1940s, are representative of what Escolano describes as “post-war educational neo-archaism” (Escolano, 1998a, p. 20).

The instrument that made possible the emergence of a “second generation” of school textbooks were the *Cuestionarios Nacionales* [National syllabus] of 1965, designed by CEDODEP itself to support the Law that in 1964 had imposed compulsory schooling up to the age of 14. These *Cuestionarios* recovered certain progressive traditions (globalisation, activism, realistic teaching) and appropriated new pedagogical proposals such as unit programming, behaviourist technology and image culture (Escolano, 1998a, pp. 29-30). From this new approach, they promoted the development of schoolbooks by subject and by course, didactic units for the application of the method of globalisation of teaching, exercise books or worksheets for individualised work.

The LGE of 1970, which gave continuity to the CEDODEP’s concern to improve teaching and the modernisation of school textbooks at a time when a major expansion of schooling was taking place with General Basic Education (EGB) as a development strategy, offered new possibilities for pedagogical renewal that would lead to a “redefinition of the reader” as a new active subject who had to combine reading with action (Escolano, 1998a, p. 21). Despite the criticisms of some pedagogical renewal movements that emerged in these years of late Francoism and the beginning of the democratic

transition, from then on, the recurrent use of school textbooks in the classroom was consolidated, at the same time as teachers' books or guides became a strategy to compensate for the deficient training of teachers. However, among innovative teachers in some schools, the new textbooks formed part of their resources in a more critical and eclectic way (Tiana, 2021, p. 349). According to Mauricio Santos, a publisher linked to the beginnings of the publishing house Anaya and later president of the *Asociación Nacional de Editores de Libros y Material de Enseñanza* (ANELE) [National Association of Educational Books and Media Publishers], the LGE of 1970 meant "the assumption by publishers of previously unthinkable functions, such as their important contribution to teacher training, in many cases surprised by curricula whose contents and approaches were new to them" (Santos, 2013, p. 16).

The evolution of school textbooks from the 1980s onwards

Despite the changes in the curriculum that began in the 1980s, incorporating, for example, new content on civic education to teach students about democratic values and constitutional principles, there were no major changes in school textbooks throughout the 1980s. The production of textbooks raised significantly due to the increase in school enrolment, and also due to the increase in the number of subjects on the syllabus, not only in EGB, but also in *Bachillerato* [Upper Secondary Education].

In the preparation of the new *Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo* (LOGSE), which was to be implemented in 1990, new curricular materials were proposed which would encourage a type of 'meaningful learning' in pupils. As Elena Rodríguez Navarro stated, in the change of conception of curricular materials proposed by the LOGSE, technical-methodological issues were to replace epistemological contents (Rodríguez Navarro, 1999, p. 102), an aspect to which the new school textbooks had to adapt. At the same time, school publishing became much more complex with the competences assumed by the Autonomous Communities in the development of the curriculum. School texts had to be adapted to the

Autonomous Communities differences. This also meant that books had to be published in the languages of those Autonomous Communities with their own official languages (Beas, 1999). More recently, from 2004 onwards, the proliferation of bilingual teaching (especially in English and French) in public and private schools has led to greater editorial diversity, as some subjects are also offered in other foreign languages.

Although the intention of the legislator and of some renovating tendencies was, besides giving a more active role to the pupil in the learning process, to give more autonomy and protagonism to teachers in the use of diverse didactic materials and in the application of a more constructivist and open curriculum, after the LOGSE the textbook was maintained and consolidated as the main resource used in the classroom, giving rise to a great development of school publishing. The new concept of “curricular materials” (which extended the concept of “textbook”) offered publishers the possibility of diversifying their educational resources, offering teachers “publishing projects” which include textbooks (at present, digital versions of the books are offered as an alternative), supplementary workbooks for recuperation of failed subjects or academic enrichment related to each subject, access to digital resources such as videos, presentations or educational games, reference books, classroom libraries, manipulative material, or specific resources for teachers (teaching proposals, solutions, pedagogical guidelines, proposals for school projects, area and classroom programs, etc.). In this way, publishers have managed to have an important capacity to guide classroom work, and have taken on “an invaluable task of teacher training”, taking on “the demands and needs of teachers, the only decisive and essential actors in the educational task” (Santos, 2013, p. 23).

The process towards the liberalisation of school publishing

Another very important aspect of the evolution of school textbooks over this long period is undoubtedly that of their control and authorisation, which has been liberalised up to the present day. Traditionally, school textbooks

have been a resource “intervened” from the political sphere, since, being impregnated with values, they are an ideological product that has been the preferred object of educational policy in all countries (Puelles, 2007, pp. 1-2). But they have also been subject to control in many other aspects of a denominational, pedagogical, curricular, technical and even economic nature.

In this sense, the process of liberalisation of school textbooks does not mean, in the period we are dealing with, only an elimination of the strict ideological control and prior censorship imposed by Franco’s regime (which was relaxed in the 1960s), since many other controls were maintained during the transition and the democratic period itself, until the complete liberalisation of the publication and distribution of school textbooks in 2006.

The LGE of 1970 maintained the prior ministerial approval of school textbooks, which had to be adjusted ideologically, but also in terms of their adaptation to the official curriculum and their didactic suitability. However, in 1974, some new features were included in the legislation: once the textbooks had been approved, their selection was entrusted to the cloister of the EGB or *Formación Profesional* [Professional Training] centres, or, where appropriate, to the didactic seminars in the *Bachillerato* [Upper Secondary Education] centres, including additionally the approval of this choice by the parents’ association in each school. These regulations were to be applied by the Autonomous Communities that gradually obtained powers in education. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education set the maximum sale prices for school textbooks until 1982. Another factor regulated by legislation has been the vigency and pedagogical validity of school textbooks, which since 1972 has been maintained at four years, except in cases in which it is fully justified, such as a curricular change.

The LOGSE maintained, as a basic regulation, the same regime of supervision of textbooks and teaching materials, which was also obligatory in the Autonomous Communities that acquired powers in education. However, in 1992, a provision was approved that took a first step towards the liberalisation of administrative authorisation, arguing the need to be consistent “with the open character that the new organisation of the education system confers on the curriculum” and to respect “the rights and freedoms of teachers, parents and publishers, and the autonomy of schools”. This new

regulation required that only the editorial project designed by publishers as a guide for the elaboration of curricular materials for the different areas be submitted for examination. According to this provision,

the aim is to guarantee, in this way, respect for the freedom of publishers to creatively develop the contents of the curriculum and, at the same time, to safeguard the unity and coherence of the curricular approaches proposed by the Government for Pre-school Education, Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education and Bachillerato.²

The projects to be submitted by publishers had to conform to the basic lines of the corresponding curriculum, indicating the organisation and distribution of the objectives, contents and assessment criteria for each subject, including also the cross-curricular objectives of the respective educational stage, as well as the pedagogical methods envisaged. Moreover, the same decree required that the projects should reflect “in their texts and images the principles of equal rights between the sexes, the rejection of all types of discrimination, respect for all cultures, the promotion of habits of democratic behaviour and attention to the ethical and moral values of pupils”.

It would be the 2006 Organic Law on Education (LOE) which, twenty-eight years after the enactment of the Constitution, would abolish the prior authorisation of school textbooks, stipulating only that they should be adapted to the scientific rigour appropriate to the age of the pupils and to the curriculum approved by each educational administration.³

The abolition of prior authorisation remains in force to this day, although the obligation of publishers to reflect and promote respect for constitutional principles is of course maintained, to which has been added the obligation to incorporate content aimed at protecting against gender violence, promoting the equal value of women and men, as well as avoiding sexist or discriminatory

2 Real Decreto 388/1992 de 15 de abril, por el que se regula la supervisión de libros de texto y otros materiales curriculares para las enseñanzas de régimen general y su uso en los Centros docentes, BOE de 23 de abril de 1992, p. 13726.

3 Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación (LOE), Disposición adicional cuarta, epígrafe 2. In this respect, the LOE basically respected the provisions of the *Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación* (LOCE) of 2002, which was never implemented.

stereotypes.⁴

Although the prior authorisation of school textbooks has been abolished, the adaptation to the curriculum and respect for the aforementioned values has since been subject to possible supervision by the regional education administrations, as well as through the ordinary inspection process exercised by the education administration over all the elements that make up the teaching and learning process.

It should be noted, however, that although prior authorisation of texts and teaching materials has not been re-established, several Autonomous Communities maintain this requirement, to which publishers must submit their products in order to be taken into account in aid and textbook lending programmes.

The evolution of the publishing market

The beginning of the modernisation of school textbooks at the end of the 1960s also meant a total transformation of the Spanish publishing market. As the aforementioned Mauricio Santos states when recalling those years and the implementation of the LGE of 1970, “of the more than seventy specialised publishing houses that existed in 1970, there were barely thirty left when this country entered democracy” (Santos, 2013, p. 18). Miñón, one of the most prominent publishers of the time and responsible for the publication of the famous *Enciclopedia Álvarez*, was one of the first to declare bankruptcy. Other publishers also gradually disappeared or were taken over by other companies. Thus, the school textbooks of the family publishing houses Hijos de Santiago Rodríguez (Burgos) and Dalmau (Girona) disappeared from the market, as well as those of Magisterio Español, all of them publishing houses with a century-long history.

It was just at that time that the large publishing houses that have dominated the market ever since took off, such as Anaya and Santillana

⁴ LOE 2006, Disposición adicional cuarta; Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación (LOMLOE), Disposición adicional vigésima quinta, epígrafe 5.

(founded in 1959 and 1960, respectively), as well as SM, linked to the Marianist order, which had been created in 1937. Other smaller publishers such as Teide, Vicens Vives and Casals in Barcelona, or Everest in León, also had an important development. All these publishing houses, which gradually monopolised the publishing market throughout the 1970s, were modelled on the texts published by other French and German companies, such as Hachette, Fernand Nathan, Larousse, Klett and Schroedel, which had accompanied the expansion and modernisation of education in those countries. These publishers “published excellent textbooks, scientifically rigorous, didactically and pedagogically very careful and with attractive typographies and designs that, to a large extent, would serve as inspiration for Spanish authors and publishers” (Santos, 2013, p. 16).

Other smaller publishers such as Bruño, Edelvives or Edebé, linked to religious congregations (De La Salle Brothers, Marists and Salesians, respectively), maintained a guaranteed market share at least in their religious centres.

In 1978, the *Asociación Nacional de Editores de Libros y Material de Enseñanza* (ANELE) was created, a corporate group that lobbied the government on issues such as freedom of pricing or the controls required for the publication of school textbooks. Since then, ANELE has continued to represent and defend the interests of its members, and to provide important reports on the evolution of the textbook industry and market in Spain. At present (2025) twenty-two publishers are members of ANELE.

Very early, at the beginning of the 1980s, other regional publishing companies began to consolidate, some of them of a confessional nature, especially in the Autonomous Communities with their own language (Erein, and later Ibaizabal, in the Basque Country; A Nosa Terra in Galicia; La Galera/Enciclopedia Catalana in Catalonia; Bromera in the Valencian Community). But the large publishing houses also created subsidiaries and distinctive imprints to publish school texts in Catalan, Basque and Galician, such as those of Anaya (Xerais in Galicia; Barcanova in Catalonia), Santillana (Obradoiro in Galicia; Zubia in the Basque Country; Grup Promotor in Catalonia), SM (Cruilla in Catalonia; Xerme Edicions in Galicia), or Edebé (Rodeira in Galicia). The Santillana group also created specific imprints for Andalusia

(Ed. Grazalema) or Valencia (Ed. Voramar). Similarly, in Andalusia, Anaya created the Algaída publishing house.

For its part, Oxford University Press entered the Spanish market in 1991 with specific content for English language teaching, but since 1998 it has developed publishing projects in other disciplines for all levels of education, and in the last fifteen years it has become one of the very large and large companies in the sector.

Since the late 1980s, a structural characteristic of the Spanish publishing sector has been the concentration of publishing, where a small number of large companies and publishing groups produce a large part of the titles, and a large number of small and medium-sized publishers publish less than a quarter of the books. In addition, large and medium-sized companies have merged into publishing groups or holding companies (Beas and Montes, 1998, p. 84). The expansion of these publishing groups has linked them to other sectors of the world of communication, “which for the first time in the history of schooling has come to link this industry of culture with more general areas of the economy and society” (Escolano, 1998a, p. 33). An example of this was the incorporation of Grupo Anaya into the French group Vivendi in 1998, as well as the integration of Santillana into the Spanish group Prisa in 2000. Since 2004, the Anaya Group has been part of Hachette Livre, also incorporating Grupo Editorial Bruño. Since the end of 2020, Santillana España has been part of the Sanoma Group, a Finnish-based company with educational companies in eleven European countries. Part of Santillana, which retains its name, continues to belong to the Prisa Group and is a leader in Latin America, both in Spanish and Portuguese. We should not forget that the expansion of large Spanish publishers such as Santillana, Anaya or SM in the Latin American market had already begun in the 1960s through exports, and from the 1980s onwards through the creation of subsidiaries in several countries (Puig Raposo, 2022; Cassiano, 2007; Fernández Reiris, 2005, pp. 223-235).

Today, the companies classified as “very large” in the textbook sector are still Santillana, Anaya and SM, together with the Oxford publishing house (of these four large companies, three belong to a foreign parent company). Other “big” companies include Edebé, Grupo Edelvives and Vicens Vives,

among others. The medium-sized and small companies include many of the publishers with regional coverage, as well as others such as Pearson, Casals, Editex, Teide and McGraw Hill.⁵ It is difficult to know the growth figures for the production of school textbooks, as the data from the publishing sector do not always specifically differentiate the figures corresponding to non-university school textbooks, and provide global data for publishers, but not for each publisher, nor the specific figures by subject or educational level (Beas and González, 2019).

Beyond being immersed in a highly competitive market that generates significant economic benefits, the Spanish textbook industry has to face a complex and changing set of factors, some of which have already been mentioned. The numerous educational reforms of recent years and the regulations that have developed them have been the first conditioning factor in the design and content of textbooks. Moreover, the publishing industry has not been oblivious to some of the debates that have arisen in recent decades, such as the one generated by the introduction of the subject of “Education for Citizenship and Human Rights”, a short-lived subject, for which almost all publishers made a major commitment by publishing textbooks on the subject for all levels of education. The same happened with another short-lived subject, “Science for the Contemporary World”, which was introduced, like “Citizenship Education”, by the LOE of 2006. Previously, in 1996, the so-called “Debate of the Humanities” initiated by the then Education Minister Esperanza Aguirre, proposed above all changes in the teaching of history that were to have an impact on school textbooks. And there has been no shortage of complaints and debates on different occasions about the presence of nationalist content in school textbooks, especially in Catalonia. Undoubtedly, school textbooks have been at the centre of important ideological debates, as has been widely reported in the media, and have been the cause of a certain degree of social alarm at times; however, none of the complaints about the alleged indoctrination caused by school textbooks has had any legal consequences to

⁵ The Federación de Gremios de Editores de España [Federation of Spanish Publishers' Associations] (FGEE) classifies companies by turnover bracket: very large, those with a turnover of more than €60,000,000 per year; large, between €18,000,000 and €60,000,000; medium-sized, between €2,400,000 and €18,000,000; small, up to €2,400,000 (FGEE, 2024, p. 19).

date.⁶

In addition, it is necessary to take into account the editorial diversity brought about by the adaptation to regional curricula and languages from 1990 onwards, as well as the introduction of bilingual education, with subjects mainly in English or French. Beyond this complexity, the introduction of the broad concept of “curricular materials” has meant that publishers have broadened the range of educational resources on offer, complementary to textbooks.

Another decisive aspect for the publishing industry is the mandatory four-year validity of textbooks, which affects production during the intervening years, and the preservation and use of textbooks during that period. This requirement has at times clashed with curricular changes. However, it is one thing for schools to be obliged to keep the same textbooks for four years and for publishers to reprint them, but it is quite another for publishers not to be able to bring out another editorial line.

Finally, the fact that not all Autonomous Communities implement curricular reforms in the same year and that there are delays in the publication of regional curricula (partly to save the cost of updating textbooks), has an important impact on the publishing industry. The broad curricular competence of the Autonomous Regions involves not only what content is included or left out of the curriculum, but also the teaching load, the school year in which certain subjects are taught, or the inclusion of optional subjects of their own, to which publishers must adapt. Added to this is the disparity of models of aid to families for the purchase or loan of school textbooks, with different financial budgets and possible requirements for approval of publishers for their textbooks to be included among those eligible by schools.

At present, some major publishers, such as SM or Vicens Vives, have undertaken staff reductions and financial adjustments which publishers attribute to a number of factors, such as the rising cost of publishing and the

6 There are also numerous studies that analyse not only current school texts, but also texts from the more remote or recent past, such as the treatment of gender or race issues, or the approach to some controversial topics in the teaching of history such as the Reconquest, the civil war, or Franco's regime, to cite just a few examples. This makes the school text a constantly “watched” object from the academic sphere, especially since the beginning of the 1990s, when research in the field of what Agustín Escolano has called “manualística” (Escolano, 1998, p. 17) began to gain momentum. A wide repertoire of this type of research can be found on the website of the MANES Research Centre, based in the Faculty of Education of the UNED [www.centromanes.org] (Ossenbach, 2021).

complexity of adapting to the changing curricula and requirements of the different Autonomous Communities, to the reduction in sales caused by the systems of free textbooks, lending and reuse of textbooks that have been implemented in some Autonomous Communities, or to the increase in the number of schools that dispense with the use of conventional textbooks as a factor of teaching innovation, partly thanks to the rise of digital platforms and free online content.

