Part I

Educational reform in Spain

The Reform of the Spanish Education System: An Evaluation and Prospective

Gonzalo Vázquez

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

ABSTRACT

This study examines the genesis and development of Spanish education reform since 1990 from a systemic perspective. Problems affecting the entirety of the education system will be examined in relation to changes made mainly in Europe and developed countries (economic, technological, labor, and cultural modifications). Specifically analyzed are the effects of demographic changes and migratory movements on education. This study of secondary education will focus on the positive effects and the main concerns brought on by applying the principle of comprehensive education and continuing promotion, and will conclude by underscoring the need for legislative and pedagogical changes to the curriculum, school timing, and the professionalization of teachers. Higher education will be reviewed in terms of the results of the processes of educational assessment and innovation within the broader context of quality management. The paper concludes by pointing out the main challenges now facing the Spanish education system if it is to meet societal expectations and demands: integrating personal education and professional training, opening up to the new political and demographic realities, and particularly, revising the entire education system in light of new demands for life-long and life-wide education.

Key words: Spanish education system, education reform, continuing education, secondary education, higher education, university education, quality of education, educational innovation, educational assessment,

RESUMEN

Este estudio examina la génesis y desarrollo de la reforma educativa española desde una perspectiva sistémica a partir de 1990. Se examinan los problemas que afectan al conjunto del sistema educativo en relación con los cambios producidos principalmente en el entorno europeo y de los países avanzados (modificaciones económicas, tecnológicas, laborales y culturales). Más específicamente, se analizan los efectos producidos sobre la educación por los cambios demográficos y de los movimientos migratorios. Respecto de la enseñanza secundaria se estudian los efectos positivos y los principales puntos críticos generados por la aplicación del principio de la enseñanza comprensiva y de la promoción continua apuntando la necesidad de introducir cambios legislativos y pedagógicos en el currículum, en el tiempo escolar y en la profesionalización de los profesores. Respecto de la enseñanza superior se pasa revista a los resultados de los procesos de evaluación e innovación educativa dentro del enfoque de la gestión de la calidad. Para concluir, se señalan los principales retos a los que ha de hacer frente el sistema educativo si quiere responder a las expectativas y demandas sociales: la integración entre la formación personal y la capacitación profesional, la apertura a las nuevas realidades políticas y demográficas y, particu-

larmente, la revisión de todo el sistema educativo desde la perspectiva de las nuevas exigencias de la educación a lo largo y ancho de la vida.

Descriptores: sistema educativo español, reforma educativa, educación permanente, educación secundaria, educación superior, enseñanza universitaria, calidad de educación, innovación educativa, evaluación de la educación

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude examine la genèse et le développement de la réforme éducative en Espagne dès 1990 d'une perspective systémique. On examinera des problèmes qui affectent la totalité du système éducatif par rapport aux changements faits principalement en Europe et les nations industrialisées (des modifications économiques, technologiques, culturelles ainsi que celles liées au travail). On analyse spécifiquement les effets des changements démographiques et les mouvements migratoires sur l'éducation. L'étude de l'éducation secondaire se concentrera sur les effets positifs et les soucis principaux qui ont été le résultat de mettre en pratique le principe de l'éducation polyvalente et la promotion continue; elle se terminera en soulignant le besoin des changements législatifs et pédagogiques faits au programme d'études, le minutage scolaire, et la professionnalisation des professeurs. On réexaminerons les études supérieures en termes des résultats des processus de l'évaluation pédagogique et l'innovation dans le contexte plus large de la gestion de la qualité. L'article se termine en signalant les défis principaux auxquels fait face le système éducatif si celui-ci doit remplir les attentes et les exigences sociétales: en intégrant l'éducation individuelle et la formation professionnelle, en s'ouvrant aux nouvelles réalités politiques et démographiques et, en particulier, en révisant tout le système éducatif à la lumière de nouvelles demandes pour l'éducation continue et profonde.

Mots-clés

système éducatif en Espagne, réforme éducative, éducation continue, éducation secondaire, études supérieures, éducation universitaire, qualité de l'éducation, innovation éducative, évaluation pédagogique

Introduction

THE CURRENT SITUATION of the reform underway in the Spanish education system takes on greater meaning in reference to three significant dates over the last three decades: 1970, with the enactment of the General Law on Education (*Ley 14/1970 General de Educación y Financiamento de la Reforma Educativa*); 1983, with the Law on University Reform (*Ley Orgánica 11/1983 de Reforma Universitaria*); and 1990, with the Law on General Organization of the Education System (*Ley Orgánica 1/1990 de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*). At present, the education system is undergoing a period of educational renovation and innovation primarily affecting secondary and higher education.

Three problems remain unsettled in the whole make-up of the system: the relationship between basic education and higher education, the integration of formal or scholastic education into the wider framework of knowledge and information systems, and the articulation of all the educational processes in the process of lifelong education and learning.

Spain's education system may currently be said to be in a state of systemic crisis given the critical relationships between education, culture, and work. Additionally, education, especially formal education but also non-formal and informal education, is feeling the consequences of globalization and the creation of a new multicultural society.

In order to gain an overview of the Spanish education system, an analysis will be made of the following points: the background, principles, aims, and main actions underlying the education reform of 1990; the process of reform, evaluation, and educational innovation in higher education; and the recent modifications to the levels of secondary education. Finally, this study will conclude with an examination of the changes in higher education and a look at the changes that will affect the education system in the near future.

The Reform of the Spanish Education System: Background, Principles, Aims, and Main Actions

Comparative studies all concur that 1990 was the year of education reform in Spain. It was in that year that Parliament passed the Organic Law on General Organization of the Education System, known as the LOGSE.¹ In the Spanish Constitution of 1978, organic laws are those that stem from fundamental constitutional rights (in this case, the right to education, in compliance with the International Declarations of Children's Rights).

