

UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND FOR SCHOOLING

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**Schooling for Tomorrow. Analysing and Understanding the
“Demand for Schooling”. Spanish National Report.**

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1. Demand and views about schooling in society.

Demands for schooling: some contextual issues.

In the last decade, the analysis of Spanish educative demand about schooling has become to reach a special and public relevance. In a general sense, the most important discussion proceeds from the extension of compulsory education, from ages 6 to 16, set down by the Organic Act on the General Organisation of the Education System of 1990 (*LOGSE, Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*). This Act, proposed by the Socialist Government, was supported by the majority of the Spanish political parties, except by the main party in the opposition.

Several Spanish authors interested in education matters (Delval, 2000; Feito Alonso, 2002; Fernández-Enguita, 2002; Gimeno Sacristán, 2000; Marchesi, 2000) have declared that this educational reform was carried out without the required economic support. The idea that the changes derived of this reform were implemented with deficient economic resources, caused a predominant sense –not real- that an increasing level of academic failure was found in schools due to these economic reasons. Moreover, other difficulties emerged. Many teachers, mainly of secondary education, criticized the process of educational change based on an extensive and fast program of transformations of very distinct areas (i.e., organisational, professional, academic, etc). For instance, they questioned the new dimensions of their jobs produced by the great emphasis given by the law to the "education-for-all" programs, as radically dissimilar from "only-for-the-best". Actually, incrementing the quality of teacher training in order to attend the diversity of students in schools seems to be one of the main educational demands posed by teachers of primary and secondary education in many societies.

Other problems arouse from the socio-political context. Finally, it was the Popular Government, after rejecting explicitly the Act of 1990, who had to carry out some of the principal developments of this Organic Law in the period of 1996-2003. This context of change in the national education system contributed to generate a new focus related with the quality of the education assumed by

the different political parties (state parties and also nationalist and/or regionalist ones from the Autonomous Communities, such as Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, and so on).

One of the consequences of the political discussion about these educational matters was manifested in the two last national elections (2000, 2004). The official programs of the three big national parties (Socialist Party, Popular Party, and Left Union Party) remarked the relevance of education in the Spanish agenda. For example, in the electoral process of 2000, the Popular Party emphasised the "quality" dimension of education proposing to create a new Organic Law. The national government authorities were convinced that the assumptions of the *LOGSE* Act (1990) had provoked a significant decrease in the level of student's knowledge as a result of the emphasis given to the generality of the educative curriculum. They claimed that the quality of education had to be necessarily oriented to the elaboration of diverse educative programs to achieve different abilities according to the particular situation of the students, especially those with a high level of academic success. As in 1994, the proposed Organic Law on the Quality of Education (*Ley General de la Calidad de la Educación, LOCE*) was approved in 2002 only by the party in the Government (Popular Party). As a result of this situation, in the 2004 electoral campaign the educational facet was one of the three more important topics, and the central national debate was centred in the costs and benefits of this 'quality' law.

At present, the Socialist Government accomplished the promise assumed during the campaign to bring to an end some normative included in the 2002 Act, with the formal goal to formulate a new educational Act based on a wider political and social consensus. Teachers, trade unions, parents associations, and the Catholic Church (who has the property of nearly 85% of all private schools in our country) also requested the agreement. At this time, we are in this process.

School demand and different types of schools.

The analysis of the educational demand is one of the major topics in analysing the public debate about schooling. Generally, parents want to wield

their right to choose the school they consider more adequate for their children. However, not always the offer is plenty in all the schools. This fact has become especially significant in the case of some regional or local contexts in our country, and especially in some publicly funded schools.

The private schools called *centros concertados* are financed by the State, under the responsibility of the Autonomous Communities, and represent 30% of the entire Spanish compulsory schools. In the communities with a low rent *per capita* or those that are geographically dispersed, such as the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, there are only 10% of *centros concertados* (see section 5). By contrast, the Autonomous Communities with a high rent *per capita* and geographically concentrated have a higher proportion of this kind of schools (i.e. Basque Country, Catalonia, or the area of Madrid with 50% of *centros concertados*).

This situation has generated strong reactions from both schoolteachers and parents' associations of the public schools. They criticized the action of the government authorities in some Autonomous Communities, like Madrid, who financed and authorised the opening of many new *centros concertados* in the last years. They explicitly disapproved the fact that in areas governed by right-oriented parties there were more interest in increasing the number of this type of schools in detriment to the public school. Some inferences are possible regarding this situation. It seems, for instance, that these governmental educative actions are quite contradictory. On one hand, there is an apparently application of a severely neo-liberal educative program, and, in the other hand, there is an adhesion to the Catholic Church moral point of view about education.

In general, we can assume that the *LOGSE* Act (1990) allowed the demand of the school system in the elaboration and public transmission of a specific educative program based in the core national and regional curricula. Moreover, this program gave a great emphasis in transversal matters like peace education, multicultural dimension, context adaptation, etc. The problem was that this new curriculum was carried out in all the public schools with scarce

financial founding, and without increasing the human resources¹. The local authorities (i.e. the city council) only provide some resources for structural changes in the school buildings and for their essential maintenance.