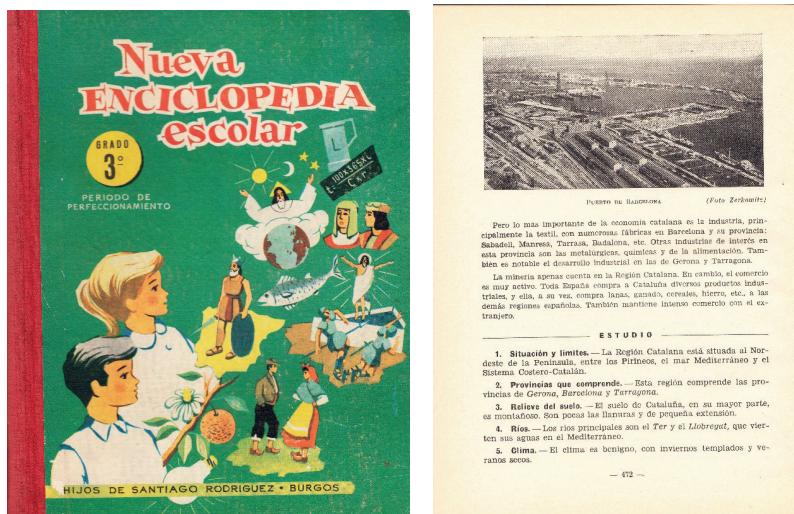
The new professional profiles of textbook authors

Throughout this period, textbook authors changed not only because of a generational shift, but also because authorship shifted to other professional profiles. The identity and position of authors in the field of education are elements that help to understand the influences and perspectives that guide and shape their texts. There are two shifts in authorship. One towards multiple authorship in the form of teams, and the other towards the writing of textbooks by university graduates, some of them prestigious academics. Beas and Montes (1998, p. 95) explain that “in the new publishing houses, teams will be strengthened, so that the authors are blurred; this reaffirms the image of the commercial brand as the identifier of the textbook, unless, for marketing reasons, the main author is a person of academic prestige”. Indeed, the second shift was towards authors whose recognition was based on their academic trajectory within their field of study. Their prestige depended not only on the number of published works, but also on their education, depth of knowledge and contributions to the discipline. Over time, the value of their work became linked to the enrichment of textbooks based on their ability to generate critical thinking, innovative contributions and intellectual authority in their area of specialisation.

In the early Franco regime, the authors of primary school textbooks were teachers, but above all primary school inspectors such as Antonio Juan Onieva, Agustín Serrano de Haro, Adolfo Maíllo, Antonio Fernández Rodríguez, Josefina Álvarez de Cánovas and Josefina Bolinaga, to mention some of the most well-known names. On the other hand, “Even in the mid-sixties, the old encyclopaedias, books of object lessons, instructional or

edifying readings and, in general, texts of rudimentary and terminal knowledge were still in circulation at primary level" (Mateos, 2011, pp. 70-71). The *Nueva Enciclopedia escolar* from Hijos de Santiago Rodríguez reached its 45th edition in 1965, combining drawings by the national teacher Julio Algora with black and white photographs (Figure 1). In other words, the transition from one group of authors to another was slow.

FIGURE I. (1965). *Nueva Enciclopedia Escolar H.S.R. Grado Tercero*. Burgos: Hijos de Santiago Rodríguez, 45th edition, p. 472



The textbooks of the second half of the 1960s already had double or multiple authorship, the editors began to acquire greater prominence and evidenced the beginning of the change in design, as can be seen in this page from the 1968 *Geography of Spain and World History* textbook (Figure 2). Alluding to the *Cuestionarios Nacionales* in its prologue, it is signed by three authors, including a woman, E. Ramos, headmistress and graduate in History, A. Álvarez, national teacher, and C. Herrero, regent of Escuela Aneja. It still includes, however, several illustrators of the time: Aguilar, Santana, Aguirre and Sinovas, and visibly indicates the role of the teacher Antonio Álvarez,

author of the *Enciclopedia Álvarez*, in the direction and editing of the book.

FIGURE II. E. Ramos, A. Álvarez and C. Herrero (1968). *Geografía de España e Historia Universal. Octavo curso*. Valladolid: Miñón, p. 180



The authorship of books for the *Bachillerato* or preparation for entry to the *Bachillerato* was also multiple and involved graduates in different university courses, but even in the early 1970s textbooks by a single author and illustrator survived.⁷

However, from the mid-1970s onwards, publishers incorporated new

⁷ This is the case, for example, of *Planeta Tierra. Geografía*, by Edelvives, published in 1973 with Victoriano Rostán Gómez, Profesor de Escuela Universitaria del Profesorado de EGB, as author, and Francisco Carrillo Mora, as illustrator.

authors, graduates, university professors and secondary school teachers, as well as teachers from other educational levels. In the words of Mateos (2011, p. 89), “there was a slippage of pedagogical knowledge towards the University and the educational administration began to form alliances with new agents of theoretical production”, who entered the field of textbook writing. The new didactic-disciplinary organisation of school knowledge was transferred to textbooks and called for the need for authors by areas and disciplines. Thus, in the 1970s, a new generation of textbooks appeared which bore little resemblance to those of the first generation, in size, design, colours or authorship. The *Senda* reading books by Santillana, directed by Antonio Ramos, meant a relevant change in the type of literary readings that were made known, incorporating readings by Ana María Matute and Gloria Fuertes, and also “extensively examining the literary fact from an exceptional historical perspective” (Mora-Luna, 2019, p. 804).

For the educational level of *Bachillerato Unificado y Polivalente* (BUP), university professors were incorporated into the task of writing textbooks. Gustavo Bueno, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oviedo, together with Carlos Iglesias and Alberto Hidalgo, wrote *Symploké. Filosofía* (3º BUP) in 1987, published by Ediciones Júcar (Bonilla, 2025). Years later, regarding the “Symploké Project”, Bueno (2004) clarified that these were not textbooks but philosophy manuals in Spanish “mainly because [the manual] is not intended for the student, in order to provide him with an instrument to prepare for his exams, nor is it intended for the teacher to offer him, informally, already prepared the topics proposed by the syllabus, essential in all “administered philosophy”, which he is supposed to be able and even supposed to prepare freely”.

The area of language and literature followed a similar itinerary to that of philosophy. Its greatest representative as a textbook author, Fernando Lázaro Carreter, had published in the 1950s, together with Evaristo Correa Calderón, a relevant and long-running textbook: *Cómo se comenta un texto en el Bachillerato* (1958).⁸ The book was modified and published under the title *Cómo se comenta un texto literario*, from 1960 onwards by Editorial Anaya

⁸ Responding to article 83 of the Law on the Organisation of Secondary Education of 1953, which established that “all pupils will be trained in the reading and commentary of fundamental texts of literature” (BOE of 27 February 1953, p. 1127).

and, later, after the eleventh edition, by Editorial Cátedra. This work was the classic work on the subject throughout the second half of the 20th century. From this period onwards, Lázaro Carreter's works in the Anaya publishing house became an indispensable reference and made a substantial difference in the pedagogical literary canon (Mora-Luna, 2019).

In the teaching of history and geography, authors such as Antonio Domínguez Ortiz (in Anaya) or Javier Tusell (in Santillana) stand out. Independent authors also wrote their own textbooks in the 1990s. One example is *Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia. La Tierra se mueve. 1er ciclo de ESO*, by Julio Mateos Montero and María Luisa Vicente Blanco, published by Hespérides in 1996, a didactic project of the Cronos Group.

In short, individual authorship shifted from individual authority based on their recognition as prestigious teachers, pedagogues and inspectors to individual authority based on their field of competence (Bourdieu, 1985). However, as early as the mid-1970s, textbooks began to be produced by multidisciplinary teams, and authorship was distributed among various experts, allowing for a greater diversity of approaches. For example, in the 1980s, the publishing house Anaya absorbed the names of its authors under the name *Equipo Aula 3*.

The collective of illustrators was also changing towards designers with other styles. The illustrators, the vast majority of whom were men until the end of the 20th century,⁹ constituted an important group of renowned artists, such as the illustrator, painter, draughtsman and muralist Eduardo Santoja, whose production is considered an essential reference in the history of *deco* illustration and drawing in Spain, together with Antonio Cobos, Pedro Mairata Serrano and Sacul (Miguel Lucas San Mateo). Other illustrators were the painter José López Arjona, the illustrators José Aguilar Fernández, Fortunato Julián García Hernando, Jesús Bernal, Julián Nadal del Val, and national teachers such as Julio Algora, Joaquín Fernández Cidre and Pedro Sarraga, to name but a few well-known names. José Ramón Sánchez, winner of the National Illustration Prize 2014, is one of the most famous names of

⁹ In Spain, women are more active in the school, children's and young people's book sector, "in a clear reflection of the influence of the role of educators traditionally attributed to women", and secondly in advertising and poster illustration. While male illustrators work equally in advertising, school, children's and young people's books (Castro, 2004, p. 91).

the 70s and 80s, for his illustrations in Santillana's *Senda* reading books. Like the authors, the illustrators began to work in teams with professional photographers and drawers from the books of the 1970s onwards.

The graphic design of information: textuality and illustrations

The change in authorship and illustration was accompanied by an increase in the number of paratextual elements¹⁰ and the space they occupied on the pages. Textbooks were growing in all aspects: size, font, images, and other elements complementary to the text, such as activities and exercises, influencing the way in which the content is written and organised: the textual structure, the integration of iconic language and the graphic design as a whole. The changes also responded to the new psychological model of teaching aimed at a new concept of the school child, "a model of the *average* child, in social and psychological terms" and "a *unified childhood*, which will correspond to schooled childhood until the end of compulsory age (*unified school*), participating in a menu of common knowledge (*unified knowledge*)" (Mateos, 2011, p. 73). In the mid-1960s, regulations for the approval of textbooks were published and numerous publications on the subject were produced.¹¹

It is also worth remembering that since the educational reform of 1970, textbooks coexisted and competed with other didactic materials and resources, such as worksheets and the first school audiovisual media. The introduction of these didactic innovations included a new approach to the

10 Gerard Genette (1989, p. 11) explains that within transtextual relations, one of them is the one in which "in the whole formed by a literary work, the text itself maintains with what we can only name as its paratext: title, subtitles, intertitles, prefaces, epilogues, warnings, prologues, etc.; margin notes, footnotes, endnotes, illustrations, inserts, covers, dust jackets and many other types of accessory autographic or allographic signs that provide a (variable) setting for the text".

11 The Order of 28 October 1965 laying down rules for the approval of books for primary education included requirements for content and material characteristics, BOE no. 275 of 17 November 1965, p. 15551. The head of the Textbook Department of CEDODEP, Álvaro Buj Gimeno, wrote in 1967 about the structure of school textbooks in the magazine *Vida Escolar*, mentioning typographical aspects, sentence length, use of new words, prepositions and the importance of illustrations (Buj Gimeno, 1967).

textbook as a “collaborator of the teacher and as a work guide for the pupil”, books that promoted “the pupil’s personal effort” and created “habits of work, search, comparison, analysis, synthesis”, instead of “making learning easy and comfortable” (Puga, 1972, p. 312). With this argument, textual instructions for different cognitive activities were incorporated: read, learn, remember, etc.

In this evolutionary process, design and editorial aspects have also significantly influenced the visual and textual form of content transmission. From long, dense texts, sometimes with illustrations, and thematic reading books (readings on politics, nature, society), we moved on to textbooks by disciplines or curricular areas, and to textbooks with fragmented writing structured in microtexts, transforming the way of presenting the discourse, interrupted by numerous paratextual elements, such as illustrations, photographs, graphs and tables, and organised in different textual units: summaries, extracts from readings, vocabularies for learning, etc.

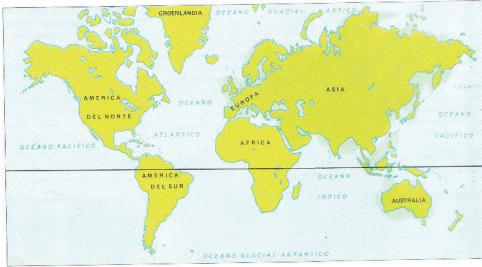
The whole amalgam of resources (textual and iconographic) that textbooks present on their pages now and since the 1980s, not only form a hyper-structure, but also a multi- paratextual design, where paratext abounds in its multiple forms. The hierarchy of information units is blurred, as the text no longer appears as the main source of information. Illustrations are the most abundant paratext, but not the only one. Images have become increasingly numerous and larger, occupying a significant portion of the page and relegating the text to the background. Escolano (1998b, p. 142) rightly states that “this iconographic impregnation of contemporary texts has come to induce a systemic change in the design of textbooks, and equally important modifications in the modes of cognitive appropriation of forms and content by the users: children and teachers”.

The large basic textual units of Francoist school textbooks such as the dedications, the table of contents, the presentation or introduction, and the thematic chapters (Mahamud 2014) have multiplied, giving way to independent microtexts that are related to the main text, training the reader in various cognitive actions, such as remembering, summarising or searching for information. Figures 3 and 4 show the evolution of the design modalities of short texts accompanied by paratextual elements (maps, tables, graphs), a

diversity of cognitive activities and different types of illustrations (drawings and photographs).

FIGURE III. Equipo Aula 3 (1985). *Bóveda. Ciencias Sociales 6º EGB*. Madrid: Ediciones Anaya, p. 46

3 ACTIVIDADES COMPLEMENTARIAS



1

- Observa:
¿Cuál es el océano más extenso? ¿Qué forma tiene el Atlántico? ¿En qué hemisferio predominan los continentes?
- Localiza:
Los grandes océanos y escribe sus nombres. Los continentes que rodean al océano Índico. ¿En qué hemisferio se encuentra este mar? ¿Será un mar cálido o un mar frío? Las tierras que rodean al océano Glacial Ártico. ¿Es un mar frío?

2

- Clasifica de más a menos extensos los océanos.
- Indica cuántas partes hay de tierra y cuántas de agua.

Océanos:	– Pacífico.....	180 millones de km ²
	– Atlántico.....	92 millones de km ²
	– Índico.....	75 millones de km ²
	– Glacial Ártico.....	14 millones de km ²
	– Total aguas.....	361 millones de km ²

El Antártico se distribuye entre el Pacífico, Atlántico e Índico.

3

- Observa si la resaca es una corriente que tiene la misma dirección que las olas o es de sentido contrario.
- Si lanzamos un trozo de madera al mar observaremos que se desplaza y que se mueve de arriba hacia abajo. ¿Ese movimiento se lo producen las olas? ¿Cuál es la explicación de ese movimiento?

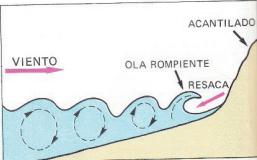


FIGURE IV. Enrique Juan Redal (dir.) (2007). *Ciencias de la Naturaleza 1ºESO*. Madrid: Santillana, Proyecto La Casa del Saber, p. 83

5 Los equinodermos

Un erizo de mar, una estrella de mar y una holoturia son equinodermos. Viven en el fondo del mar, donde permanecen fijos o desplazan por el muy lentamente.

Cómo es su cuerpo

Las principales características de los equinodermos son:

- Tienen **simetría radial**, aunque en las larvas es bilateral.
- Su cuerpo tiene forma redondeada, como en los erizos; cilíndrica, como en las holoturias, o estrellada, como en las estrellas de mar.
- Presentan un **esqueleto interno** formado por placas situadas debajo de la piel.
- No tienen una cabeza diferenciada, y la boca suele estar situada en la parte inferior del cuerpo.

Cómo son sus funciones

Los equinodermos se desplazan utilizando un aparato exclusivo de este grupo de animales, el **aparato ambulacral**. Consiste en un sistema de tubos internos, llenos de agua, que forman los **pies ambulacrales** terminados en ventosas. Respiran a través de la piel, utilizando para ello el aparato ambulacral. Algunos poseen branquias poco desarrolladas. Son animales carnívoros, y se alimentan principalmente de pequeños crustáceos y moluscos. Normalmente presentan sexos separados, aunque hay algunas especies hermafroditas. La fecundación es externa. De los huevos nacen unas larvas nadadoras que, tras la metamorfosis, se convierten en adultos. Algunos, como la estrella de mar, poseen un gran poder de regeneración, que les permite volver a formar los brazos perdidos, e incluso llegar a originar todo el animal a partir de un brazo que incluya parte del disco central.

Cinco grupos de equinodermos

Equinoides. Erizos
do mar.

Asteroideos. Estrellas
de mar.

Ophiuroideos. Ofturas.

Holoturoideos. Holoturias. Crinoideos. Crinoideos. Lirios de mar.

ACTIVIDADES

19. Busca en los conceptos clave el significado del término «equinodermo».

20. ¿Qué es el aparato ambulacral? ¿Cuál es su misión?