The LOGSE was drawn up in an attempt to reorganize the entire system. Along with its positive effects on the whole education system, such a sweeping intention also gave rise, perhaps, to its main limitation. This critical view, now held by many, was hardly voiced at the time. In one study on the education reforms, though, Díez Hochleitner (1989) remarked that the attempt at offering a "global reform" of the system would be its "Achilles heel" (p. 41).

The push for reform was justifiable in part by both the political environment leading up to it and its objective as a fundamental change. Indeed, the reform bill was drafted bearing in mind the advances in pedagogy and the experiences in scholastic reforms from other countries. As the statement on motives or "philosophy" of the LOGSE itself points out, the bill was presented as an undertaking of a democratic country integrated into Europe, and should directly address the structural changes underway in culture, the economy, labor, and technology.

With that main aim of the new system (from a structural and political point of view), the *reform* was fully justified. However, depending on what is meant by the concept of "education reform," the LOGSE itself may or may not be accepted as an agent of reform. If education reform is seen as the planned transformation of the essential elements in the education system (as Díez Hochleitner defines it, 1991, pp. 457-458), the 1990 law may indeed be said to involve reform, since it made structural changes in the system. The LOGSE raises the compulsory school age from 6-14 years old to 6-16, and divides it into two levels (primary education from 6 to 12, and secondary education from 12 to 16).

One reason in favor of viewing the LOGSE as true *reform* comes from the commonly accepted argument in comparative education that every reform affects some part of the population's access to education. In this way, the fact that, for the first time, the Spanish education system (in resonance with the systems of other European or OECD countries) raises compulsory school age to 16 years old, providing it with a comprehensive shared curriculum, certainly does constitute a structural modification of the system.

On the contrary, if education reform is understood as having global scope, even within what is ordinarily dubbed the “formal education system,” it seems clear that the LOGSE fails to meet this requirement. Indeed, the law was passed in 1990, seven years after enacting the law on university education. In this regard, two facts stand out: the name of the law (*Law on University Reform*) and the date it was passed (August 1983, before the end of the Socialists’ first year in office). The precedence of the university law over the so-called Law on General Organization of the Education System (LOGSE) contradicts the regulatory nature of the latter on the system as a whole. Furthermore, it has obfuscated a number of components in the system, such as how students move from non-compulsory secondary education (16-18 years old) to higher education, and what model to use for secondary education teacher training. These are but two examples of unresolved issues at the start of the 2001-2002 academic year, a full eighteen years after enacting the Law on University Reform and eleven after the Law on General Organization of the Education System.

There, then, are the two clear basic characteristics of the LOGSE, knowing on the one hand its nature as a reforming agent by extending the compulsory school age to sixteen, and on the other, its partial scope relative to a global reform on the system as a whole, since it does not directly affect higher education, previously regulated by another law. Any assessment of the reform of 1990 must account for this two-sided balance, highly positive on one side yet negative on the other. In order to reach the goal of improving educational practices in the classroom, making them more dynamic and personalized, it becomes necessary to articulate adequately the factors of stability and of change in the educational institution. That, in turn, requires involving the last of the nine factors threatening schools as “robust organizations”: the fragmentary, non-systemic approach by which changes in education reforms are conceived and applied.²

This initial valuation notwithstanding, and despite being a reform established twelve years after the Constitution took effect, it may be said that the reform law hardly reaches beyond a few changes in the General Law on Education of 1970. The 1990 law itself acknowledges that fact, as have noteworthy authors such as Díez Hochleitner³ (1991) as well as sociologists and education historians (Barreiro, 1999), who state that the LOGSE did nothing more than pick up on the elements of the 1970 law “without making any substantial changes” (bearing in mind, of course, the raising of the compulsory school age to sixteen). If, as Barreiro states, education laws are aimed at adjusting the education system to the economic/productive system on one hand, and to the political system on the other, the law of 1970 embodied a proposal of a new education system for a new economic (and in some ways social) situation even though it quite paradoxically sprang from a non-democratic political system.⁴ Thus, the 1987 *Project for education reform* (*Proyecto para la reforma de la enseñanza*) and the *White Book for the Reform of the Education System* (*Libro blanco para la reforma del sistema educativo*) of 1989 both base their technical support on the earlier 1970 law despite the fact that their political base is found in the constitutional text of 1978 and in the Organic Law on the Right to Education of 1985.

The educational reform of 1990 has its basic normative foundation in Article 27 of the 1978 Constitution. With that in mind, one point bears closer scrutiny for under-

standing the 1985 and 1990 laws, as well as the social and political debates on education as planning for the 2001-2002 academic year and national and regional budgets for non-university education are being drawn up. The issue at hand involves the dual meaning of the constitutional text, as can clearly be seen in the first lines of Article 27: "Everyone has the right to education. Freedom of teaching is acknowledged." According to experts in political and constitutional law, the text reveals two theses which, if not contradictory, are at least differentiated in terms of the relationship between education and rights. While the first part stresses the right of everyone to education, the second acknowledges the freedom of teaching. These two principles are then related in the following eight subsections of that same article.

The ambivalent meaning of the article of the Constitution of 1978 (carried through to the Law on the Right to Education and the Law on General Organization of the Education System) is itself a reflection of how the Constitution was drawn up. Article 27, subsection 1 ("Everyone has the right to education. Freedom of teaching is acknowledged") at once guarantees the right of the administrated to receive education (and thus the right to demand an administrative service) and the right of the administrated to teach. In that way, this constitutional precept obligates the state to *do and yet not do* in relation to the same matter. Still, far from creating a paradoxical situation, it coherently expresses the character of Spain as "a social and democratic State of Law" in accordance with what is set forth in Article 1 of the Constitution (Garrido Falla, 1983).