La estrella de mar es un equinodermo con cinco brazos.

83

In this evolution, the reduction of the continuous linear main text stands out, which reduces its length and lightens its content, being invaded by the paratextual elements, which create their own discourse in parallel and whose reading is necessary to construct the meaning of the original text. In addition to being reduced, the main text is fragmented into small informative *bits*, short paragraphs, which must be read with the support of the paratexts, by means of jumps, *zapping* and textual and paratextual navigation, making reading, on the one hand, a process that is also fragmented, brief and superficial,

and on the other, dynamic, open, light and free. In this way, printed and digital textbooks have evolved towards more multi-textual formats, visually attractive and seductive in their design. However, this transformation entails greater difficulty in offering in-depth narratives or explanations.

Reading these books requires specific learning, adopting a different way of reading, which depends on the mediation of a teacher for proper comprehension. This is an aspect that has remained constant over time, since both those books with long thematic readings and the multi-textual textbooks of today require teacher mediation. Textbooks are educational documents or resources which, although they must be readable and comprehensible, are not intended for the intimate reading of the reader alone. “Readability is the match between readers and the text” and “suggests that content is clear, well expressed, and suited to the readers”, but it happens that textbook reading is not an individual or intimate reading, it is a mediated reading and part of the readability is obtained from the group and the teacher, in the classroom in the framework of pedagogical interaction” (Chavkin, 1997, p. 151). Rowe (2013) and other authors distinguish between linear reading and tabular reading. While the former “involves the ability to read an extended narrative in continuous, in-depth fashion and reflect upon its meaning”, the latter “focuses on either reading short pieces of text or browsing or skimming texts in search of specific pieces of information” (Durant, 2017, p. 5). The important thing is not to lose sight of deep reading, “the array of sophisticated processes that propel comprehension and that include inferential and deductive reasoning, analogical skills, critical analysis, reflection, and insight” (Wolf, 2009, p. 33).

From the brief analysis we have made of the evolution of textbooks over more than 50 years, it is clear that school textbooks *per se* should not be the cause of teacher passivity, although we know that many teachers make a mechanical and uncritical use of them, as an inertia of long-standing practices established in the culture of the school. This reality has profound implications, since the core of a reflective teaching practice should lie in the solidity of teacher training, not in the textbook. The pedagogical value of the textbook ultimately depends on the teacher’s ability to select, adapt and articulate teaching resources in relevant ways, to adapt to the particularities and schedules of each school, and to teach how to read, understand and

interpret changing texts.

These tensions around the various forms of textbook use have given rise to alternative discourses that propose the non-use of textbooks or their substitution or complementation with other resources for teaching and learning. However, former Portuguese education minister Nuno Crato, whose opinion has had an important echo in this debate, in his sharply titled work, *Apologia do Livro de texto*, considers a textbook to be “an essential part of the education system. Ideally, it should be a translator of the curriculum, a guide for teachers and a working tool for students”. Crato advocates the importance of the use of quality textbooks, whose purpose should be above all to build knowledge in a progressive and systematic way, refraining even from substituting knowledge for skills, but rather building skills on knowledge (Crato, 2024, pp. 61 and 16).

Conclusions

The evolution of textbooks over the last 50 years has been determined by various contextual factors, including ideological, political, economic, pedagogical and technical aspects. It also responds to transformations in the conception of the child as a school subject, to new didactic and disciplinary approaches, and to the rise of a new digital and online textuality, which gives rise to forms of communication and reading that are different from the traditional ones. In this process of change, the textbook is adapting to the new realities, albeit slowly, coexisting with previous models in a dynamic equilibrium.

Despite all these changes and transformations, the school textbook retains a series of essential characteristics that continue to define and identify it as such. Its structure, its aesthetics and its pedagogical function of collecting and transmitting selected knowledge maintain a continuity that distinguishes it within the educational ecosystem and the school, under every law and in every era. It is also clear that the recurrent use of school textbooks in the

classroom has been consolidated throughout this period.

For their part, textbook publishers, mostly concentrated in large companies and many of them linked to media groups, have acquired throughout this period, thanks to the persistent use of textbooks in school practice, a great capacity to influence the curriculum and the classroom.

From strict regulation to greater editorial autonomy; from centralisation to territorial diversification by Autonomous Communities; from individual authorship exercised mainly by inspectors, to the collaborative creation of teams of disciplinary experts who construct an edited curriculum; from texts structured with a sober tone and alien to children's reality, to fragmented and brief texts, the textbook continues its process of transformation and persistence in the educational environment.

The challenge lies in adapting to new forms of digital and online reading without sacrificing the ability to read long and deep texts, which require sustained attention and prolonged concentration. It also involves finding a balance between an attractive visual design suitable for different school stages, while maintaining the scientific rigour of the content. All this without falling into overly simplified, superficial and infantilised formats, where the image ends up displacing or eclipsing the value of the text and its informational content.

Since the 1960s, textbooks have undergone a gradual transformation towards multi- textual formats, which invites us to reflect on the evolution of reading practices. In this context, it is essential to adopt an interdisciplinary perspective in order to analyse which reading processes are most effective for both the learning of knowledge and the development of cognitive skills. This reflection should guide the design of current and future textbooks.

By way of conclusion, it seems appropriate to invite reflection on what a textbook is and should be today, at the beginning of the second quarter of the 21st century, and what added value it has or can have in the scenario of artificial intelligence within everyone's reach. Just as there is a debate about what schools can and should do today, what should and can textbooks contain? Is it appropriate to expect textbooks to incorporate values, attitudes, skills, provide emotional well-being, include diversity and transmit knowledge? Or should we focus on textbooks that contain science-based curricular knowledge

and a diversity of approaches to analysis, leaving other educational issues, such as skills and values, to teachers and other educational resources?

Textbooks are products designed and targeted to cater to as many students as possible, which implies that their target audience is, in effect, a prototype of the average student. However, this does not mean that they are not inclusive; on the contrary, they increasingly incorporate diverse social, cultural, sexual, familial and other differences in an effort to reflect the plurality of the student body. It is the teacher's task to complement and deepen those aspects of the textbook that do not fit the specific reality of his or her school and class group. The adaptation of curricular materials - including textbooks - to the characteristics of each school and to the diversity of the students should form part of the professional competence of the teacher.

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Research section

Impact of the duration of the school transport journey on the academic engagement of students in Compulsory Secondary Education and Sixth Form

Afectación de la duración de la ruta de transporte escolar en el compromiso académico ('engagement') de estudiantes de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato

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Abstract

The characteristics of the territory and the distribution of the population have historically meant that school transport has had to be used to guarantee access to education for the entire population. This creates inequalities and can have an impact on the academic performance of the students transported. The article analyses the impact of travel time between home and school on academic engagement. The sample consisted of 470 students in Compulsory Secondary Education and Sixth Form. The participants were students from

YEAR 8 = 18.9%, YEAR 9 = 21.9%, YEAR 10 = 15.3%, YEAR 11 = 13.4%, Lower Sixth = 14.0%, Upper Sixth = 16.4% and were aged between 13 and 21 years ($M = 15.63$, $SD = 4.25$). Data were collected using the Engagement Questionnaire (MOCSE-EEQ) and the SPSS 25.00 statistical package was used. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the questionnaire for this study, in addition to Pearson's linear correlation analysis to test the relationship between the variables studied, one-factor ANOVA to determine the differences between types of engagement and travel time, and simple linear regression analysis to predict engagement. The results showed that there is a relationship between the time it takes students to get to school and engagement. Furthermore, it can be affirmed that the longer the travel time, the lower the students' academic engagement. In fact, it is evident that engagement can be predicted from travel time. In conclusion, the present study can serve as a basis to support teachers in developing and promoting measures to avoid the lack of academic engagement resulting from the time students lose in getting to school.

Keywords: school transport, academic engagement, secondary education, Sixth Form, quality of teaching.

Resumen

Las particularidades del territorio y la distribución de la población provocan históricamente la necesidad de utilizar el transporte escolar para garantizar el acceso de toda la población a la educación. Esto genera desigualdades y puede llegar a tener repercusiones en el rendimiento académico del alumnado transportado. El artículo analiza las consecuencias que el tiempo de viaje entre el lugar de residencia y los centros de estudio tienen en el compromiso académico o 'engagement'. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 470 estudiantes de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO) y Bachillerato. Los participantes eran estudiantes de 1º ESO = 18.9%, 2º ESO = 21.9%, 3º ESO = 15.3%, 4º ESO = 13.4%, 1º BACH = 14.0%, 2º BACH = 16.4% y tenían entre 13 y 21 años ($M = 15.63$, $DT = 4.25$). Los datos fueron recogidos mediante el Cuestionario de 'engagement' (MOCSE-EEQ) y se utilizó el paquete estadístico SPSS 25.00. Se realizó un alfa de Cronbach para evaluar el cuestionario para este estudio, además de un análisis de correlación lineal de Pearson para comprobar la relación entre las variables estudiadas, ANOVA de un factor para determinar las diferencias entre los tipos de 'engagement' y el tiempo de trayecto y análisis de regresión lineal simple para predecir el 'engagement'. Los resultados mostraron que existe relación entre el tiempo que tarda el alumnado en llegar al centro educativo y el 'engagement'. Además, se puede afirmar que, a mayor tiempo de trayecto, menor compromiso académico consigue el estudiantado. De hecho, se evidencia que se puede predecir el 'engagement' a partir del tiempo de viaje. Como conclusión, el presente estudio puede servir de base para apoyar a los docentes a desarrollar y fomentar medidas para evitar la falta de compromiso académico derivado del tiempo que pierde el alumnado en llegar al centro escolar.

Palabras clave: transporte escolar, compromiso académico, enseñanza secundaria, bachiller, calidad de la enseñanza

Introduction

The advent of school transport in England in 1827 was intended to attract more students and facilitate the schooling of the entire population. At that time, horse-drawn carriages were used, which achieved their objective in very precarious conditions. These conditions were obviously different from those of the present day. The rudimentary system has evolved considerably since its inception, with journeys and itineraries now perfectly designed to improve access to education for all students, including those who live far from schools and institutes. Even until the 1960s, students sometimes had to travel several kilometres on foot to get to school. The dispersed population system, structured in many rural areas around farmhouses, hamlets, small villages, etc., (Baila, 1990; Ortells and Selma, 1993; Nabàs and Andrés, 2023) have demonstrated that universal access to education has been challenging to achieve, and for a time, this has led to the proliferation of rural schools in a variety of locations: in hermitages, completely isolated schools in equidistant areas from several inhabited locations, in the largest farmhouses or hamlets, etc. In contrast, the current legislation defines the term “transported students” as a group of students from one or more schools who require the bus service to cover the journey between their place of residence and their school or secondary school (DOGV 186 of 23 August 1984 - Regional Official Gazette).

It is a requirement that vehicles used for school transport meet very specific criteria in order to ensure the safety of their users, who are generally minors (Domínguez-Álvarez, 2019). In Spain, the current regulations pertaining to school and child transport are established by Royal Decree 443/2001, of 27 April 2001, on safety conditions in school and child transport (BOE 105 of 2 May 2001 - Official Spanish Gazette). This decree regulates a number of aspects, including the age of the vehicle, its signalling, the use of seat belts, accessibility for people with disabilities, and the maximum duration of the journey.

The issue of school transport has been a topic of discussion among teachers, students, families, regional administrations, and even the Ministry of Education since the inception of the first educational laws. This is because not all families have the option of transporting students to schools that are located far from their places of residence or in different municipalities (Pérez-Muñoz et al., 2019). This issue gained prominence with the implementation of educational reforms and the overcrowding of educational centres, particularly in rural areas, prior to the onset of the rural exodus. This was due to the

limited availability of schools and institutes in scattered population areas compared to the more populated municipalities located in urban areas or their immediate areas of influence.

The activity in question is of great strategic importance in many scattered populated areas, such as rural areas. Indeed, educational provision from certain stages onwards – Secondary Education and Sixth Form, but also Vocational Training – is concentrated in the county capitals, as well as on the outskirts of medium-sized and small towns whose centres are assigned students from less populated neighbouring localities. According to data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics for the year 2019 in Spain, approximately 234 million students (daily commuters during the school year) utilize school transportation, which is facilitated by approximately 17,500 school buses (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2020).

In the early stages of education, such as primary education, the problem of schooling in sparsely populated areas has been alleviated through the implementation of imaginative solutions, including rural grouped schools (RGS). These centres were established in response to the disadvantage of having rural areas with a very low student/population ratio. The rationale behind this approach was to offer dispersed classrooms in different nearby localities, which were coordinated from a larger classroom that acted as an organiser. This strategy allowed for an affordable number of students per educational level to be achieved.

It should be noted that RGS are not the only educational establishments that utilise school transport. Indeed, all such institutions can benefit from this accessibility, depending on the place of residence of their students. However, they represent one of the cases where school transport plays the most important role in Spanish education, as it is the sector with the greatest mobility among students in some areas (Flores, 2022). It is important to note that rural grouped schools have minimal visibility and recognition within the educational environment, which presents a significant challenge to their development.

In the case of secondary education, the problem is further compounded by the fact that the territorial dispersion of secondary education schools is much smaller. This results in the establishment of highly selective locations in municipalities with a minimum population, which subsequently become authentic regional capitals of reference for the educational community. These schools have a student body that can reside in towns within a radius of 30 to 60 kilometres.

At this stage, school transport affords numerous adolescent students the opportunity to pursue a comprehensive education, enabling them to study Sixth Form as a steppingstone to university studies or Certificate of Higher Education (HNC). This was previously unattainable due to the distance of the nearest school from their homes or the necessity of boarding schools, as evidenced by recent observations (Morales-Gómez, 2022).

In Spain, although the aforementioned Royal Decree 443/2001 establishes in Article 11 that the maximum journey time should not exceed one hour each way, Cruz-Carbonell et al. (2020) state that the time spent on journeys causes various kinds of inconveniences for students. The same authors also indicate that the most significant issue affecting school transport in the Secondary stage is the limited availability of vehicles to cover the journeys or the lack of investment in additional vehicles. This results in the use of the same bus to travel to different municipalities, often situated more or less in close proximity to the school. This ultimately leads to a significant loss of time for the students.

Another study by Hernández-Herrera et al. (2022) posits that unregulated timetables resulting from weather conditions and obstacles on the road, such as accidents or unforeseen traffic jams, have a direct impact on students' education, leading to the loss of days of school compared to other students who have alternative means of getting to school. This was demonstrated by Lopes et al. (2020), who concluded that students residing in rural areas tend to exhibit lower academic performance compared to their urban counterparts, a phenomenon that can also contribute to elevated dropout rates.

Despite all this, there is still little work on how students are affected by the time it takes them to travel from home to school each day. This lack of information hinders the optimal planning of routes, journeys, and even mobility offer as a whole.

In light of these considerations, it is crucial to emphasise that students enrolled in Compulsory Secondary Education and Sixth Form face a multitude of challenges. To address these challenges and enhance their learning, it is essential to cultivate the necessary skills and competencies. This aspect is closely linked to academic engagement. In this study, we will examine the impact of students' academic engagement on their daily school attendance. Engagement is defined as an essential variable in the educational context, as it is fundamental to achieve academic success and prevent school dropout (Zaff et al., 2017). It can be considered a key to the full development of

students (Saracostti et al., 2021). The concept of engagement is understood as the involvement or bonding of the student in order to achieve academic goals. This is comprised of three interrelated but distinct dimensions: affective-emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Cerdà-Navarro et al., 2020). The affective-emotional dimension refers to students' connection with the educational environment, including elements such as the sense of belonging to the school, relationships with peers and teachers, and also the social support they perceive (Ito and Umemoto, 2022). As for the cognitive dimension of engagement, this involves analysing the psychological involvement of students in learning, including elements such as motivation, expectations or effort to learn complex concepts (Ben-Eliyahu et al. 2018). Finally, the behavioural dimension refers to elements such as student behaviour or classroom participation, and other variables related to effort and commitment to tasks and activities or time invested (Cerdà-Navarro et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, despite the significance of establishing a correlation between the variables under investigation – namely, the time it takes students to reach their educational centres and their academic commitment or engagement – no research has been identified that directly links these variables. However, there is research that underscores the importance of linking engagement to the broader educational environment (Arrivillaga et al., 2022; Ito and Umemoto, 2022). Salmela-Aro et al. (2017), Cachón et al. (2015), Extremera et al. (2007), Leo et al. (2020), Martínez and Salanova (2003), and Ramos-Vera et al. (2023).

Objetive

The main objective of this study was to ascertain whether the duration of the journey to school affects the engagement of students in Compulsory Secondary Education and Sixth Form.

The specific objectives were as follows:

- To review whether there is a correlation between the time it takes students to reach their educational centre and their engagement levels.
- To predict engagement by considering the time it takes students to get to school.
- To ascertain whether there were significant differences in the three types of engagement measured by the time it takes students to get to school.