An examination of the background of the reform leads to an analysis of the pedagogical principles on which it is based. The most important principles involved are those of a psycho-pedagogical or curricular nature, and affect the various education levels:

1. Principles of meaningful learning, constructivism, and pedagogical intervention;
2. Principle of comprehensiveness;
3. Principles of diversity and curricular diversification;
4. Principle of professionalization;
5. Principle of continuing education.

Meaningful learning and constructivism, tightly intertwined, make up the key psycho-pedagogical principles of the 1990 reform, especially in primary education (ages 6-12) and compulsory secondary education (ages 12-16). The aforementioned *White Book for the Reform of the Education System* points out that the base curriculum falls within a constructivist conception of school learning and pedagogic intervention. The basic assumption is that the subject (the student) is the one who "constructs" knowledge by interacting with his or her social and physical environment (*Libro blanco para la reforma del sistema educativo*, 1989, pp. 109-135).⁵ The theory of learning implied here is that of meaningful learning (Ausubel), a hallmark of the reform (Rodríguez Diéguez, 2000).⁶

Current curricular practice in primary and secondary education is liable to receive three kinds of criticism: first, regarding the anthropological assumptions (the basic beliefs on *who learns*); second, the formative capacity of that being learned (*what is learned*), and third, the instructional methodology (*how it is learned*).

One of the first tacks to be taken concerns the anthropological assumptions of the reform (Vázquez, 2001). Drawing on technological-cognitive theories, education reform considers the human to be educated as:

1. a technological artifact,
2. an information processor,
3. someone who “proceeds” continuously,
4. the effect of an interactive social construction, and
5. a subject annulled by an interactive construction of knowledge.

These and other reductions operate on the object of pedagogical research as well as the beliefs of teachers and the conditions of their professional practice. From each of these suppositions come important consequences for educational practice, but also some risks. Generally speaking, it may be said that in the recent past, especially in the last ten years, there has been a displacement of interest, and even of recognition, of the subject as an individual who learns at school to an educand who is in a continuous learning process by means of the interaction with the extramural world throughout life.

Recent psychological studies have concerned themselves with that displacement, which has been called a revolutionary change and an effect of a socio-cultural revolution. The problem is far-reaching when one considers the permeability of the information society in terms of this new paradigm of learning. A clear example of this change can be found in a study by Palincsar (1998), who, after examining several articles on teaching and learning in the *Annual Review of Psychology* over the last decade, finds that they all subscribe to a view of learning and cognition “from an individualistic perspective.” Nevertheless, in Palincsar’s opinion, the examination of current knowledge on teaching and learning ought to be undertaken from a perspective of social construction.

The main criticism against the Spanish education system has focused on the results of secondary education, particularly in its compulsory years (ages 14-16). The primary object of the critics lies in the articulation of “comprehensiveness” with the diversity of the students.

As known, Comprehensive schooling responds to three principles (García Garrido, 1998):

1. “No separation,” i.e., integrating all the students in the same kind of scholastic institution.
2. Forming homogeneous classes with students of the same age regardless of their differences in social, cultural, or intellectual level (except for the extreme cases of subjects with highly pronounced abilities or disabilities).
3. The development of a minimum common curriculum for all school children, with the aim that, upon completing the compulsory stage of secondary education, all the students can achieve common results.

Bridging the gap between comprehensiveness and cultural diversity has proven to be no easy feat, if not downright impossible. This was at least in part foreseen in the *White Book*:

The challenge currently facing comprehensive education is not just that of broadening schooling within a common curriculum...[but rather] that of how to provide an adequate answer to a collective of surely heterogeneous students who have different learning needs and personal interests while all attend the same school and study under a largely common curriculum. The difficulties at reaching a balance between curricular comprehensiveness and student diversity increase as students advance through Secondary Education and their educational needs become more heterogeneous.... (*Libro Blanco para la reforma del sistema educativo*, 1989, p. 119).

Twelve years after the *White Book* was published, the Spanish demographic situation and the influx of immigrants (from North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and other European Union countries) have brought about structural changes at every level of the education system, from infant to higher education.⁷

There is at present a social consensus that the main “political” problem (in the sense of building *citizenship*) of the day is the result of demographic decline and the entrance of immigrants and the subsequent effects on the (sub)systems of production, culture, and education. In that regard, it would not be untoward to think that, if the LOGSE had been promulgated in the year 2000, it would have made this problem high priority given the effect of cultural diversity of the student body in a multicultural society and the obstacle it presents in achieving a comprehensive education and the construction of a common identity by means of the education system, as one of the purposes given to education systems (Tedesco, 1995a, 1995b; UNESCO, 1996; McLaughlin, 1997).⁸ Since it is unlikely that a new global reform in education will be undertaken anytime soon, it would not be amiss to assume that systemic modifications will need to be made (functional if not structural changes) to Spanish education to meet the needs of a globalized and multicultural society.

The problems posed by applying comprehensive education to an increasingly multicultural society have become apparent in compulsory secondary education.⁹ In practice it turns out to be quite difficult to offer a comprehensive education for all students. Of chief concern is the social significance of compulsory secondary education, school bullying and social climate, and achievement as seen in performance in Language and Mathematics. The problem has been stated by Husén (1998) in these terms: “How can [compulsory] schooling be made meaningful for those whose abilities and interests do not overlap with the traditional academic way?” (p. 43).

Recent test scores for students concluding their compulsory secondary education (age 16) reveal several important deficiencies. For reading comprehension, 27 percent of the students fail to attain even an intermediate score on the test. Lower yet are scores on grammar and literature. In mathematics, 38% score below what the reports call “average” (answering 50% correct). Scores, then, in language and mathematics are globally insufficient considering the nature of basic compulsory education at ages twelve to sixteen.

A mandate approved in December 2000 set new minimum standards in objectives, contents, and criteria for evaluation of compulsory secondary education by raising the

number of hours per week in language and mathematics, which should contribute to improving results in those areas.

The most recent report by the National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (Instituto Nacional de Calidad y Evaluación, 2000) on the results of the compulsory education system has included a new indicator of the quality of the system: that of *appropriateness*, meaning the percentage of students who are enrolled in the grade they theoretically belong in. The study reveals the following important findings:

1. Appropriateness drops from 96% of the students at age 8 to 86% at age 12 and only 60% at age 15.
2. Appropriateness is at all times higher in girls than in boys, from ages 8 to 15.
3. Appropriateness increased slightly between the 1986–1987 and 1996–1997 school years, though it was lower in 14- and 15-year-olds.
4. Appropriateness ratios at age 15 vary noticeably from one Autonomous Community to another. The highest are in Navarre, La Rioja, Catalunya, Aragon, and the Basque Country. The Canary Islands, Ceuta, Melilla, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia and Extremadura are below the national norm.

Bearing in mind that one of the main pedagogical principles of the education reform of 1990 is to allow continuous promotion through the grades to a large extent regardless of achievement attained, it is not possible to draw rigorous conclusions from those appropriateness ratios. Nevertheless, some of the ratios are quite telling, and tend to be consistent with trends previously checked, all indicating the poor quality reached in compulsory secondary education.

That deficient quality in education is affecting the work of teachers who are experiencing the effects of problems such as social unrest in educational institutions, “school disobedience” (absence and lack of cooperation of students in the classroom), etc. In turn, it has led to “burn-out” among teachers, who, faced with the risks jeopardizing the quality of education and teaching, are calling for a new “moral contract.”¹⁰ The problem demands paying more attention to the initial training and the later development of secondary education teachers while highlighting their professional status. Indeed, one of the criticisms voiced against the Spanish education reform concerns the non-existence of the principle of professionalization at the outset.

Even so, professionalization is so basic to education reform that it can be considered one of the principles of the education system. As Touriñán puts it, professionalization is a principle of the education system with all its limitations, but with the same character and rank that belong to democratization, participation and equal opportunity (Touriñán, 1995, p. 413).¹¹ This means that, even as it was being drafted, the LOGSE should have integrated the principle of pedagogical professionalism along the whole system, which would have made it easier to solve issues such as the training and development of teachers at all levels of the education system and the identification of every professional who demanded the reform.

The last principle to be mentioned here is that of continuing education. The LOGSE has made continuing education the cornerstone of the reform. It is stated to that effect in the statement of motives as well as in the Article 2 of the law:

1. The dizzying speed of cultural, technological and productive changes sets us on a course of frequently readjusting and updating our skills and qualifications. Education and training will take on a more complete dimension than they have traditionally had; they will stretch beyond the life spans attributed to them up to now; they will spread to sectors with active prior experience; they will alternate with work activity. Education will be continuous, as stated in the law, which determines that this will become the basic underlying principle of the education system (statement of motives).
2. The education system will take continuous education as its basic principle (art. 2.1).

Despite this statement of principles, the LOGSE cannot be said to do justice to continuing education. Indeed, the bulk of the law reduces continuing education down to adult education for those who lacked a first chance.

At present, the principle of continuing education should be examined from the perspective that links it to achieving two equally important objectives of continuous learning: promoting active citizenship and improving “employability” (i.e., the ability to get and keep a job). Furthermore, the new approach to continuing education expresses a direct relation not only with lifelong learning, but also with life-wide learning (Commission of the European Communities, 2000).

From that view, it may be pointed out that the Spanish education reform, despite the gains from raising the compulsory school age to 16, presents two major limitations in that it does not integrate higher education, nor does it include a thorough view of continuing education in terms of lifelong and life-wide learning as well as non-formal education (especially regarding job skills) and informal education (regarding social education and citizenship).

The Education Reform of Higher Education: Evaluation and Innovation in University Teaching

The reform of Higher Education begun in 1983 is now at a new stage. A new draft of a bill on university education was unveiled to academicians and public opinion in early May 2001.

The statement of motives of the 1983 Law on University Reform presents the following principles and motivations behind the university-level reform:

1. academic freedom of teaching and research,
2. scientific and technological development befitting advanced societies,
3. the (at that time forecasted) inclusion of Spain in the European university environment,
4. the transfer of competencies from the national level to the regional level in accordance with the Constitution of 1978.¹²

University education has witnessed extraordinary growth over the last fifty years, especially in the last twelve years. In the 1950s, for example, there were only 100,000 students enrolled in Spanish universities; by the 1984–85 school year, there were some 780,000, and enrollment for 2001–2002 is estimated to soar to 1,590,000. The number of university students, then, has doubled in only fifteen years. It is important to note from the outset, however, that, unlike other countries, Spain makes no formal distinc-

tion between higher education and university education, so the figures on university education include any institutions, teachings, students and teachers pertaining to any kind of accredited higher education.

Still, this growth in numbers places Spain near the top of the list in Europe (in the top two or three, depending on the year) insofar as the percentage of students enrolled in higher education. Roughly one out of three people between the ages of 18 and 21 study at the university level. These statistics must be brought into focus with more precise observations (Puyol, Cabrillo, Olivera, Roses & Vázquez, 1998; Consejo de Universidades, 2001).