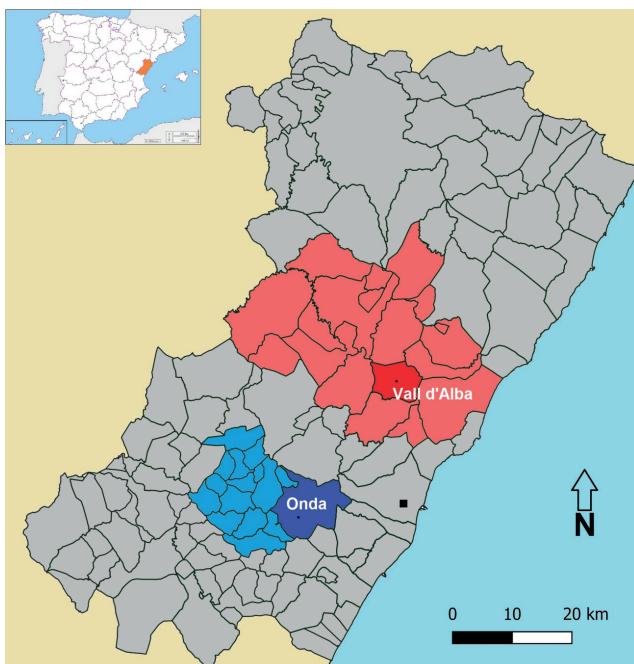
Method

Sample and procedure

The sample consisted of 470 students of Compulsory Secondary Education and Sixth Form. Of these, 232 were male (49.4%) and 238 female (50.6%). The participants were between 13 and 21 years old ($M = 15.63$, $SD = 4.25$). They were students of first year of Secondary Education = 18.9%, YEAR 9 = 21.9%, YEAR 10 = 15.3%, YEAR 11 = 13.4%, Lower Sixth = 14.0%, Upper Sixth = 16.4%.

The participating schools were two secondary schools in the province of Castellón, Alfonso XIII in Vall d'Alba and Serra d'Espadà in Onda. At the time of the study, Alfonso XIII had nine school routes, the largest of which was 55.16 kilometres in each direction. Serra d'Espadà had four routes, the longest being 52.9 kilometres.

CHART I. Area of influence of each centre.



Source: Valencian Community Department of Education. Prepared by the authors.

In terms of travel time, 33.8% of students in both schools took less than 15 minutes, 28.9% took between 16 and 30 minutes, 22.2% took between 31 and 60 minutes and 15.1% took more than 61 minutes. In terms of the mode of transport used, 77.4% of students travelled by school bus, 15.1% by walking, and the remainder (7.4%) by car, bicycle, or other means of transport. Data collection was conducted during school hours for 15 minutes in the computer room, with the assistance of teachers from the participating schools.

This research was authorised by the Department of Education of the Generalitat Valenciana. Furthermore, permission was obtained from the educational centres and the prior informed consent of parents/guardians. All those who participated in the study did so on a completely voluntary basis. All data was collected in accordance with the principles of confidentiality and personal data protection, as set out in current Spanish legislation.

Instruments

The Engagement Questionnaire (MOCSE-EEQ) (Doménech-Betoret and Abellán-Roselló, 2021) adapted for this study was used. The scale is composed of 16 items divided into three dimensions: D1. Affective-emotional engagement (items 1 to 5) and D2. Cognitive engagement (items 6 to 10), Behavioural engagement (items 11 to 16). All of them are assessed on a Likert scale with 6 scalars (6 = “very high” to 0 = “very low”). This scale treats the items as quantitative, as it takes into account that the change in preference is the same when moving from one category to another, as well as using more than four scales as indicated in the literature (Doménech-Betoret and Abellán-Roselló, 2021).

In this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. A Cronbach's alpha greater than .70 was determined to be an acceptable level of reliability in educational research (Cohen et al., 2018).

Specifically, it reached high values for all three subscales of the questionnaire; affective-emotional engagement ($\alpha = .882$), cognitive engagement ($\alpha = .741$) and behavioural engagement ($\alpha = .810$). Thus, the finding of the total Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .874$) suggests that the overall Engagement Questionnaire also has acceptable internal consistency.

In addition, the time it takes students to get to school was measured in minutes. Time 1 (less than 15 minutes) Time 2 (between 16 and 30 minutes) Time 3 (between 31 and 60 minutes) and Time 4 (more than 61 minutes) were

distinguished.

Data analysis

This study is a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional, descriptive correlational design. Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS 25.00 package (IBM SPSS, 2018).

Associations between the different factors examined were assessed using Pearson's correlation (r). A correlation of $< .19$ is considered very weak, $.20$ to $.39$ weak, $.40$ to $.59$ moderate, $.60$ to $.79$ strong and $.80$ very strong (for both positive and negative values) (Cohen, 1988).

Simple linear regression analyses were used to test whether engagement could be predicted by the time it takes students to get to school. In the regression analysis, the effect size of the predictor variables is given by the beta weights. When interpreting the effect, the size provides the following guidance: $0\text{--}1$ weak effect, $.1\text{--}.3$ moderate effect, $.3\text{--}.5$ moderate effect, and $>.5$ strong effect (Cohen, et al., 2018).

Finally, an ANOVA test was conducted on the time it takes students to get to school and the level of engagement. Main effects were tested for ($p < .05$), post-hoc comparisons were performed using the Bonferroni method, and the $\eta^2 p$ value was calculated to test the strength of the association.

Statistical significance was set at $p < .01$ and $p < .05$ for all tests.

Results

Table I shows the relationships between the factors in the Engagement Questionnaire and the time it takes students to get to school. There are moderate to strong positive and statistically significant relationships between all factors. The correlations between behavioural and affective-emotional engagement ($r = .517$, $p < .01$) or between cognitive and behavioural engagement ($r = .612$, $p < .01$) are noteworthy (see Table I).

TABLE I. Pearson's bivariate correlations between the factors studied.

	1	2	3	4
1. Time of arrival at school	1			
2. Engagement Affec-emotional	.456**	1		
3. Engagement Behavioural	.355*	.517**	1	
4. Cognitive Engagement	.372**	.498**	.612**	1

**p< .01; *p< .05

Regarding the regressions on whether engagement can be predicted by the variable time students take to get to school, all three factors (affective-emotional, cognitive and behavioural) were found to be statistically significant predictors. In other words, the data conclude that engagement can be predicted by taking into account the time each student takes to get to school with a small margin of error in the three dimensions ($F (18.423)$, $\Delta R^2=.390$) with the regression line $y = 18.423x + .487 + .112 + .023$. Affective-emotional engagement stands out as the strongest predictor and behavioural engagement the weakest. See Table II.

Table II. Results of regression analysis on engagement taking into account the time students take to get to school.

Processes/Predictors	F	R^2	ΔR^2	β
Time to get to school	18.423***	.391	.390	
Affective-emotional engagement				.487
Cognitive engagement				.112
Behavioural engagement				.023

***p< .001

Finally, Table III shows the results of the ANOVA test corresponding to the existence of differences in the three engagement factors according to the time it takes the students to get to school. Statistically significant differences are obtained for all three factors ($F (32.076)$, $p=.000$, $\eta^2 p = .153$; $F (26.547)$, $p=.021$, $\eta^2 p = .035$, $F (10.125)$, $p=0.01$, $\eta^2 p = .130$). Ex-post pairwise

comparisons (Bonferroni) revealed statistically significant differences between students divided according to the time it took to get to school, with affective-emotional engagement standing out (see Table III).

TABLE III. One-factor ANOVA results for differences in engagement according to the time it takes students to get to school.

Factors	Time	Average	SD	RMS	ANOVA test		η^2p
					F	p	
Affective-emotional engagement	Time1	4.76	.24	.821	22.157***	.000	
	Time2	4.89	.35				.255
	Time3	4.27	.31				
	Time4	3.44	.42				
Cognitive engagement	Time1	4.54	.47	.761	17.014**	.011	
	Time2	4.35	.41				.137
	Time3	3.01	.66				
	Time4	3.28	.30				
Behavioural engagement	Time1	4.12	.57	.669	8.483**	.031	
	Time2	4.31	.40				.126
	Time3	3.10	.56				
	Time4	3.05	.25				

***p< .001, **p< .01, *p< .05*

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between engagement and the time it takes students to get to school. To this end, three specific objectives were set. In relation to the first specific objective 1: to relate the dimensions of engagement (affective-emotional, cognitive and behavioural) to the time variable, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between the factors studied. A similar conclusion was reached in the study by Xu et al. (2019), which allows us to confirm that time has

an impact on academic engagement. That is, taking more or less time to get to the educational centre can have an impact on students' involvement or commitment to achieving academic goals, building interpersonal relationships among all members of the educational centre, as well as learning expectations or motivation, among others.

Regarding the second specific objective, predicting engagement through the time it takes for students to arrive at the educational centre, the results are in line with previous researches, such as Zhang et al. (2018) and Smith (2010), which conclude that the time factor has an impact on students' academic engagement, especially the affective-emotional dimension of engagement, such as relationships with peers, teachers or family influence, so that these relationships may be more compromised if students take longer to arrive at school.

With regard to the third and final specific objective of the study, to determine whether taking more or less minutes to get to school affects engagement, the data showed that students who take longer to get to school perceive less engagement than students who arrive earlier. No studies were found to support or contradict these findings, but it is suggested that students who take longer to get to school may have a more negative relationship with their place of study and this may affect their interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers (affective-emotional engagement), their psychological involvement in the teaching and learning process, such as motivation to learn, expectations or effort to understand complex ideas and skills (cognitive engagement), and their involvement and effort (behavioural engagement) (Cerdà-Navarro et al., 2020).

This study had several limitations. On the one hand, it is worth highlighting the lack of studies on the influence of the time it takes for students to get to school and variables related to the teaching/learning process, such as engagement, a shortcoming that this work attempts to address, thus adding a novel component to the study. In addition to this drawback, there is a lack of visibility for rural schools. For future studies, it would be advisable to extend the sample to other levels of education, such as Primary Education or Vocational Training, and to other Spanish provinces with secondary and high schools, in order to verify the results of this work and compare them with other more or less similar scenarios, since the data obtained could not be used to draw conclusions or generalise the results of this research. The field of study should also be extended to other variables, such as academic satisfaction, motivation to learn or self-efficacy, variables that have been more studied in

relation to the impact of using school transport to get to the education centre.

In conclusion, the present study can serve as a basis to support teachers in developing and promoting policies to avoid disengagement due to the time spent travelling to school. In addition, it can provide information for designing effective teaching projects in rural schools to improve satisfaction and academic performance. Furthermore, in order for teachers to effectively support their students, it is necessary for educational centres to provide professional development opportunities for teachers (Wendler et al., 2010), such as workshops on positive attitudes and self-confidence, as such training has a positive impact on teachers and their good practices (Haviland et al., 2010).

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Relationship between teachers' emotional competences and Primary School students' anxiety, academic performance, and emotional competences

Relación de las competencias emocionales del profesorado con la ansiedad, el rendimiento académico y las competencias emocionales del alumnado de Educación Primaria¹

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Resumen¹

Numerosos estudios han destacado la relevancia de las competencias emocionales en la labor docente y en el desarrollo del alumnado. Sin embargo, son pocos los que analizan cómo

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estas competencias en el profesorado influyen en el bienestar, el rendimiento académico y el desarrollo emocional de los estudiantes. El presente estudio evalúa las competencias emocionales del profesorado y su relación con variables clave en el alumnado de Educación Primaria: competencias emocionales, ansiedad y rendimiento académico. La muestra incluye 118 docentes y 1676 alumnos de educación primaria de diferentes centros educativos de España. Se utilizó un diseño cuantitativo no experimental, con análisis descriptivo y comparativo-causal ex-post-facto a través del software SPSS en su versión 28.0. Los instrumentos aplicados fueron el Cuestionario de Desarrollo Emocional (CDE-A-35), el Cuestionario de Desarrollo Emocional (CDE 9-13), la Escala de Observación de Competencias emocionales, la Escala de Ansiedad en Niños (CAS), el Inventory de Ansiedad estado-rasgo en Niños (STAIC) y el promedio global de calificaciones. Los resultados evidencian que no existen correlaciones significativas entre las competencias emocionales del profesorado y las de sus estudiantes en los cursos iniciales, mientras que en los cursos superiores de Educación Primaria sí muestran una asociación significativa. Además, las competencias emocionales del profesorado correlacionan significativamente y de manera negativa con la ansiedad del alumnado en los cursos más avanzados. A pesar de no haberse identificado una relación directa entre competencias emocionales del docente y el rendimiento académico del alumnado, los resultados destacan la importancia de promover el desarrollo de dichas competencias tanto en docentes como en estudiantes. En conclusión, el estudio presentado ofrece un enfoque novedoso ante la escasa investigación en este ámbito y pone de relieve la necesidad de integrar la educación emocional en la formación docente y en el currículum escolar, con el fin de favorecer el bienestar y el desarrollo emocional del alumnado a lo largo de su trayectoria educativa.

Palabras clave: competencias emocionales, ansiedad, rendimiento académico, docentes, Educación Primaria, educación emocional

Abstract²

Numerous studies have highlighted the relevance of emotional competences in teaching and student development. However, few studies have analysed how teachers' emotional competences influence students' well-being, academic performance, and emotional development. The present study assesses teachers' emotional competences and their relationship with key variables in Primary School students: emotional competences, anxiety, and academic performance. The sample includes 118 teachers and 1676 primary school students from different schools in Spain. A non-experimental quantitative design was used, with descriptive and comparative-causal ex-post-facto analysis using SPSS software version 28.0. The instruments applied were the Emotional Development Questionnaire (CDE-A-35), the Emotional Development Questionnaire (CDE 9-13), the Emotional Competence Observation Scale, the Children's Anxiety Scale (CAS), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC), and the global grade point average. The results show that there are no significant correlations between teachers' emotional competences and those of their students

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in the early years of Primary Education, whereas a significant association is observed in the upper grades. Furthermore, teachers' emotional competences are significantly and negatively correlated with students' anxiety levels in the more advanced grades. Although no direct relationship was found between teachers' emotional competences and students' academic performance, the findings highlight the importance of fostering the development of these competences in both teachers and students. In conclusion, this study offers a novel approach given the limited research in this field, and underscores the need to integrate emotional education into teacher training and the school curriculum to promote students' well-being and emotional development throughout their educational journey.

Key words: emotional competences, anxiety, academic performance, teachers, Primary Education, emotional education

Introduction

Current social transformations demand an education that goes beyond academic knowledge and fosters the integral development of students. Organizations such as the OECD (2021) and UNESCO (2015; 2020) have emphasized the need to include emotional competences in educational curricula to face life's challenges and improve student well-being. In this line, the current Spanish educational law, LOMLOE (2020), recognizes emotional education as the foundation for personal, social, and academic development throughout all educational stages. Although only 5% of schools implement it systematically, according to the First National Study on Emotional Education (IDIENA, 2021), there is broad consensus among teachers about its necessity, which reinforces its value as an essential component for student well-being and their preparedness to face the challenges of contemporary society.

Based on scientific evidence, emotions play a key role in student learning, as there is a clear correlation between emotional competence and academic performance (Martínez-Sánchez, 2019; Wahyudi, 2018; Perpiñà, 2021). Furthermore, emotional education not only facilitates students' personal development but also supports their learning process, since it is essential for them to understand and manage their emotions to succeed in school (Durlak & Weissberg, 2005; MacCann et al., 2020). Several studies also show that emotional competences can predict levels of anxiety, reinforcing the need to address them in schools (Mella et al., 2021; Puertas-Molero et al., 2017; Ros-Morente et al., 2017).

Moreover, research has shown a close relationship between teachers'

ability to promote positive emotions in the classroom and meaningful student learning (Anzelin et al., 2020; Becker et al., 2014). When teachers effectively regulate their emotions, they become more sensitive to their students' needs, fostering a favorable emotional climate (Calderón et al., 2014; Gutiérrez-Torres & Buitrago-Velandia, 2019). This is key for generating a positive learning environment where students feel understood, valued, and supported. This emotional competence also benefits teachers themselves, leading to greater job satisfaction and better emotional adjustment, which results in better performance and a positive impact on the school climate (Granziera & Perera, 2019; Mérida-López et al., 2022). Therefore, teachers' values, behaviors, and goals not only influence their own teaching practices but also shape the school environment and the general well-being of students (Kim & Seo, 2018; Ramírez-Vázquez et al., 2020; Wang, 2022).

These considerations highlight the importance of teachers developing emotional competences, which are essential for effective and quality education (Pacheco-Salazar, 2017; Sutton & Wheatly, 2003). Training in emotional competences is essential for achieving positive outcomes both individually and collectively (Amponsah, 2024; Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Castillo et al., 2013; Cabello et al., 2010). Teachers play a fundamental role in the development of these competences, not only as learning facilitators but also as role models (López-Cassá, 2023).

Although emotional education is increasingly recognized as essential in teaching practice, in Spain it remains an unresolved issue, as most teachers have not received specific training in this area (OECD, 2019). This lack of training limits their ability to properly manage their own emotional well-being and that of their students (Fundación Botín, 2023). In this regard, UNESCO (2020), the Talis Report (OECD, 2019), and the Education at a Glance report (OECD, 2024) propose including emotional competences in teacher training programs. Initial and ongoing professional development of teachers is closely linked to their classroom practices (Cejudo & López-Delgado, 2017). This approach is even more relevant in a constantly changing educational and social context that requires new competences to address contemporary challenges (Sánchez-Tarazaga & Matarranz, 2023). The promotion of key competences for lifelong learning is also one of the main objectives of the European Education Area. Among the competences defined by the European Commission's reference framework, LifeComp (Sala et al., 2020), are personal competences such as self-regulation, flexibility, and well-being, as well as social competences like empathy, communication, and collaboration,

all highly valued both in education and in the workplace. This framework can serve as a common foundation for educators, professionals, and citizens, especially in complex and uncertain contexts such as the present. Hence, it is important to integrate emotional competences both in university training (Palomera et al., 2019; Schonert-Reichl, 2019) and in continuous professional development (Keefer et al., 2018; Kotsou et al., 2018; Guerrero-Guillén et al., 2023). Despite advances in recognizing the importance of emotional education, the lack of a universal consensus on the conceptualization, models, and tools for measuring emotional competences highlights the need for a coherent theoretical approach (Pérez-González et al., 2020; Nelis et al., 2009). In this context, it is appropriate to present the theoretical model used in this study, as it allows for a more rigorous definition and analysis of emotional competences and their influence on teaching practice.

According to Bisquerra and Pérez-Escoda (2007), emotional competences are defined as a set of capacities, knowledge, skills, aptitudes, attitudes, and values necessary to understand, express, and regulate emotional phenomena adequately. Based on this conceptualization, a classification of competences is proposed, grouped into five dimensions according to GROP's pentagonal model of emotional competence: emotional awareness (ability to recognize and identify one's own and others' emotions), emotional regulation (ability to manage emotions and emotional responses effectively), emotional autonomy (self-management and personal initiative), social competence (ability to maintain positive interpersonal relationships), and life and well-being competences (ability to adopt responsible behaviors to face everyday life problems effectively).

From these various contributions, it is clear that emotional competences are an increasingly important area of knowledge and interest in education, particularly regarding their potential to influence both learning and student well-being. However, few studies have examined how teachers' emotional competences impact key variables in students such as well-being, academic achievement, and the development of their own emotional competences in Primary Education.

For this reason, the present study aims to:

- Explore the correlation between teachers' emotional competences and Primary Education students' emotional competences.
- Analyze the relationship between teachers' emotional competences and students' anxiety levels in Primary Education.
- Examine the relationship between teachers' emotional competences

and the academic performance of Primary Education students.

Method

This study employed a descriptive and comparative-causal ex-post-facto design to analyze the relationship between teachers' emotional competences and key variables in Primary Education students: emotional development, anxiety, and academic performance.

This design is especially suitable when it is not possible to intentionally manipulate variables, as it allows for the observation and analysis of phenomena in real contexts (Hernández, 2014). It also allows the establishment of associations between variables without direct intervention.

Sample

The sample of this study included a total of 118 teachers (83.9% women and 16.1% men) (see Table I) and 1676 Primary Education students (50.7% boys and 49.3% girls) (see Table II), from 20 public and semi-private schools in various Spanish cities. Third-grade students were excluded because the assessment tools used were not homogeneous and did not allow for comparative analysis across the study variables.

It is important to note that none of the schools had implemented emotional education programs, and the teachers had not received previous training in emotional competences.

TABLE I. Teacher Sample

Participants	Men	Women	Total
Teacher	19 (16.1%)	99 (83.9%)	118

Source: Authors' own work

TABLE II. Student Sample

Participants	Boys	Girls	Total
Grades 1–2 Primary Education	217 (50.5%)	213 (49.5%)	430
Grades 4–6 Primary Education	634 (50.9%)	612 (49.1%)	1246
Total Student Sample	851 (50.7%)	825 (49.3%)	1676

Source: Authors' own work

The selected variables for this study were Emotional competence-understood as the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to understand, express, and appropriately regulate emotional phenomena (Bisquerra, 2009), the variable State anxiety- understood as a situation of emotional vulnerability where the child experiences fear, uneasiness, nervousness, and above all, tension, which may alter behavior (Spielberger, 2019)-and Academic performance, defined as the degree of achievement of the educational goals established in the curriculum being studied (Rogers, 2010).

The study aimed to explore correlations among these variables to understand how teachers' emotional competences may influence students' emotional competences, anxiety, and academic performance.

Instruments

In selecting the instruments, conceptual consistency, the variables to be analyzed, psychometric validity and reliability, and practical application feasibility were taken into account. Based on these criteria, the following instruments were selected:

- *Emotional Competence Observation Scale* (adaptation of Filella-Guiu et al., 2014): Consisting of 83 items with an 11-point Likert scale (0 = very rarely or never, 10 = almost always). It was used to assess the emotional competences of students in first and second grades based on their teacher's perception. Built on GROP's pentagonal model of emotional competences and based on the emotional competence observation scale by López-Cassá (2007) for Early Childhood Education. Reliability indices: emotional awareness ($\alpha = .83$),

emotional regulation ($\alpha = .77$), emotional autonomy ($\alpha = .76$), social competence ($\alpha = .84$), life and well-being competences ($\alpha = .75$).

- *Emotional Development Questionnaire [CDE-9-13]* (Pérez-Escoda, López-Cassá, and Alegre, 2021). This self-report questionnaire was used to assess the level of mastery of emotional competences in students from fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of Primary Education. The questionnaire is based on the GROP pentagonal model of emotional competences (Bisquerra and Pérez-Escoda, 2007). The instrument uses a Likert-type response format on a scale from 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree). Each of the scales in the different dimensions: emotional awareness ($\alpha = .80$), emotional regulation ($\alpha = .75$), emotional autonomy ($\alpha = .62$), social competence ($\alpha = .72$), and life and well-being competences ($\alpha = .72$), as well as the total scale ($\alpha = .91$), show optimal reliability.
- *Emotional Development Questionnaire [CDE-A35]* (Pérez-Escoda, Alegre, and López-Cassá, 2021). This self-report questionnaire is based on the GROP pentagonal model. It consists of 35 items, with an 11-point Likert-type scale (0 = very rarely or never, 10 = almost always). This questionnaire was used to assess the emotional competences of the teachers participating in the study. The reliability data of this test, by scale, show the following results: emotional awareness ($\alpha = .78$), emotional regulation ($\alpha = .77$), emotional autonomy ($\alpha = .77$), social competence ($\alpha = .64$), and life and well-being competences ($\alpha = .80$), and the complete scale presents an $\alpha = .89$.
- *Children's Anxiety Scale [CAS]* (Gillis, 1980; Spanish adaptation by Gómez-Fernández and Pulido, 2011). A questionnaire used to measure anxiety in students in the first and second grades of Primary Education. The scale consists of 20 items with a dichotomous response format (Yes or No), resulting in a total score. The reliability values of the test in this sample, using Cronbach's alpha, show optimal values (α

= .80).

- *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children [STAIC]* (Spielberger, 1973). This questionnaire consists of two independent scales, one to assess Trait Anxiety and the other to assess State Anxiety, with a total of 40 items using a 3-point Likert-type scale (1 = very rarely, 3 = almost always). In the present study, the validated version by Seisdedos (TEA Ediciones, 1989) was used for students in the fourth to sixth grades of Primary Education. Only the State Anxiety scale (STAIC-State) was used to evaluate the different anxiety levels students presented at the time of data collection. The test, in this sample, shows optimal internal consistency values using Cronbach's alpha of 0.97 for the State Anxiety scale.
- *Academic Report*. The overall grade point average (0 to 10) of students in the first, second, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of Primary Education was considered a quantitative indicator of academic performance. This information was provided by the school administration.

Procedure

The application of the questionnaires was carried out under the supervision of the research team and school staff. During this process, the Helsinki recommendations on confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, and minimal intervention were followed. Since the participants were minors, their families or legal guardians were informed by the school administration about the purpose of the research and the procedures to be followed. They were asked to provide written informed consent to the school's responsible personnel. The research team signed a research agreement with each educational center, guaranteeing the confidentiality of the results.

To analyze the data collected in this study, SPSS software version 28.0 was used. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed. In the first phase, a descriptive analysis of all the variables involved was conducted. Subsequently, normality assumptions were verified using specific

tests: the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test and Levene's test to assess homogeneity of variances. Additionally, to explore the associations among the study variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of the relationship between the different dimensions analyzed.

Results

In accordance with the objectives of this research, the results obtained are presented below.

- Correlation between teachers' Emotional Competences and students' Emotional Competences

An analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the emotional competences of teachers and those of students in the first cycle (first and second grades) and in the fourth to sixth grades of Primary Education. The data review revealed no statistically significant correlations between teachers' emotional competences and those of students in the first and second grades of Primary Education (see Table III).

TABLE III. Pearson correlation of Emotional Competences between teachers and students of First-and Second- Grade Primary School Students

		Teachers' Emotional Competences					
Students' Emotional Competences in First- and Second-Grade Primary School Students		Emotional Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Emotional Autonomy	Social Competence	Life & Well-Being Competences	Total Competences
Emotional Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.091	-.121	.019	.094	-.102	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.338	.203	.840	.324	.285	.913

Emotional Regulation	Pearson Correlation	.007	.038	-.021	.053	.004	.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.941	.687	.826	.574	.969	.833
Emotional Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.120	.014	.034	.129	-.036	.068
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.204	.886	.718	.173	.703	.474
Social Competence	Pearson Correlation	-.052	-.090	-.108	-.026	-.092	-.108
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.582	.341	.253	.786	.335	.254
Life & Well-Being Competences	Pearson Correlation	-.040	-.001	-.100	-.018	-.062	-.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.671	.993	.293	.850	.513	.482
Total Competences	Pearson Correlation	.045	-.064	-.028	.067	-.080	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.634	.503	.766	.482	.402	.815

N= 430. * p < .05, ** p < .01

Source: Authors' own work

Regarding students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of Primary Education, the results reveal a significant association between the total emotional competences of teachers and students' life and well-being competences ($r = 0.206$, $p < 0.05$). However, this relationship was not observed for other emotional competences, such as emotional awareness ($r = -0.037$, $p > 0.05$), emotional regulation ($r = 0.141$, $p > 0.05$), emotional autonomy ($r = 0.079$, $p > 0.05$), social competence ($r = 0.023$, $p > 0.05$), or the total emotional competences ($r = -0.022$, $p > 0.05$) of the students (see Table IV).

TABLE IV. Pearson Correlation of Emotional Competences between Students and Teachers of Fourth-to Sixth-Grade Primary Education Students

Teachers' Emotional Competences							
Students' Emotional Competences in Fourth- to Sixth-Grade Primary Education Students		Emotional Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Emotional Autonomy	Social Competence	Life & Well-Being Competences	Total Competences
Emotional Awareness	Pearson Correlation	-.063	.003	-.042	-.016	-.011	-.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.511	.977	.659	.867	.909	.697
Emotional Regulation	Pearson Correlation	.147	.086	.095	.107	.067	.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.121	.366	.319	.258	.482	.136
Emotional Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.074	.076	.018	.031	.078	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.436	.423	.849	.745	.410	.403
Social Competence	Pearson Correlation	-.067	-.002	.082	.043	.017	.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.479	.986	.388	.649	.855	.809
Life & Well-Being Competences	Pearson Correlation	.134	.171	.135	.090	.182	.206*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.158	.071	.155	.342	.054	.028
Total Competences	Pearson Correlation	.045	-.064	-.028	.067	-.080	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.634	.503	.766	.482	.402	.815

N= 1246. * p < .05, ** p < .01

Source: Authors' own work

- Relationship Between Teachers' Emotional Competences and Anxiety Levels in Primary School Students

The relationship between the anxiety levels of first- and second-grade

students and the emotional competences of their teachers was examined. The analysis revealed no significant associations between the anxiety of early-cycle students and the emotional competences of the participating teachers (see Table V).

TABLE V. Pearson Correlation Between Teachers' Emotional Competences and Anxiety of First-and Second- Grade Primary School Students

		Teachers' Emotional Competences					
		Emo-tional Awareness	Emo-tional Regu-lation	Emo-tional Autono-my	Social Compe-tence	Life & Well-Being Compe-tences	Total Compe-tences
Anxiety in First- and Second-Grade Primary School Students	Pearson Correlation	.033	-.017	.027	.011	.045	.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.731	.856	.774	.910	.637	.753

N= 430. * p < .05, ** p < .01

Source: Authors' own work

In the analysis of the relationship between teachers' emotional competences and the anxiety of fourth- to sixth-grade Primary Education students, negative and statistically significant correlations emerged between student anxiety and teachers' emotional autonomy ($r = -0.246$, $p < 0.01$), social competence ($r = -0.218$, $p < 0.05$), and overall emotional competences ($r = -0.248$, $p < 0.01$) (see Table VI).

TABLE VI. Pearson Correlation Between Teachers' Emotional Competences and the State Anxiety of Fourth-to Sixth-Grade Primary Education Students

Teachers' Emotional Competences							
		Emotional Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Emotional Autonomy	Social Competence	Life & Well-Being Competences	Total Competences
State Anxiety in Fourth- to Sixth-Grade Primary Education Students	Pearson Correlation	-.118	-.168	-.246**	-.218*	-.121	-.248**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.213	.074	.009	.020	.203	.008

N= 1246. * p < .05, ** p < .01

Source: Authors' own work

- Relationship Between Teachers' Emotional Competences and the Academic Performance of Primary School Students

The relationship between teachers' emotional competences and student performance was analyzed. The results showed no correlation between teachers' emotional competences and the academic performance of early-cycle students (see Table VII). Similarly, no significant relationship was found between these variables among teachers and students in fourth- to sixth-grade Primary Education (see Table VIII).

TABLE VII. Pearson Correlation Between Teachers' Emotional Competences and the Academic Performance of First-and Second-Grade Primary School Students

		Teachers' Emotional Competences					
		Emotional Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Emotional Autonomy	Social Competence	Life & Well-Being Competences	Total Competences
Academic Performance – First- and Second-Grade Primary School Students	Pearson Correlation	-.060	-.134	-.150	-.05	-.077	-.137
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.526	.157	.113	.593	.418	.149

N= 430. * p < .05, ** p < .01

Source: Authors' own work

TABLE VIII. Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Emotional Competences and Academic Performance of Students in Fourth-to Sixth-Grade Primary Education

Teachers' Emotional Competences							
		Emotional Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Emotional Autonomy	Social Competence	Life & Well-Being Competences	Total Competences
Academic Performance- Fourth-to Sixth-Grade Primary Education	Pearson Correlation	-.070	-.138	.018	-.164	-.125	-.130
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.466	.148	.851	.086	.192	.174

N= 1246. * p < .05, ** p < .01

Source: Authors' own work

Discussion

The first objective of this study was to explore the correlation between teachers' emotional competences and those of primary school students. Regarding the results obtained in the initial cycle (first and second grade), no correlations were found between teachers' emotional competences and those of their students. However, in the more advanced stages of primary education (fourth, fifth, and sixth grade), the findings reveal a significant association between the overall emotional competences of teachers and students' life and well-being competence. These results are consistent with previous research, such as that of Jennings and Greenberg (2009) and Poulou (2015), which report a significant relationship between teachers' and students' emotional competences, moderated by the developmental stage of the students. In this sense, in the upper levels of primary education, greater emotional maturity may enable increased receptiveness to the influence of the teaching environment, which could help explain the associations observed in this study. It is important to highlight that the development of emotional competences follows a progressive evolutionary course from early childhood to adolescence, increasing in complexity with age (Denham, 2019). In the early years of

Primary Education, students' emotional interactions are more focused on peer groups and are primarily influenced by peer relational dynamics. However, in the later grades, emotions become more autonomous and increasingly shaped by adult figures such as teachers. This process is facilitated by the progressive development of higher-order cognitive functions, such as sustained attention and reflective thinking, as well as by advances in language skills. These allow students to identify, express, and regulate their own emotional states, seek support when needed, and expand their emotional vocabulary (Holodynski et al., 2013).

The second objective of this study was to analyze the relationship between teachers' emotional competences and the anxiety levels of primary school students. The results did not reveal significant associations between student anxiety in the early years of primary education and teachers' emotional competences. However, in the upper grades (fourth, fifth, and sixth), significant negative correlations were observed between the two variables. In other words, higher levels of teachers' emotional competence were associated with lower levels of student anxiety.

These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that teaching is an inherently emotional activity, in which continuous interpersonal interactions generate a constant experience of emotions (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). In this regard, various studies have shown that teachers' emotions can predict students' emotional experiences (Becker et al., 2014; Utto et al., 2015), significantly influencing their ability to identify, express, understand, and regulate their own emotional states (Rodrigo-Ruiz, 2016). These results align with the work of Jennings and Greenberg (2009), who emphasize how the development of teachers' emotional competences affects the emotional climate of the classroom and the emotional well-being of students—an effect that is particularly evident in the later years of Primary Education. According to these authors, the influence of teachers on students' emotional regulation varies according to developmental stage, becoming more significant as students gain greater emotional autonomy. During the early years of Primary Education, students tend to be more emotionally dependent, relying heavily on authority figures (such as teachers) for emotional regulation. However, in this stage, student anxiety may be more strongly determined by other factors, such as

school adaptation, family support, or early socialization routines, which could explain the weak association between anxiety and emotional competences in the lower grades. As children progress developmentally, they acquire greater independence in emotional regulation, allowing the teacher's influence on anxiety management to become more relevant. In this line, previous studies have shown that students with high levels of anxiety often struggle with emotional expression (Mathews et al., 2016), which can negatively impact their overall well-being as well as the quality of their social and academic relationships (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Ruvalcaba-Romero et al., 2017). Specifically, the *Life and Well-Being* Competences subscale, which includes items related to personal well-being and self-satisfaction, such as "I am satisfied with how I face life and how happy I am" (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021), emerges as a relevant indicator for understanding the link between teachers' emotional competences and students' emotional well-being.