1. Most of the students (more than 60%) study long-duration degree programs.
2. Although there are few rigorous studies on how many years it takes for students to earn their degree, it is generally known that the average is considerably longer than the theoretical norm.
3. The number of female students has risen more sharply than that of males. Women now make up the majority in both nationwide university statistics and almost every education institution taken individually, with the exception of a few technical degree programs.¹³
4. The increases in students have been partially due to the belief that a college degree would open doors in the job market and that it would be easy to join mainstream active life upon graduating from the university. This has led to overqualification in low-skilled jobs.

While it is impossible to separate university growth from the realities of the job market, it can be said that demand for higher education services has risen sharply. The demand is being met by a number of new universities, public and private, founded over the last ten years.¹⁴

That situation has given rise to intense overcrowding at the university level, especially at the older public universities. Given the new demographics in Spain, though, the situation is beginning to undergo substantial change. "First quantity, then quality," as Complutense Rector and demographer Puyol puts it.¹⁵ Thus, recent years have brought several analyses and proposals for improving the quality of university education. The most significant documents presented in the years 2000 and 2001 to that respect are the *University Report 2000* (also known as the *Bricall Report*) (*Informe Universidad 2000*, 2000), the *Record of the 1st National Plan on Evaluating Quality at the Universities*, the *2nd Plan on Quality at the Universities* and the draft of a new Law on Universities.

Even though these documents and regulations differ in nature, they all address a common concern: the new needs and demands of higher education. Leading up to them were prior documents such as the UNESCO publication of 1998 and the Bologna Declaration of 1999, among others. The final document from UNESCO (1998) on *Higher Education in the 21st Century* acknowledges four trends in higher education worldwide: quantitative growth (college student population increased five-fold between 1960 and 1990), unequal access among countries (50 times higher in North America than in sub-Saharan Africa), the growth in numbers of female students and "the need to develop quality in higher education." The Bologna Declaration stresses the need to create a

European common ground of higher education in accordance with the new demands of society and the advances in scientific knowledge.

The *Bricall Report* got its start in a 1997 European Commission document on the objectives that higher education institutions should meet. Such objectives include developing employability by acquiring the skills for lifelong promotion of creativity, flexibility, adaptability and the ability to learn how to learn and solve problems (*Informe Universidad 2000*, 2000, p. 8). The *Bricall Report* calls for higher education to contribute to developing and improving education at every level, particularly secondary non-compulsory education, since those grades are no longer (in developed nations) meant only as springboards to higher education (p.16). The report acknowledges four basic dimensions in the “structural change” (in accordance with the *White Paper on Education and Training* by the Commission of the European Communities, 1995): the generation of advances in science, communications and information technologies; the economic transformations under way in the various sectors of production; the increase in interdependence; and the rising level of education and base knowledge in the more advanced societies.

Since 1995 Spain has participated in the European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education. The same year, the First National Plan for Evaluating the Quality of Universities (1996-2001) was initiated. In 2001 the Second Plan for Quality Universities was formulated based on the previous experiences. In doing so, Spain has joined the European Union initiative through the European Network for Quality Assurance and complied with the aforementioned Declaration of European Education Ministers in Bologna.¹⁶

The five-year experience of evaluating public and private Spanish universities reveals the main causes for concern in quality of teaching, some of which are shared by other higher education institutions in Europe. These are:

1. the tension among the three levels of higher education (basic or short-duration professional degrees; academically-oriented long-duration degrees; and doctorate and postgraduate degrees geared toward research or entry in specialized fields of work);
2. the overload of information and the fragmentation of knowledge, a by-product of students' and teachers' excessively differentiated learning to the detriment of rigorous yet broader-based academic education, research training and cultural development;
3. the very high rates of academic delay (as students take more time to finish a degree program) and the high dropout rate, both of which lower the efficiency of higher education in Spain;
4. the perhaps overly rapid development of new universities and centers of higher education at growth rates that make it difficult to achieve a desirable level of quality among universities as a whole;¹⁷
5. the fragmentation of academic time as a result of splitting the school year into semesters or four-month terms;¹⁸

6. the unevenness of improvements in research among universities, insufficient educational innovation in the teaching-learning process and the very low rates of applying new information technologies to the classroom;
7. the precarious balance between general education (shared and interdisciplinary) and adaptation to the needs of a marketplace characterized by innovation, specialization, integration and globalization;
8. the job placement process and the evaluation of the skills and behavior required by the workplace;
9. the need for new sources of funding and efficient structures of administration to deal with university finances.¹⁹

A Prospective of the Spanish Education System

Three kinds of characteristics can be distinguished in the future of the education system: those that are shared by the whole system, those common to all levels prior to higher education and those specific to each level. The two most common characteristics in the system as a whole (from infant education to university) are the evaluation and improvement of quality, on one hand, and the adaptation to the changing features of the cultural, social and economic-productive milieu on the other.

At levels prior to higher education, the system is gearing up to address the new threats to quality and equity in education, mainly due to immigration and multiculturalism. In that vein, steps will continue to be taken to evaluate the system in Spain (going on with a state-wide system of indicators of education quality²⁰) and in relation to other European and OECD projects (e.g., the PISA and INES projects). One of the main challenges facing the Spanish education system at the basic levels is that of developing context-sensitive evaluation without jeopardizing accreditation within the whole of the Spanish and European systems.

Innovations in infant education will mostly affect the first cycle (children up to age 3), which requires specialized training for educators and better regulation of its socio-educational function. The greatest change in infant education will be the impact of children from new ethnic and cultural minorities, which will in turn require developing new resources as well as more specialized training for teachers and educators at that level. Changes in primary education will follow similar lines, especially in the large cities and autonomous communities with higher per capita incomes, where greater demand for skilled and unskilled workers produces a greater influx of immigrants.

As concerns the changes emerging in secondary education, the problem will persist as a result of the tension characteristic of secondary education. Husén (1998) points out the ambivalence in the following passages:

We are apparently headed towards a society whose youth, rather than being kept sheltered in school until the end of adolescence, are given opportunities that instill the hopes and fears of adulthood, in and beyond the world of work.