The third objective of this research was to examine the relationship between teachers' emotional competences and the academic performance of Primary School students. The results did not show a significant correlation between these variables. These findings contrast with other studies (Curci et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2023) that do report an association between the two factors. However, other research suggests that, although emotional competences are essential for teacher well-being and effectiveness, their impact on students' academic performance may be mediated by intermediate variables such as motivation, professional or teaching engagement, or classroom climate (Frenzel et al., 2021). In this regard, studies such as that by Addimando (2019) suggest that teachers' emotional competence may have an indirect influence on students' academic performance, primarily through increased professional engagement. That is, an emotionally competent teacher may be better equipped to engage positively and consistently in their educational role, potentially fostering a more effective learning environment for students. Given that empirical evidence on this relationship remains limited and sometimes contradictory, further research is needed to clarify the mechanisms through which teachers' emotional competences may directly or indirectly influence students' academic performance.

It is worth noting that the schools included in the sample had not

previously implemented emotional education programs, and the participating teachers did not have specific training in this area. This lack of prior intervention strengthens the value of the findings by allowing the studied relationships to be observed in settings not influenced by previous programs. Moreover, the study offers a novel contribution to the existing literature by providing a relatively unexplored perspective on how teachers' emotional competences impact key student variables, such as well-being, academic performance, and the development of their own emotional competences. Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged that may affect the generalizability of the findings. First, there was a gender imbalance in the teacher sample, with a majority of female participants. While this reflects the actual demographic distribution in Primary Education, thereby potentially enhancing the external validity of the study, it would be advisable for future research to strive for a more balanced sample to explore possible gender-related differences. Additionally, in the first cycle of Primary Education, student assessments were hetero-reported due to the developmental stage and early literacy acquisition of the group. This method of evaluation may introduce certain variations in the results compared to self-reported data, which should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Furthermore, although including third-grade students would have been of great interest, this group was excluded from the analysis due to inconsistencies in the evaluation instruments, which hindered comparison across the study variables. Finally, future research should consider conducting longitudinal studies to assess the stability of the results over time and further advance understanding of the impact of teachers' emotional competences on student development.

Conclusion

The present study offers a novel approach, given the scarcity of previous research in this field, and has made it possible to identify various relationships between teachers' emotional competences and different aspects of students' emotional and academic development, with variations depending on the

educational level.

First, it was observed that in the early grades of Primary Education, there is no significant correlation between teachers' and students' emotional competences. However, in the later years of Primary Education, the results do show a significant association between these variables. This finding highlights the importance of tailoring emotional education interventions to the developmental characteristics of students, particularly in the upper primary grades, when the impact of teacher modeling becomes more evident.

Second, the study found that teachers' emotional competences play a relevant role in reducing student anxiety in the upper grades of Primary Education. This suggests that older students are more receptive to their teachers' influence, which contributes to lower anxiety levels and, consequently, to a more favorable learning environment. From a practical perspective, this reinforces the need to train teachers in emotional competences not only as a tool for personal regulation, but also as a means of creating emotionally safe and supportive school contexts for learning.

Finally, no direct relationship was found between teachers' emotional competences and students' academic performance. This lack of direct correlation does not diminish the importance of emotional well-being in teaching and learning processes, but rather underscores the complexity of these connections and the need to address them from a holistic perspective that includes both cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Overall, the findings of this research highlight the relevance of emotional competences in the school context and the importance of strengthening them in both initial and ongoing teacher training. These results support the need to design and implement specific programs for the development of teachers' emotional competences and to integrate emotional education into the student curriculum, with the aim of promoting student well-being, emotional development, and academic success throughout their educational journey.

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Video game usage influence on adolescents' social skills

Influencia del uso de videojuegos en las habilidades sociales de los adolescentes

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Abstract

Video games, deeply rooted in nowadays' society, constitute a key element to understand the implications that their use has on the social and personal relationships of adolescents. The aim of this research is to determine the link between video games use and social skills in the adolescent population. The study was developed following a quantitative perspective, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional, descriptive and multifactorial design. An *ad hoc* questionnaire with general items on preference and frequency of video game use and a social skills questionnaire were used. Data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS v.22 statistical package. The sample consisted of 708 Galician adolescents aged between 12 and 18 years ($M = 13.92$; $SD = 1.71$). Results show that a 31.4% of adolescents see video games as their first leisure choice, with the male gender being the one that plays the most

through cell phones, Tablets or consoles connected to the television. In addition, Massively Multiplayer Online games are the most played type of games, with the female population preferring *Among Us*, whereas the male population shows preference for *Fortnite*. Finally, a slight relationship has been shown between the use of video games and worse social skills. Not using video games improves both assertiveness and problem-solving skills during adolescence. On the other hand, no statistically significant relationship was found between the use of video games and communication skills. In conclusion, the use of this leisure activity implies certain negative consequences in the social sphere, resulting in slightly poorer social skills, with problem-solving skills being the most affected area.

Keywords: Videogames, Social skills, Adolescence, Gender, Quantitative research.

Resumen

Los videojuegos, enraizados profundamente en la sociedad actual, constituyen un elemento clave para abordar las implicaciones que conlleva su uso en las relaciones personales y sociales de los adolescentes. El objetivo de la presente investigación es determinar la asociación que existe entre el uso de videojuegos y las habilidades sociales en la población adolescente. El estudio fue desarrollado siguiendo un enfoque cuantitativo, con un diseño no experimental transversal descriptivo y multifactorial. Los instrumentos utilizados fueron un cuestionario *ad hoc* de preguntas generales sobre la preferencia y frecuencia en el uso de videojuegos y un cuestionario de habilidades sociales. Para el procesamiento de la información se utilizó el paquete estadístico SPSS V.22. La muestra estuvo conformada por un total de 708 adolescentes gallegos de entre 12 y 18 años ($M = 13.92$; $DT = 1.71$). Los resultados muestran que un 31.4% de los jóvenes tiene los videojuegos como principal opción de ocio, con un mayor uso de estos por parte del género masculino utilizando el móvil, Tablet o consola conectada a la televisión como plataforma de preferencia. Además, el tipo de videojuego más utilizado son los juegos multijugador con predilección por *Among Us* por parte del género femenino y *Fortnite* por parte del masculino. Finalmente, se ha evidenciado que existe una relación entre el uso de videojuegos y unas peores habilidades sociales. No hacer uso de videojuegos mejora la assertividad y las habilidades en la resolución de conflictos en edad adolescente. Asimismo, no se alcanzan diferencias significativas entre el uso de videojuegos y las habilidades comunicativas. En conclusión, el uso de esta forma de ocio parece llevar aparejadas ciertas consecuencias negativas en la esfera social, traducidas en una merma de las habilidades sociales de sus participantes, siendo la capacidad de resolución de conflictos el área más afectada.

Palabras Clave: Videojuegos, Habilidades Sociales, Adolescencia, Género, Metodología Cuantitativa.

Introduction

Human beings are inherently social creatures; both survival and the experience of a meaningful life depend on the presence of others. Social skills are therefore essential, as they enable individuals to establish and maintain effective interpersonal relationships (Betina & Contini, 2011; Flores-Mamani et al., 2016), regardless of the intent—whether to trade, form friendships, or express needs (Dongil-Collado & Cano-Vindel, 2014). Defining the construct of social skills is a complex task, as is often the case within the social sciences. However, in this study, the concept is approached from two premises: first, social skills encompass both behavioral and cognitive dimensions; second, their purpose is emphasized: “they are cognitive or behavioral routines that allow us to maintain healthy relationships with others” (Oliva et al., 2011, p. 176). According to these authors, social skills comprise communication abilities, assertiveness, and conflict resolution skills.

Most research on social skills links them to desirable outcomes, such as improved academic performance (Betina, 2012; Caldarella et al., 2017; Zorza et al., 2013), enhanced quality of life (Leme et al., 2015; Salavera et al., 2020), or positive romantic relationships (Zavala et al., 2017). Notably, several studies suggest that females tend to exhibit higher levels of social skills (Maleki et al., 2019; Morales et al., 2013; Reyna & Brussino, 2015).

Today, the use of video games continues to rise: in Spain, there are approximately fifteen million players, with around eleven million engaging weekly, spending an average of about seven hours per week (Asociación Española de Videojuegos, 2019). Among adolescents, nearly seven out of ten report regular use, with the typical gamer profile being predominantly male. Nonetheless, gender distribution has become more balanced in recent years, and the frequency of use appears to decline with age (Asociación Española de Videojuegos, 2019).

Although multiple definitions of video games exist (Arjoranta, 2019), to avoid ambiguity, this study adopts the definition proposed by Esposito (2005, p. 2): “a game played through an audiovisual device that may be based on a storyline.” The main challenge, however, lies in establishing a

comprehensive and precise classification system for video games. While the current regulatory framework (Pan European Game Information - PEGI, 2003) provides guidance on recommended age and content, it does not address key elements such as theme—referring to the narrative topics explored in games—or mechanics, defined as the tools and systems that allow players to progress (Fabricatore, 2007). In many cases, classification proves difficult, as games often integrate multiple mechanics without any one predominating (Pérez, 2011). Consequently, this study adopts the classification proposed by Fritts (n.d.), which categorizes video games into action, adventure, action-adventure, role-playing games (RPGs), simulators, strategy, casual games, and massively multiplayer online games (MMOs).

Numerous studies suggest a relationship between video game use and diminished social skills. Männikkö et al. (2014) and Campit (2015) report a negative correlation between video game use and social skills. Similarly, Yousef et al. (2014) found a positive association between video game use and social problems, while Griffiths (2010) linked high gaming frequency to increased social anxiety. Research by Kowert et al. (2014a), De Pasquale et al. (2020), and Fumero et al. (2020) indicates that higher levels of online gaming correlate with poorer social relationships. You et al. (2014) observed that exposure to violent video games reduces prosocial behavior by impairing both empathy and behavioral regulation. Furthermore, Zamani et al. (2010) and Männikkö et al. (2020) highlight that problematic video game use is associated with lower social competence and deteriorated interpersonal relationships.

However, other studies have found no significant link between video game use and social skills (Blinka & Mikuška, 2014; Kowert, 2013; Kowert et al., 2014b; Loton, 2007; Mamani & Yupanqui, 2018). In fact, some research posits that appropriate use of video games may provide adolescents with a safe environment conducive to the development of social skills (Alfageme & Sánchez, 2002; Eguia et al., 2013; Kovess-Masfety et al., 2016; Thirunarayanan & Vilchez, 2012). Carras (2015) even argues that online games can serve as effective tools for acquiring social competencies that may later be transferred and applied in real-life settings.

Thus, considering that the purpose of this study is to determine whether

an influential relationship exists between video game use and social skills in adolescents, the following hypotheses are proposed: H1: adolescents who identify video games as their primary leisure activity will obtain lower scores in social skills; H2: those who report a longer history of video game use will display reduced levels of social skills; H3: an inverse relationship will be observed between the amount of time spent playing video games during the school week and social skill levels; and H4: the number of hours dedicated to video game use over the weekend will likewise be negatively associated with social skills scores.

Method

Design

This study follows a quantitative, non-experimental, *ex post facto* design, as it analyzes a phenomenon that has already occurred in a natural setting: the use of video games. Participants were informed that the research focused on the world of video games from the perspective of adolescents, and they were asked to complete a brief questionnaire.

Sample

The participants in this study were selected through a non-probabilistic, purposive sampling method. The final sample consisted of 708 students (see Table I), with the following characteristics:

- Students enrolled in schools offering Compulsory Secondary Education (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO) and Baccalaureate (Bachillerato) under the authority of the Department of Culture, Education and University Planning of the Xunta de Galicia.
- Participants enrolled in any year of ESO or Bachillerato.
- Adolescents aged between 12 and 18 years, inclusive.
- Data collection occurred both in person at the students' schools under the supervision of the research team, and online via a digital

questionnaire.

- The sample size was heavily influenced by a double layer of voluntariness: first, at the institutional level (schools and/or teachers), and second, at the individual level (students' personal willingness to participate).

TABLE I. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

<i>N = 708 participants</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
Sex			
Women	51.3	363	
Men	48.7	345	
Age			13.92 (1.71)
12-13 years	26.7	189	
14-15 years	54.1	383	
16-18 years	19.2	136	
Main Leisure Activity			
Video games	31.4	222	
Other activities	68.6	486	
Years Playing Video Games			4.96 (3.57)
0 years	17.4	123	
1-3 years	18.1	128	
4-6 years	30.4	215	
7-9 years	22.7	161	
More than 9 years	11.4	81	
Weekly Hours of Gameplay (min. 0; max. 40)			5.76 (7.75)
0 hours	25.7	182	
1-3 hours	29.4	208	
4-6 hours	15.4	109	
6-9 hours	8.5	60	
More than 9 hours	21	149	
Weekend Hours of Gameplay (min. 0; max. 25)			4.99 (5.33)

0 hours	18.9	134	
1-3 hours	32.2	228	
4-6 hours	22.5	159	
6-9 hours	8.1	57	
More than 9 hours	18.4	130	
Preferred Gaming Platform			
TV-connected	28	198	
Handheld console	5.5	39	
Computer	17.8	126	
Mobile phone or tablet	31.4	222	
Does not play	17.4	123	
Preferred Type of Game			
Action-adventure	16.7	118	
RPG / Strategy / Casual	4.1	29	
Simulators	11.4	81	
MMOs (Massively Multiplayer Online)	41.9	297	
Not specified	8.5	60	
Does not play	17.4	123	
Most Played Video Game			
Among Us	15.5	110	
Fortnite	15	106	
FIFA	4.9	35	
Several titles simultaneously	47.2	334	
None	17.4	123	

Instruments

Two questionnaires were used to collect information:

- *Ad hoc* questionnaire: Developed to gather sociodemographic data of

the sample. This set of items included standard classification questions such as age, gender, or academic year, as well as others related to video game use, such as favorite game type or weekly hours dedicated to video gaming.

- Social Skills Questionnaire by Oliva et al. (2011): This instrument directly measures social skills through three scales: communicative skills, assertiveness, and conflict resolution skills. The questionnaire consists of 12 items (acceptable reliability in this study: $\alpha = .696$; $\omega = .660$), divided into three subscales: communicative skills (5 items, $\alpha = .731$), assertiveness (3 items, $\alpha = .614$), and conflict resolution skills (4 items, $\alpha = .733$). Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from completely false (1) to completely true (7).

Procedure

Fieldwork was conducted by contacting selected secondary education centers in Galicia, offering them the possibility to participate either by having the research team visit the center in person or through an online survey (Google Forms). Participant anonymity was ensured at all times. Prior to data collection, families were sent an informed consent form, so participation in the study was granted only after approval from both the legal guardians and the adolescents. Combining both options, a sample of a total of 708 adolescents was obtained.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, descriptive statistical analyses were first conducted for all variables of interest through cross-tabulation. Secondly, after verifying that the data met the assumptions for parametric statistical analyses, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. This type of analysis was chosen because it examines the simultaneous effect of multiple variables and is used to analyze the joint behavior of more than one dependent variable. Additionally, *Wilks' Lambda* statistic was selected due to its widespread use in multivariate analysis when the independent factor has more than two levels. This statistic compares the within-group deviations with the total deviations without distinguishing groups (significance level: $< .05$).

Results

The descriptive analysis carried out through contingency tables for video game use by gender (Table II) shows that 49.9% of boys report video games as their primary leisure activity, while only 13.8% of girls consider them their first choice of entertainment. Likewise, when considering years of gameplay, higher percentages are observed in the zero to three years range among girls, whereas for longer periods of play (more than four years), the percentage is higher among boys. Regarding weekly and weekend hours of gameplay, females show higher percentages in the zero to three hours range, while males predominate from four or more hours of play. Similarly, the male adolescent population prefers the console connected to the TV as their gaming platform, whereas females prefer mobile phones or tablets. Finally, both males and females agree that multiplayer online games are their favorite genre, with Among Us being the most played among girls, and Fortnite among boys.

TABLE II. Descriptive analysis of video game use by gender

Main Leisure Activity				Video Games	Other Activities	Total
Female				13,8% _a	86,2% _b	100%
Male				49,9% _a	50,1% _b	100%
Years Playing Video Games	0 years	1-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	> 9 years	Total
Female	30,3% _a	20,7% _a	25,3% _a	18,5% _a	5,2% _a	100%
Male	3,8% _b	15,4% _a	35,7% _b	27,2% _b	18% _b	100%
Weekly Gaming Hours	0 hours	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	> 9 hours	Total
Female	35,5% _a	33,1% _a	14,6% _a	6,3% _a	10,5% _a	100%
Male	15,4% _b	25,5% _b	16,2% _a	10,7% _b	32,2% _b	100%
Weekend Gaming Hours		0 hours	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	Total
Female		32% _a	36,1% _a	18,7% _a	5,5% _a	7,7% _a
Male		5,2% _b	28,1% _b	26,4% _b	10,7% _b	29,6% _b
Preferred Platform		TV Console	Handed Console	Computer	Mobile/Tablet	Does not play
Female		10,5% _a	5,2% _a	8% _a	45,7% _a	30,6% _a
Male		46,4% _b	5,8% _a	28,1% _b	16,2% _b	3,5% _b

Preferred Game Type	Action-Adventure	Role-Strategy-Casual	Simulators	MMOs	Unspecified	Does not play	Total
Female	8,3% _a	3,3% _a	8,3% _a	39,7% _a	9,9% _a	30,6% _a	100%
Male	25,5% _b	4,9% _a	14,8% _b	44,3% _a	7% _a	3,5% _b	100%
Most Played Game	<i>Among Us</i>		<i>Fortnite</i>	<i>FIFA</i>	Various/Others/Unspecified	None	Total
Female	26,4% _a	6,3% _a	0,8% _a	35,8% _a	30,6% _a	100%	
Male	4,1% _b	24,1% _b	9,3% _b	59,1% _a	3,5% _a	100%	

Note. Each subscript letter denotes a subset of gender whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

The scores obtained in social skills according to whether leisure time is primarily dedicated to video games (yes/no) are presented in Table III. Slightly higher communicative skills are observed when leisure time is spent on video games. In contrast, greater assertiveness and conflict resolution skills are found among those who do not dedicate their leisure time to video games.

TABLE III. Means, standard deviations, and multivariate analysis (MANOVA) of social skills according to leisure time dedicated to video games

SS	YES	NO	Total	F	p	η^2	Power
CS	19.77 (7.19)	19.74 (7.81)	19.75 (7.61)	.003	.956	.000	.050
AS	15.96 (3.70)	16.82 (3.21)	16.55 (3.39)	9.86	.002	.014	.880
CR	17.25 (5.37)	19.28 (5.07)	18.64 (5.25)	23.62	.000	.032	.998

Note. CS: Communicative Skills; AS: Assertiveness; CR: Conflict Resolution.

Likewise, the MANOVA results (Table III) indicated significant differences in the use of video games as a central leisure activity in relation to specific subscales of the social skills questionnaire [*Wilks' Lambda* = .97, $F(3, 704) = 8.06, p < .001, \eta^2 p = .033$, power = .991]. Univariate analyses revealed significant differences in video game use for assertiveness [$F(1, 706) = 9.86, p < .01, \eta^2 p = .014$, power = .880] and conflict resolution [$F(1, 706) = 23.62, p < .001, \eta^2 p = .032$, power = .998], but not for communicative skills [$F(1, 706) = .003, p > .05, \eta^2 p = .000$, power = .050]. Therefore, individuals who do not play video games in their leisure time demonstrated better assertiveness ($M = 16.82, SD = 3.21$) and conflict resolution skills ($M = 19.28, SD = 5.07$)

than those who do play them (assertiveness: $M = 15.96$, $SD = 3.70$; conflict resolution: $M = 17.25$, $SD = 5.37$).

When considering the number of years participants have been playing video games, those who had been playing for four to six years showed higher communicative skills, while those who had never played video games showed better assertiveness and conflict resolution skills (Table IV).

TABLE IV. Means, standard deviations, and multivariate analysis (MANOVA) of social skills according to years spent playing video games

SS	0 years	1-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	+ 9 years	Total	F	p	η^2_p	Power
CS	20.31 (7.64)	19.45 (7.43)	20.47 (7.87)	18.64 (7.19)	19.67 (7.89)	19.75 (7.62)	1.56	.183	.009	.485
AS	17.18 (3.19)	16.76 (3.10)	16.57 (3.46)	16.20 (3.58)	15.93 (3.49)	16.55 (3.39)	2.38	.048	.013	.697
CR	20.02 (5.14)	18.47 (5.05)	18.37 (5.46)	18.30 (5.25)	18.28 (4.95)	18.65 (5.52)	2.59	.035	.015	.713

Note. CS: Communicative Skills; AS: Assertiveness; CR: Conflict Resolution.

Additionally, the MANOVA analyses revealed significant differences in social skills based on the number of years adolescents have been playing video games [*Wilks' Lambda* = .969, $F(12, 71854.963) = 1.844$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 p = .010$, power = .853]. Subsequent univariate analyses (Table IV) indicated significant differences only in the assertiveness [$F(4, 703) = 2.389$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 p = .013$, power = .697] and conflict resolution [$F(4, 703) = 2.596$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 p = .015$, power = .731] subscales of the social skills questionnaire. In contrast, the differences in the communicative skills scale [$F(4, 703) = 1.562$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 p = .009$, power = .485] were not statistically significant.

Post hoc tests showed that adolescents who have never played video games demonstrated significantly higher assertiveness ($M = 17.18$; $SD = 5.08$) than those who have been playing for seven to nine years ($M = 16.20$; $SD = 3.58$) and more than nine years ($M = 15.93$; $SD = 3.49$). Similarly, adolescents who have never played video games ($M = 20.02$; $SD = 5.14$) exhibited greater conflict resolution skills compared to those who have been playing for seven to nine years ($M = 18.30$; $SD = 5.25$) and more than nine years ($M = 18.28$; $SD = 4.95$).

Taking into account the number of hours spent playing video games weekly (Table V), better communicative skills were found in adolescents who played between seven and nine hours per week, greater assertiveness in those who had never played video games, and higher conflict resolution skills in individuals who spent between one and three hours weekly playing video games.

TABLA V. Means, standard deviations, and multivariate analysis (MANOVA) of social skills according to the number of hours spent playing video games during the week

SS	0 hours	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	+ 9 hours	Total	F	P	η_p^2	Power
CS	19.70 (7.47)	19.09 (7.57)	19.89 (7.86)	21.30 (8.04)	20.02 (7.50)	19.75 (7.62)	1.07	.368	.006	.340
AS	16.96 (3.11)	16.70 (3.37)	16.68 (3.16)	16.10 (3.61)	15.95 (3.77)	16.55 (3.39)	2.24	.063	.013	.659
CR	19.23 (5.03)	19.33 (5.45)	18.69 (4.94)	17.72 (5.25)	17.34 (5.23)	18.65 (5.25)	4.28	.002	.024	.929

Note. CS: Communicative Skills; AS: Assertiveness; CR: Conflict Resolution.

Similarly, the number of hours spent playing video games during the week showed significant differences in adolescents' social skills [*Wilks' Lambda* = .968, $F(3, 701) = 1.935, p < .05, \eta^2 p = .011, power = .873$]. The subsequent univariate analyses (Table V) revealed that significant differences emerged exclusively in the conflict resolution subscale of the social skills questionnaire [$F(4, 703) = 4.283, p < .005, \eta^2 p = .024, power = .929$]. For the remaining two subscales, the results were not statistically significant: communicative skills [$F(4, 703) = 1.074, p > .05, \eta^2 p = .006, power = .340$], and assertiveness [$F(4, 703) = 2.247, p > .05, \eta^2 p = .013, power = .659$]. Post hoc tests showed that adolescents who reported playing video games for more than 9 hours during the week ($M = 17.34; SD = 5.23$) had lower conflict resolution skills compared to those who never played video games ($M = 19.23; SD = 5.03$), and those who played between 1 and 3 hours weekly ($M = 19.33; SD = 5.45$).

Finally, regarding the number of hours spent playing video games during the weekend, better communicative skills were found in adolescents who played between 7 and 9 hours, whereas higher assertiveness and conflict

resolution skills were observed among those who never played video games on weekends (Table VI). Accordingly, hours of video game use during the weekend were found to be significant for adolescents' social skills [Wilks' Lambda = .971, $F(3, 701) = 1.917, p < .05, \eta^2 p = .012, power = .870$]. The univariate analyses (Table VI) revealed no statistically significant differences for the communicative skills subscale [$F(4, 703) = 1.596, p > .05, \eta^2 p = .009, power = .494$] nor for assertiveness [$F(4, 703) = 1.272, p > .05, \eta^2 p = .007, power = .400$]. However, significant differences were found for the conflict resolution subscale [$F(4, 703) = 3.438, p < .05, \eta^2 p = .019, power = .857$]. *Post hoc* comparisons showed that adolescents who never played video games during the weekend ($M = 19.78; SD = 5.00$) demonstrated greater conflict resolution abilities compared to those who played between 4 and 6 hours ($M = 17.88; SD = 5.07$) and more than 9 hours ($M = 17.85; SD = 5.41$).

TABLA VI. Means, standard deviations, and multivariate analysis (MANOVA) of social skills according to the number of hours spent playing video games on weekends

SS	0 hours	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	+ 9 hours	Total	F	p	η_p^2	Power
CS	20.48 (7.39)	19.06 (7.67)	19.33 (7.62)	21.39 (7.30)	20.02 (7.81)	19.75 (7.62)	1.59	.412	.009	.494
AS	17.01 (3.19)	16.64 (3.52)	16.17 (3.41)	16.67 (2.77)	16.35 (3.59)	16.55 (3.39)	1.27	.631	.007	.400
CR	19.78 (5.00)	18.85 (5.42)	17.88 (5.07)	19.16 (4.78)	17.85 (5.41)	18.65 (5.52)	3.43	.026	.019	.857

Note. CS: Communicative Skills; AS: Assertiveness; CR: Conflict Resolution.

Discussion and Conclusions

The inappropriate or excessive use of video games is related to various problems in social skills, especially during adolescence. In fact, it has become a subject of emerging social and clinical concern, since there is evidence demonstrating a direct relationship between excessive video game use and an increase in difficulties with individuals' social skills. Thus, the aim of this study was to determine the association between video game use and social

skills in the adolescent population.

The results obtained appear to follow the expected direction according to the state of the art derived from the reviewed literature. On one hand, according to sociodemographic and descriptive data, it is observed that the typical adolescent does not have video games as their main leisure option (more prevalent among males), has been playing between four and six years (females: zero to three years; males: more than three years), and dedicates between one and three hours to this leisure activity both during the school week and on weekends (females: zero to three hours; males: more than three hours). Their preferred platform is the mobile phone or tablet for females, whereas for males it is the console connected to the television. Finally, for both genders, the favorite type of game is the online multiplayer (MMO), while Among Us (females) and Fortnite (males) are the most selected titles.

On the other hand, regarding the first hypothesis—which posits that those adolescents who have video games as their primary leisure activity will present lower scores on the social skills questionnaire—it is almost entirely confirmed. The data indicate that those adolescents who do not consider video games their main leisure activity show better levels of assertiveness and conflict resolution. However, although not statistically significant, descriptively higher communicative skills were observed in those who spend their leisure time playing video games. These results align with studies by Alave and Pampa (2018), Challco and Guzmán (2018), and Gallego-Domínguez and Marcelo-Martínez (2016), who consider that greater dependence on video games during adolescence leads to poorer social skills in this period.

The second hypothesis states that those adolescents with a longer history of video game use will obtain lower scores on the social skills scale, and this is also almost fully confirmed. In this case, the group of adolescents who never play video games present higher scores in assertiveness and conflict resolution scales than those who report playing between seven and nine years, or more than nine years. Additionally, descriptive data reveal better communicative skills in adolescents who have been playing video games between four and six years.

Analyzing the third hypothesis, which proposes an inverse relationship between the number of weekly hours dedicated to video games and social skills scores, it is partially confirmed again. Thus, the group of adolescents who spend more than nine hours per week playing video games exhibit lower conflict resolution ability compared to those who either never play video games or play between one and three hours per week. Moreover, better

assertiveness is observed in adolescents who do not play video games during the week, and higher communicative skills are found in those who play video games between seven and nine hours per week. Given that social phenomena are clearly multifactorial, a plausible reason behind this finding might be the actual amount of time dedicated, as spending excessive time on video games—especially during adolescence—may hinder the development of good social skills (Griffiths, 2010).

Finally, the fourth hypothesis, which posits an inverse relationship between the number of hours played during the weekend and social skills scores, is partially confirmed. In this case, the group of adolescents who never play video games obtain better scores in the conflict resolution scale than those who report playing between four and six hours on weekends. Descriptively, adolescents who play between seven and nine hours on weekends show better communicative skills, while those who do not play on weekends score higher on assertiveness. Studies such as those by Medrano (2018) and Voltes (2018) argue that excessive video game use limits the optimal development of social interaction.

Taken together, these findings align with several studies that show a negative relationship between video game use and social skill levels (Campit, 2015; Männikkö et al., 2014), although, complementarily, they contradict other research suggesting that video games are either harmless entertainment (Kowert et al., 2014b; Mamani and Yupanqui, 2018) or may even have positive consequences (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2016; Thirunarayanan and Vilchez, 2012). A very important nuance in these latter studies is their assertion that proper use of video games could lead to positive outcomes. In other words, it is not video games themselves, but rather good usage of them that may allow for positive effects.

It is also noteworthy that the lowest conflict resolution scores were obtained by the group of adolescents who most identify video games as their first leisure option, have played for the longest time, and dedicate the most hours to them during both the school week and weekends. This may be because the mechanisms required to progress in video games are more often oriented toward competition—whether against other players or the game's AI—and confrontation, whereas cooperation is the cornerstone of good social adjustment. Adolescents who play more video games might be primed to evoke more competitive rather than cooperative responses, a strategy frequently dysfunctional in social interaction contexts.

The present study has some limitations that must be considered

when interpreting and generalizing the results. Most relate to the sample: it is not as large or as diverse as would be desirable. The focus was on the Galician adolescent population, but random sampling was not possible, and convenience sampling was used instead. Moreover, participants were only aged 12 to 18 and attending compulsory secondary education (ESO) or high school (Bachillerato), with no representation of youth studying vocational training or outside the educational environment. Future research would benefit from increasing both the sample size and diversity. It would also be valuable to explore questions not addressed here, such as whether young people play alone or accompanied, as this might be relevant for explaining the effects of video game use on social skills. Another interesting aspect would be applying the data collection tool used in this study to other Autonomous Communities in Spain to allow comparisons and broaden understanding of the results.

Focusing on the educational context, it is essential to develop pedagogical strategies that promote proper management of video game use by adolescents. Such strategies could include classroom activities fostering critical thinking about video games and their content. Students could analyze the representation of social relationships and conflicts in video games and engage in discussions about gender stereotypes present in virtual environments.

Additionally, establishing safe spaces in schools would allow adolescents to openly discuss their experiences with video games, contributing to a deeper understanding of individual and collective dynamics surrounding video game use. This would enable more effective adaptation of educational strategies.

Furthermore, the natural interest of young people in video games can be harnessed to integrate these games constructively and didactically into the school curriculum. This could involve creating educational projects linking video game themes with established learning objectives, fostering a more interactive and relevant pedagogical approach.

Finally, providing resources and guidance to parents and caregivers on how to supervise and support their children's video game use positively and constructively is essential. Implementing these and other measures aims to create an educational environment that leverages the positive aspects of video games while mitigating their potential negative impact on the development of a vulnerable population such as adolescents.

Given the entrenched presence and ongoing expansion of the video game world, it is crucial to comprehensively understand its implications in order to address its use in an informed and responsible manner.

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Reviews

Moraleda Ruano, A., & Galán Casado, D. (2024, Coord.). Stigma and Education. An Approach to Equality. Narcea. 177 pp. ISBN. 978-84-277-3186-8

When a preface begins by placing the reader before themselves, it opens a path of encounters from the uniqueness of each person. This is how this paperback book from Narcea Publishing starts: “sometimes it is necessary to look back and face what your life has been up to that moment. Take a deep breath and take an honest look at who you are today and, of course, the bricks you have been building for that construction” (p. 7). Ten chapters to address stigma from different perspectives. A stigma that we have all known or experienced throughout our own history.

Conversely, being older, mental health, disability, multiculturalism, or gender are the topics that bring us closer to ideas not so far from our reality, even when we thought we were not the target, or when we were “often silent witnesses to experiences in which prejudice and judgments relegated someone close to us, people who walk beside us, also building their lives as best they can” (p. 8).

Stigma arises from our own citizen condition, a mark that in other times was branded on the skin to be seen and today is labelled with social approval in an invisible way, with a hostile and distrustful attitude, affecting the people who live with it negatively. For this reason, “people belonging to a marginalised group are labelled by others as abnormal, shameful, or undesirable” (p. 13).

Chapter 1 presents the current theoretical frameworks of reference, from the origin, components, types, and actions that lead to stigmatising a person or group, as well as their consequences. But how can we address this stigma through education? Chapter 2 focuses on this core binomial that gives the book its title: stigma+education.

The role of education as prevention is evident, and we all know “people who have overcome great life difficulties thanks to the institutional and personal support received” (p. 30). UDL, institutional resource bank, diversified methodologies, a new evaluation model, or an open curricular design can be political measures that can prevent stigma.