What can be said of secondary education in the year 2025, within a quarter century? In practice, secondary education up to age 18 will be universal (p. 45).

The tension will lead to efforts to integrate both kinds of actions: that of evaluating mastery of procedural skills and contents at the end of compulsory secondary education, and that of attending to non-formal education and training for youth who, as of age 16, enter the labor force.

Regarding higher education, some of the main trends likely to become more pronounced in the years ahead are (a) the extension of higher education to new students (which will require greater assessment of knowledge and skills prior to admission to a university), (b) greater concern over quality and excellence of universities and the degrees conferred, (c) the search for new sources of funding and (d) new legislation on governing universities and the processes of training and selecting faculty members.

Statistics on university student population place Spain among the highest in Europe. At first glance one might think there can be no significant rise in store. However, comparative studies in Europe predict further increases overall, and there is no indication that Spanish youth will escape a trend the OECD (1998b) has detected over recent decades:

A historic shift is occurring in the second half of the 20th century: tertiary education is replacing secondary education as the focal point of access, selection, and entry to rewarding careers for the majority of young people (p. 20).

Within this general trend, the changes foreseen for upcoming years revolve around the following points (*Education Information Network in the European Community* [EURYDICE], 2000, pp. 171-179): an increase in demand, a tightening of public funding, decision-making to jostle for position in a highly competitive globalized environment, technological advances, decentralization of education administration, creation of a European network or system of education that is already streamlining various areas (e.g., the structure of higher education, university autonomy, student admissions policies, curriculum, teaching and internationalization²¹). On the other hand, it is possible to predict that, while higher education in Europe will gradually tend to converge, it will maintain considerable diversity according to the political traditions, the local contexts and the autonomy of the university itself.

It is that duality of converging yet diverging that will keep up the dynamics of change in Spanish higher education, but also within the context of the European Union, and even in relation to what the *Attali Report* calls a trend towards “a worldwide model of standardized higher education.” This would revolve around the following points (Deem, 2001; EURYDICE, 2000; OCDE, 1997; Jarvis, 2000; Vázquez, 1999; Vázquez & Torre, 1999):

1. greater interaction between higher education and the economy (focusing on R&D and knowledge management);
2. coordination of the dual outreach towards the global and the local;
3. the promotion of quality evaluation and management based upon identifying reliable indicators of quality;
4. enhancing student mobility within and among European universities in general and Spanish universities in particular;

5. a more pronounced distinction between the three university degree levels (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate); and
6. the integration of higher education within the broader process of lifelong education.

Conclusion

The eleven years since the Law on General Organization of the Education System and eighteen since the Law on University Reform were passed have served to consolidate their respective contributions: raising the compulsory school age to 16, and giving universities the autonomy to establish new regulations, organizational structures and new programs of study.

At present there are three kinds of problems in the education system. Some, belonging to the structure of the system, are to be found in the last stage of compulsory secondary education (namely, deficits in academic performance, lack of basic skills and the discontent of teachers) and in the transition from secondary education to higher education (where there is a gap between the skills required for university and those achieved by the students). Others, more dynamic in nature, concern socio-political and demographic changes: the demographic crisis, immigration and multiculturalism. These dynamic changes are meshing with the structural changes and require a new model of schools and curriculum, which is better integrated with the community.

Finally, there is a third kind of problem of a systemic kind. It consists of achieving the integration of the “education system” and the “training system” into a global system of information and knowledge which would include the entire range of education institutions, organizations and agencies to assure a synergetic process of lifelong and life-wide learning and education as the basis of personal development and the development of Spain within the European and international community.

Notes

1. Henceforth this law will be cited here as LOGSE, just as it is known in Spain and Spanish-speaking countries. Other laws that develop the fundamental right to education, in accordance with article 27 of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, are: LODE, Organic Law on the Right to Education (*Ley Orgánica 8/1985 Reguladora del Derecho a la Educación*) and LOPEG, Organic Law on Participation, Evaluation and Governing of Schools (*Ley Orgánica 9/1995 de la Participación, la Evaluación y el Gobierno de los Centros Docentes*). On the other hand, as we shall see further on, the law that regulates university education (Law on University Reform, known as the LRU) is partially organic and develops article 27.10 of the 1978 Constitution in which university autonomy is acknowledged.
2. This is one of the “lessons” we must learn from the past of curriculum, according to Eisner (2000, pp. 347-348).
3. This author held relevant positions in the Ministry of Education at the time the 1970 General Law of Education was being drafted.
4. Point 18 in chapter 1 of the *White Book of Education Reform* identifies several positive points of the General Law of Education, namely the State’s obligations towards education; the spread of schooling to a population 6 to 14 years old; a more coherent and integrated approach to the education system; and the acknowledgement of values “already present in

- Spanish society but hard to accommodate in the political situation of 1970" (*Libro Blanco para la reforma del sistema educativo*, 1989, p.18).
5. For more on the constructivist model of education in the reform and the theoretical underpinnings and problems posed, see Barrón (1991), García del Dujo (1992), Sarramona, J. (2000, ch.13).
 6. This author maintains that both personalized education (the pedagogical principle on which García Hoz worked and which inspired the reform of the 1970 General Law of Education) as well as meaningful learning (the hallmark of the 1990 reform) stem from the principles of pedagogic activism that were already present in theory and practice in the New School Movement of the 1920s and 1930s (p. 455).
 7. According to statistics from international organizations, Spain has the lowest birthrate in the world. Two pieces of data illustrate the magnitude of the problem: first, recent data on fertility from the National Statistics Institute show an average of 1.07 live births per woman of childbearing years (15-49) (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1999). Second, estimates from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports indicate a decrease of 119,118 students in the 2000-01 school year compared to the previous year, and if infant and university education are not counted, the decrease totals 139,710 (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2001). The 1987 Report from the International Council for Educational Development on the Spanish university reform mentions that the changing education system environment is characterized by a set of features, especially political, demographic and economic changes.
 8. The State School Board has carried out two studies in the last two years on the two problems that affect the Spanish education system at non-university level: cultural diversity and school social climate. School-based answers to the problem of multiculturalism have been discussed at the European Network of School Boards Conference's *Mobility, Intercultural Education and Citizenship*. Madrid (22 and 23 September 2000) (Information available at: www.mec.es/cesces/inicio.htm)
 9. The *Report on the Status and Situation of the Education System* from the 1997-98 school year acknowledges the gravity of the situation by stating that the "Achilles' Heel" of the education reform is its attention to diversity in compulsory secondary education" (Consejo Escolar del Estado, 1999, point 1.4).
 10. The importance of the problem is shown in studies by Esteve (1994), Esteve, Franco, & Vera (1995) and Martínez (1998).
 11. This thesis appeared previously in Tourián (1990).
 12. This transfer has affected all the public universities except the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia* (National Open University) and the *Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo* (which does not offer professional accreditation), both of which fall under special categories of regulation.
 13. Rates for women are higher than rates for men. In the last five years, females rank at 53% of total university student population even though women make up only 48.89% of the population of Spaniards 18-23 years old. The greater numbers of women occur throughout the various types of universities (public, private and church).
 14. From 1983, when the Law on University Reform was passed, to 2001 the number of universities almost doubled, even without counting the Higher Education Centers associated with universities but not legally recognized as such. The increase in new universities has created a kind of "localistic" effect at public universities, which is starting to be corrected as of this year thanks to a new "open district" rule. Under the new rule, public universities in Madrid may offer more than 60% of their admissions to students from anywhere in Spain in the 2001-02 academic year.
 15. The juxtaposition of quantity (i.e., size of university) and quality (of education) is discussed in Neave (1995). In Spain, the drop in enrollment will help universities change their admissions requirements from the current University Access Tests to specific entrance tests for each college and program (from 2003-04 onwards).

16. Quality management approaches are now quite common in higher education. See Spencer-Matthews (2001).
17. The rapid rate of new universities being founded is jeopardizing the existence of the university as *studium generale* (as opposed to *studium particulare*).
18. This point is investigated further in Milikin & Colohan (2000). This study, using Likert's technique, shows that teachers in the U. K. disapprove of the new semester-based academic calendar.
19. These problems are common throughout higher education in Europe (Weiler, 2000). Weiler examines four alternatives: seeking support from foundations, mobilizing external resources, introducing new tuition fees and creating new private higher education institutions.
20. The set of indicators from *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* are being used with that end in mind. The 1998 edition worked with 36 indicators (five on demographic, economic and social context; seven on economic and human resources; six on schooling and social participation in teaching; four on the professional activities of the students; six on the organizational and instructive processes of schools; and eight on achievement) (OECD, 1998a). That same methodology is being used for evaluating the quality of the system in some of the Autonomous Communities (c.f. Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 1999).
21. Internationalization of this kind is already in progress thanks to the mobility programs of students and teachers among European universities. Furthermore, the ECTS (*European Credit Transfer System*) is gradually gaining acceptance as a system based on academic recognition of coursework done at different universities.

References

- Barreiro, H. (1999). A renovación educativa en España durante o século XX. *Revista Galega do Ensino* [Especial Issue: A Educación no Século XX. Unha Análise Panorámica], 24, 81–96.
- Barrón, A. (1991). *Aprendizaje por descubrimiento*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca.
- Bologna Declaration (1999). Retrieved from <http://www.unige.ch/cre>
- Commission of the European Communities. (2000). *A memorandum on lifelong learning*. SEC(2000)1832, 30-10-2000.
- Commission of the European Communities. (1995). *White paper on education and training*. COM(95)590, 29-1-1995.
- Consejo de Universidades. (2001). *Estadística universitaria*. Retrieved from <http://www.mec.es/consejou/estadis/index.html>.
- Consejo Escolar del Estado. (1999). *Informe sobre el estado y situación del sistema educativo*. Curso 1997/1998. Madrid: Author.
- Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu. (1999). *Sistema d'indicadors d'ensenyament de Catalunya*. Barcelona: Author.
- Deem, R. (2001). Globalization, new managerialism, academic capitalism and entrepreneurialism in universities: Is the local dimension still important? *Comparative Education*, 37 (1), 7–20.
- Díez Hochleitner, R. (1989). Prospectiva, reformas y planificación de la educación. In *Prospectiva, reformas y planificación de la educación. IV Semana monográfica*. (pp. 11–83). Madrid: Fundación Santillana.
- Díez Hochleiter, R. (1991). Reforma educativa. In S. Sánchez (Ed.), *Tecnología de la educación* (pp. 457–458). Madrid: Santillana.
- Eisner, E. W. (2000). Those who ignore the past: 12 “easy” lessons for the next millenium. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 32 (2), 343–357.
- Esteve, J.M. (1994). *El malestar docente* (3rd ed.). Barcelona: Laia.