The third chapter introduces us to the socio-educational challenges

of drug addiction, from research that analyses the perception of university students in the socio-educational field in relation to their intervention with drug-dependent people. Attributing it to a personal choice can be the seed of the stereotype and stigma towards people who suffer from it, something that, according to the authors' approach, can be avoided "by combining theoretical, methodological, and practical learning from different levels of prevention and diversity of approaches" (p. 52).

The fourth chapter begins with a clarification of key terms in the field of sexual education (sex, gender, sexual identity, orientation, diversity) that need to be defined to understand how stigma in this area "originates when individuals deviate from the established social norms regarding gender identity and sexual orientation" (p. 62). The school can be the favourable environment to "offer comprehensive and systematic sexual education" (p. 67) and thus support the formation of positive attitudes to accept people's sexual differences.

A work focused on stigma cannot avoid including the multicultural perspective in education, because the usual starting point of this perspective is already impregnated with a negative view of diversity, because it pairs diverse with different, and therefore, with the need for specialised attention for difficulty. But aren't we all different? Don't we each embody diversity as a form of wealth? This multicultural diversity, which is the focus of the fifth chapter, must thus be understood as fundamental for the migrant, but also for the society that welcomes and constitutes itself as a multicultural community.

Chapter 6 shows us how the generalised need to use technology in all areas of life is not without problems, because its use has become a constant need to the detriment of the rest of the environment for some people. Cyberbullying, grooming, sexting, or techno-addiction are some of the terms linked to dangers that have arisen with the use of the internet. The chapter presents an experimental study with a university population focused on problematic use of networks and the support received through social networks.

Disability from the stigma perspective is the central theme of the seventh chapter, which focuses on a review of the research. Three social processes link stigma and disability: individual discrimination, structural discrimination, and self-stigma. Knowing or making disability visible can lead to less stigmatising attitudes. Harassment, social marginalisation, compassion, or infantilisation are terms linked to stigma from disability, which can lead to a decrease in quality of life and social participation.

The title of the eighth chapter brings us closer to dialogic practices in

this case for working with adolescents and mental health problems. Almost half of mental disorders begin before the age of 18, so it is essential “to carry out preventive work in educational centres, with a process that encompasses aspects related to emotional development, awareness of the stigma of mental health problems, and learning coping strategies and establishing support networks to mitigate these difficulties” (p. 130).

The social reintegration of people who have been in prison as a distance from a situation of stigma is the theme of the ninth chapter. This stigma, far from being a consequence for people who have been imprisoned upon regaining freedom, takes place from the entry into the penitentiary context, when the person must “adapt to the customs that the institution itself imposes” (p. 144). Penal stigma is not shown in isolation but infers with characteristics of each person’s reality: illnesses, self-esteem, drugs, or homophobia, among others. A stigma that does not remain stagnant in the person in prison but affects their closest nucleus, the family.

And the work ends by looking at stigma from ageism, “a set of negative stereotypes and prejudices associated with older people and the ageing process” (p. 161). A negative view of ageing can lead to attitudes of rejection, which sooner or later will affect us all.

Blanca Arteaga-Martínez

Vinuesa Benítez, V., López-Navas, L. y Pavón Vázquez, V. (2024). Evaluación nacional de la enseñanza bilingüe en España. Funciones discursivas y lenguaje académico. pp.113. Madrid: Dykinson. ISBN: 9788410707054

The volume “*National Evaluation of Bilingual Education in Spain*”, directed and analyzed by Vinuesa Benítez, López-Navas, and Pavón Vázquez, with the expert assistance of nearly a hundred researchers from across Spain and the management of Xavier Gisbert, focuses on the results of the ENEBE project. This project emerged from the need to reassess the procedures and values of

bilingual education in Spain, a topic that has garnered both strong support and criticism. In fact, *Revista de Educación* dedicated an issue to this subject in 2024, featuring contributions from renowned researchers. Over the past 30 years, bilingual education in Spain has experienced significant growth, largely driven by recommendations from European institutions. However, while each Autonomous Community has developed its own programs, the lack of uniformity has sparked debates regarding their effectiveness, beyond the political opinions that often fuel praise or criticism. While some scientific evaluations have yielded positive results, public perception remains skeptical, largely due to the limited dissemination of research findings. This is precisely why the ENEBE project, whose final study is reviewed here, proposed a rigorous national evaluation to measure students' linguistic competence in academic contexts and improve programs by ensuring their quality and effectiveness in learning content through a foreign language.

According to this valuable publication, the study involved 3,748 students from sixth grade (Primary Education) and fourth grade (Secondary Education - ESO), making it the most extensive research conducted in Spain, with a balanced sample of 50.2% public schools and 49.8% private schools (p. 44). The introduction justifies the need to assess all four language skills: reading, writing, listening comprehension, and speaking, something that no other Spanish test—including the high-stakes university entrance exam (PAU)—currently does. The study's objective is to examine the academic use of English, in contrast to the 2025 PISA report (<https://www.educacionfpydeportes.gob.es/inee/evaluaciones-internacionales/pisa/pisa-2025.html>), which will assess English proficiency in a more general manner.

The book is divided into several key sections. The presentation and introduction outline the context of bilingual education in Spain and the importance of evaluating its impact. The background and problem definition examine the evolution of these programs and the challenges they face. The justification section highlights the role of academic language in learning. The volume also defines its objectives and hypotheses, aiming to assess whether English use is balanced and if students can effectively apply academic English. The research design (Chapter 7) details pilot testing, examiner training, test validation, data collection, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The impact and dissemination section explores how the findings could influence educational policies. The results provide detailed

analyses of listening, reading, writing, and speaking performance across different education levels.

Finally, the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations propose improvements and future research directions. The book highlights small advantages for private schools, significant progress in spoken English, and a balanced overall performance, suggesting the need to expand the sample to include all Spanish Autonomous Communities. Among its limitations, it is noted that, as a non-institutional study, the sampling was done through a chain-referral method, meaning participation was voluntary. The volume concludes with recommendations for different educational stakeholders and raises the possibility of comparing its findings with the 2025 PISA report.

In conclusion, this is a well-structured and significant study, considering the resources available. Bold research like this is essential in Spain. In summary, this is a highly relevant open-access publication (<https://www.ebspain.es/index.php/ebspain/proyectoenebe#mas-informacion-6>), which educators and policymakers alike will find valuable, offering much to reflect upon.

Jesús García Laborda

García García, Mayka; Alcántara López, Lucía; Benítez Gavira, Remedios y Zarzuela Castro, Ana. (2024). *Thinking and acting on inclusion from different perspectives. The challenge of caring for people with dyslexia*. Madrid: Dykinson. 230 pp. ISBN 978-84-1070-531-9

The book *Thinking and acting on inclusion from different perspectives. The challenge of caring for people with dyslexia* offers a significant contribution to the field of inclusive education. Throughout its pages, the authors explore barriers and opportunities for dyslexia care within the educational context, addressing both theoretical aspects and practical experiences of intervention. This work is based on the premise that educational inclusion is a fundamental right and that it is necessary to rethink didactic and organisational strategies

to ensure the effective participation of all students. This work emerges from a proposal co-designed by the Dyslexia Cadiz Association and the Eduardo Benot Educational Research Group, within the framework of the research project *What are we forgetting in Inclusive Education?* A participatory research project in Western Andalusia. Through it, its participants listen to the voices of the people with dyslexia, their families, young people and teachers who live with this reality every day.

It is structured in different sections that offer a multidisciplinary perspective on dyslexia, combining pedagogical, psychological and socio-cultural approaches. Its main contributions include the recognition of dyslexia as an educational and social reality, highlighting the need to overcome the deficit model and move towards an understanding of dyslexia from a rights-based approach. Various pedagogical strategies are also presented, including the use of active methodologies and universal design for learning (UDL), which favour the participation of students with dyslexia on equal terms. Another noteworthy aspect is the valuing of reading clubs as inclusive spaces, where mediation plays an essential role in generating meaningful reading experiences. Narratives from students, families and teachers are included, which allow us to understand the socio-emotional barriers and levers in the learning of reading and writing. All this means that the book offers a comprehensive approach to dyslexia and educational inclusion, although there are some aspects that could be improved.

As limitations, we could highlight that most of the studies and experiences cited come from the Spanish context, which limits their applicability to other educational systems. Although inclusive strategies are addressed, it would be enriching to have more development on teacher training in educational inclusion and its impact on dyslexia care. An in-depth analysis of the educational policies that regulate dyslexia care in different countries could be carried out. As potentialities, it is worth highlighting its informative and accessible nature, which makes it a reference work for researchers, teachers and families. The combination of theory and practice facilitates the understanding of the challenges of educational inclusion and the inclusion of first-hand experiences enriches the content and brings a more human dimension to the approach to dyslexia.

Today, the debate on inclusive education continues to evolve, and this book is part of that debate by providing evidence and practical strategies for addressing dyslexia in the classroom. It aligns with the paradigm of rights-based education and promotes the transformation of pedagogical and organisational practices to ensure equal opportunities. It also highlights the importance of collaboration between different educational actors (teachers, families, institutions) to generate accessible and enriching learning environments.

Thinking and acting on inclusion from different perspectives is a valuable book that provides theoretical knowledge and practical experiences in dealing with dyslexia in education. It is recommended reading for education professionals, researchers and policy makers interested in moving towards a more inclusive and equitable education. Its content represents a significant contribution to understanding and addressing dyslexia from an inclusive perspective.

Susana Escorza Piña

Olondriz-Valverde, A. & Ramos-Pla, A. (2024). Deciphering the invisible: A holistic perspective on bullying by Olondriz-Valverde and Ramos-Pla (2024). Madrid: Dykinson, 123 pp. ISBN: 978-84-1070-729-0

The presented book stands as a groundbreaking contribution to understanding and addressing bullying—a phenomenon that profoundly affects the atmosphere in educational settings and often hides behind the daily routine. From its very first pages, the authors pave a path between theory and practice through a multidisciplinary perspective that integrates education, health, and law. This integrative approach not only allows for the identification of the multiple dimensions of the phenomenon but also fosters a coordinated effort among teachers, families, institutions, and students to prevent and respond to bullying situations.

One of the major strengths of the work is its commitment to empowering

educators, acknowledging the need to equip them with up-to-date tools and solid training. Beyond merely conveying information, the book promotes mediation practices and harm repair, facilitating reflection and personal growth for both victims and perpetrators. This perspective is grounded in the strengthening of community bonds and in building coexistence based on shared well-being.

The book is organized into ten thematic chapters, detailed as follows: (i) Awareness of bullying in primary school classrooms; (ii) Legal aspects of cyberbullying; (iii) Agonizing before suicide; (iv) School bullying, families, and suicide; (v) The Department of Education and school bullying: Situation, protocols, and tools in Catalonia; (vi) Contextualizing care: Teaching strategies for well-being and development; (vii) Treating school bullying with a video game; (viii) Slaps for everyone: Bullying in classic 20th-century comics; (ix) Bullying prevention from non-formal education: Current perspective and new challenges; and (x) Bullying and gender, research and prevention.

The analysis delves into the challenges of the 21st century, highlighting the need to incorporate gender and intersectional approaches, as well as the transformative influence of information technologies, as evidenced by the rise of cyberbullying. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of mental health and overall well-being, exploring innovative pedagogical strategies such as gamification and reading to rethink safe, respectful, and resilient school environments.

The book also underscores the urgency of promoting spaces for dialogue and community within educational institutions, creating safe physical and social environments. The development of protection maps and support networks is proposed as an indispensable tool to identify risk areas and prevent conflicts, ensuring a climate of peace and security in all school spaces—from classrooms to recess.

Moreover, the authors maintain that early and conscientious intervention is key to an education that includes emotional and social dimensions from the very beginning of schooling. Inaction in the face of bullying deteriorates the school climate and affects students' ability to regulate their emotions, manage conflicts, and understand interpersonal relationships, which can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harm, and even suicidal ideation.

Published by the prestigious Editorial Dykinson, S. L., which ranks fourth in the field of Education, this work stands as a beacon of hope

and transformation for those who aspire to build a culture of peace in the educational environment. The quality of the content is reinforced by the track record and diversity of specializations of its authors, among whom stand out Professor Leonor M. Cantera (a specialist in violence, bullying, and gender), Professor Gemma Filella Guiu (an expert in emotional education and school coexistence), Francesc Jové Vila (a psychopedagogue with extensive practical experience), Ramon Arnó Torrades (whose legal approach enriches the protection of rights), and Bibiana García Sanfeliu (a specialist in family and community nursing).

In short, this monograph offers an in-depth analysis of a persistent problem and presents itself as an invitation to look beyond what is apparent in our schools. Its holistic and integrative approach makes it an invaluable resource for educators, families, and professionals committed to eradicating bullying and fostering environments based on respect and restorative justice. Without a doubt, it is a must-read for transforming educational reality and building a future in which every word and every gesture contributes to healing the invisible.

Prof. Laura Fornons Casol

Cacheiro -González, M.L., López-Gómez, E., González-Fernández, R. (Coords.) (2025). Innovation in Early Childhood Education: From Theory to Practice. Narcea. 270 pp. ISBN: 978-84-277-3233-9

The book *Innovation in Early Childhood Education: From Theory to Practice*, published by Narcea in 2025 and coordinated by María Luz Cacheiro González, Ernesto López Gómez, and Raúl González Fernández, is a valuable contribution to the field of early childhood education from the perspective of pedagogical innovation. The work offers a balanced approach between the theoretical framework and practical application in the classroom, making it a useful tool for both trainee teachers and active professionals, as it is the result of collaboration between the university and the school, with the participation of teachers from both spaces, which is essential for carrying out research that promotes educational innovation.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first, consisting of eight theoretical chapters, brings together contributions from university lecturers and school practitioners. It takes a structured approach to the main frameworks and lines of educational innovation, addressing topics such as collaborative work between teachers: how shared reflection and joint planning in teams of teachers is the driving force behind innovative processes, both in curriculum design and in assessment and the search for pedagogical coherence; the use of technologies from a pedagogical perspective: criteria are offered for integrating digital resources in early childhood education, beyond their mere technical use, seeking to enrich learning experiences, enhance creativity, and encourage interaction; attention to diversity: proposals are presented for adapting educational experiences to different rhythms and needs, with examples of inclusive support and methodologies that encourage the participation of all students; the constructivist approach to teaching written language: analysis of how to introduce reading and writing in a meaningful way, linking it to authentic communication, play, and exploration of the environment, as opposed to mechanical or decontextualized practices; the introduction of “provocations” and “mini-worlds” as methodological resources: methodological resources inspired by active pedagogies that generate situations of discovery, exploration, and symbolic play, understood as triggers for curiosity and knowledge construction; or how to deal with time in the classroom: we invite you to rethink how it is treated in the classroom, moving from chronological measurement to more experiential proposals, such as the construction of life stories, which connect the personal and social time of the students, and the adaptation of classic works: guidelines are presented for bringing universal texts, such as *Don Quixote*, closer to children through narrative, visual, and playful adaptations, favoring early access to literary heritage.

This section combines established theoretical frameworks with innovative proposals under development, forming a bridge between academic research and teaching practice.

The second section comprises seven chapters that cover seven practical experiences carried out in schools, providing concrete examples of the innovative content and processes proposed in the first part. These include: creativity and symbolic play through mini-worlds and provocations: scenarios designed by teachers are described that allow children to construct stories, experiment with objects, and recreate situations, encouraging divergent thinking and oral communication; the incorporation of digital resources during

the pandemic to ensure continuity of learning: it documents how, in a context of distance learning, digital tools were incorporated to maintain interaction, ensure emotional bonding, and continue learning at home with the involvement of families; inclusive care in classrooms with students with developmental delays: a case study of a classroom with students with developmental delays shows how the adaptation of materials, flexible schedules, and collaboration among teachers can achieve effective participation and shared learning; initial literacy based on meaningful communicative situations: experiences in which reading and writing are linked to children's real needs (posters, lists, messages), so that literacy makes sense from the beginning and is not an abstract activity; literacy linked to body movement and sensory exploration: activities in which movement, body tracing, and sensory experimentation become the basis for initial writing processes, linking motor and linguistic skills; the use of fairy tales as a narrative context to introduce mathematical concepts: well-known stories are used as a context to introduce basic mathematical concepts (classification, seriation, counting, geometry) through playful and familiar situations; or a project focused on natural heritage: under the title Born to be natural heritage, children investigate their environment, go on field trips, collect data, and express what they have learned through drawings, dramatizations, and murals, promoting environmental awareness and experiential learning.

One of the book's main strengths is its ability to connect theoretical reflection with real classroom experiences, which enriches both the understanding of methodological frameworks and their applicability in real contexts. The contributions, which are collective in nature, exhibit a wide diversity of approaches and styles, adding richness; however, this can also mean that the depth of the chapters varies somewhat.

Overall, *Innovar en Educación Infantil* is an inspiring work that invites readers to rethink teaching practice and build new ways of teaching from the child's perspective and the changing reality of the school. It is especially recommended for teacher training students, early childhood educators interested in transforming their classrooms, as well as trainers and educational advisors. With its up-to-date, pluralistic, and inclusive content, this book is extremely useful for moving toward a more creative and meaningful early childhood education that is committed to the challenges of the 21st century.

Patricia Diez Ortego

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