- Esteve, J.M., Franco, S., & Vera, J. (1995). *Los profesores ante el cambio social: repercusiones sobre la evolución de la salud de los profesores*. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Education Information Network in the European Community. (2000). *Two decades of reform in higher education in Europe: 1980 onwards*. Brussels: Author.
- García del Dujo, A. (1992). Constructivismo e intervención pedagógica: a propósito de quién construye. *Teoría de la Educación*, 4, 127–138.
- García Garrido, J. L. (1998). Un nuevo horizonte para la educación secundaria. In Fundación Santillana (Ed.), *Aprender para el futuro. La educación secundaria, pivote del sistema educativo* (pp. 47–54). Madrid: Author.
- Garrido Falla, F. (1983). *Comentarios a la constitución*. Madrid: Civitas.
- Husén, T. (1998). Educación secundaria. Inventario y perspectivas futuras. In Fundación Santillana (Ed.), *Aprender para el futuro. La educación secundaria, pivote del sistema educativo* (pp. 41–46). Madrid: Author.
- Informe Universidad 2000 [Informe Bricall]. (2000). Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura.
- Instituto Nacional de Calidad y Evaluación. (2000). *Sistema estatal de indicadores de la educación*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística. (1999). *Encuesta de fecundidad 1999*. Retrieved from <http://www.ine.es/daco/daco42/analisis/fecundi/fecun99.htm>.
- International Council for Educational Development. (1987). *La reforma universitaria española. Evaluación e informe*. Madrid: Consejo de Universidades.
- Jarvis, P. (2000). Globalization, the learning society and comparative education. *Comparative Education*, 36 (3), 343–355.
- Ley Orgánica 14/1970, de 4 de agosto, General de Educación y Financiamiento de la Reforma Educativa. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 187 (6-8-1970).
- Ley Orgánica 11/1983, de 25 de agosto, de Reforma Universitaria. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 209 (1-9-1983).
- Ley Orgánica 8/1985, de 3 de julio, Reguladora del Derecho a la Educación. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 159 (4-7-1985).
- Ley Orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 238 (4-10-1990).
- Ley Orgánica 9/1995, de 20 de noviembre, de la Participación, la Evaluación y el Gobierno de los Centros Docentes. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 278 (21-11-1995).
- Libro Blanco para la reforma del sistema educativo*. (1989). Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia.
- Martínez, M. (1998). *El contrato moral del profesorado. Condiciones para una nueva escuela*. Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer.
- McLaughlin, T. H. (1997). National identity and education. In M.A. Santos (Ed.), *Educational policy in the European Union after Maastricht* (pp. 45–68). Santiago de Compostela: Instituto Gallego de Administración Pública.
- Milikin, J., & Colohan, G. (2000). Managing change in higher education: Assessing staff perceptions of the impact of semesterization. *Higher Education in Europe*, 25 (4), 539–549.
- Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. (2001). *Datos y Cifras. Curso escolar 2000–2001*. Retrieved from <http://www.mec.es/estadistica/Cifras/index.html>
- Neave, G. (1995). Las políticas de calidad: Desarrollos en enseñanza superior en Europa occidental. *Revista de Educación*, 308, 7–29.
- OCDE [OECD]. (1997). La implantación de la educación permanente para todos: Visión general y directrices de política educativa. Informe de la OCDE. *Revista de Educación*, 312, 307–330.
- OECD. (1998a). *Education at a glance. OECD indicators 1998*. Paris: Author.
- OECD. (1998b). *Redefining tertiary education*. Paris: Author.
- Palincsar, A. S. (1998). Social constructivist perspectives on teaching and learning. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 345–375.
- Proyecto para la reforma de la enseñanza*. (1987). Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia.

- Puyol, R., Cabrillo, F., Olivera, A., Abellán, A., Roses, P. & Vázquez, G. (1998). El reto de la sostenibilidad del Estado del bienestar en educación y universidad. In E. Fernández-Miranda (Ed.), *Sostenibilidad del Estado del bienestar en España* (pp. 87–184). Madrid: Price-Waterhouse.
- Rodríguez Diéguez, J. L. (2000). Estrategias didácticas activas y reformas educativas: Revisión de un problema. *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 58 (217), 439–457.
- Sarramona, J. (2000). *Teoría de la educación*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Spencer-Matthews, S. (2001). Enforce cultural change in academe. A practical case study: Implementing quality management systems in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 26, 51–59.
- Tedesco, J. C. (1995a). *El nuevo pacto educativo. Educación, competitividad y ciudadanía en la sociedad moderna*. Madrid: Anaya.
- Tedesco, J. C. (1995b). Algunos aspectos de la formación del ciudadano en las políticas de la Unión Europea. In V *Congreso Interuniversitario de Teoría de la Educación. Política de la Educación*. (pp. 75–81). Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona - Universidad de Barcelona.
- Touriñán, J. M. (1990). La profesionalización como principio del sistema educativo y la función pedagógica. *Revista de Ciencias de la Educación*, 141, 9–23.
- Touriñán, J. M. (1995). Las exigencias de la profesionalización como principio del sistema educativo. *Revista de Ciencias de la Educación*, 164, 411–438.
- UNESCO. (1996). *Informe a la UNESCO de la Comisión Internacional sobre la educación para el siglo XXI, presidida por Jacques Delors. La educación encierra un tesoro* [Informe Delors]. Madrid: Santillana - Ediciones UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (1998). *Conferencia mundial sobre la educación superior. La educación superior en el siglo XXI: Visión y acción*. ED-98/CONF.202/3.
- Vázquez, G. (1999). La educación superior como educación básica en el marco de la educación permanente. *Aula Abierta*, (73), 3–20.
- Vázquez, G. (2001). *Los procesos de aprendizaje. La acción educativa como construcción de la persona*. Paper presented in II Jornadas Pedagógicas de la Persona. Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla. March, 25–28.
- Vázquez, G., & Torre, I. de la (1999). Educación y formación. In J. L. García Delgado (Ed.), *Estructura económica de Madrid* (ch. 25). Madrid: Cívitas.
- Weiler, H. N. (2000). States, markets and university funding: New paradigms for the reform of higher education in Europe. *Compare*, 30 (3), 333–339.