According to the law, all the Spanish school centres, including the *centros concertados* and the private schools, have to submit their educative plan. In general, the programs of these schools incorporate a general view of education but with special emphasis in the humanistic/catholic facet. Moreover, in the programs of this kind of schools there is a tendency to remark aspects like responsibility, the importance of the outputs, and to show an effective connection with the non-compulsory levels (Baccalaureate, ages 16 to 18). It is important to point out that in the *centros concertados* there is the possibility to eject and reject those students with disruptive behaviour or low academic achievement. Also, as we will see in the next section, in those Autonomous Communities where there is a fast increasing rate of immigrants (basically Madrid, Catalonia, Andalusia and Valencia), with an extensive network of *centros concertados*, the vast majority of 'immigrant' children attend the public school². Even, there are some areas where around 70% of the population are 'immigrant' children. In Madrid, for example, only 2/10 of 'immigrant' students are accepted in the *centros concertados*. It is important to indicate that this situation usually happens with 'immigrant' children whose parents are blue collar workers with a low level of income (generally coming from Latin America and North Africa).

School demand in catholic-oriented schools

Issues with respect to the demand of catholic-oriented schools are worthy of mention. Although a high proportion of families demands (and their child have a

¹ For example, in public schools the Parents' Association usually contributes to the application of specific programs (for instance, breakfast in the schools, additional activities inside the buildings of school out-schedule like sports or musical education).

² As we know, the composition of the Spanish society is rapidly changing during the last 15 years. Traditionally, Spain has been a nation of emigrants but in the last years has begun to host immigrants from diverse places around the world. Thus, at school level is a challenge to face an immigration flow that has been growing at a fast pace during the last years (for example, some groups like the Latin Americans and North Africans have multiplied by 3 or 4 within 15 years, transforming the social configuration of several geographic areas like Catalonia, Andalusia or Madrid).

place) this kind of centres, the estimate percentage of families attending the *centros concertados* who are ideologically convinced with this religious orientation is less than the 50%. It is important to point out the extended concern, sustained basically by the middle-class families, regarding the 'good traditional education' that Church Schools offer. According with the neo-liberal idea mentioned before, this classical orientation goes along with the necessarily adaptations to changes, but always maintaining the principles of the major scholastic orders as Jesuits, Carmelites, etc.

Views of schooling in the media

As far as we know, there are no specific studies about the incidence of school changes in the mass media in our country. Nevertheless, during the last two years, with the implementation of the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (2002), and the recent national elections, there has been a higher attendance of education topics in the national press as well as in some TV and radio programmes. In broad terms, the most important debate recently raised regards to the 'high school failure'. Specifically, the discussion has been oriented towards the convenience or not of the segregation of the students according to their academic achievement, and in relation to the imperative necessity to create a culture of 'academic effort' as opposite to the idea that the educative standards can be reached in an 'easy way'. Other question of the debate has to do with the discussion if the role of teachers is more important than the role of parents or if the TV is a good educative influence or not... Generally, these issues have less relevance than the former.

The aims of education on different sociocultural schools and groups.

Overall, there are great differences in the perception of the different aims of education depending on the different socio-cultural context of schools and of the different socio-cultural groups involved. Although it is difficult to make global appraisals, we will mention here some specific and important issues that arise when discussing this topic.

First, as we know, there are quite differences between some Autonomous Communities and the rest of Spain regarding the 'native' language. In these territories, the specific language dimension is an important component of the educational decision because there is an increasing social awareness about the relevance of speaking the two official languages. In this sense, the schools have the explicit aim to recover the 'forbidden' languages (or at least seen as a low-level cultural reference) during the Franco's dictatorship. Although this is a relevant objective for the educative policies of these regions, the fact is that a minority of the families are still in disagreement to this official bilingual policy³.

Second, in a recent sociological opinion poll regarding the most important problems of the Spanish society (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, March 2004), 'education' is in the thirteen position and only 4.2% of the population inquired considered it as one of the three main problems for the Spanish society. This data reveal that the 'education matter' is important for Spaniards, but that probably has a greater importance on news and minutes in media than in the daily conversations of the Spanish people. In a preliminary study carried out by the authors about the educative topics with more influence in the newspaper in the last years, we have found that those related with higher education are significantly more important than those related with preschool and compulsory education. In addition, the main references to compulsory education during the last year are basically upon the role of religion teaching in the schools, and about problems related to public funding or the educational failure (basically in secondary education).

Third, another relevant issue is related to the diverse type of education received in schools. Although nearly three of each four young adults (72%) say that they have studied in a public school, only 18% affirm that they have studied in religious schools (*CIS*, 2003). Moreover, in the case of young people attending public or religious schools, there are no substantial differences in their opinion about the relevance of studying in a specific kind of school. However, it seems that one of the most significant problems- on the political, cultural, and religious dimension- comes from the discussion about the existence of a 'cultural dimension of the religion' in the core curriculum. Either the Catholic

³ Nevertheless, there are great differences in the extension and use of the distinct languages like Catalanian, Euskera or Gallego inside these territories.

groups, or the Catholic authorities, are demanding the apprenticeship of catholic religion for all the students, not only for children whose families have a religious affiliation. It is clear that a small portion of this community rejects this institutional point of view and states that the religious formation has to be learn in the churches, not in the school centres. In fact, the role of the Catholic Church in Spanish education is significant. The presence of Catholic teachers in the public schools was regulated by and International Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the State of Vatican, signed before the Spanish Constitution. By this agreement, the catholic religion teachers are selected by the Church Authorities but their remuneration is financed with public resources in order to teach in both Public and Private schools. Recently, a similar agreement was realized with the Muslim Community and other Christian confessions. It is important to point out that 75% of Spanish people mention that they are catholic (63, 3% in young adults), but only 15% are practitioners (the same in young adults) in the religious dimension and in the public dominion. The other religions represent only 1.5% of total population.

2. Participation in the decision-making in the schooling process.

Participation of parents in schools

In Spain, the right of parents to participate in the education of their child is recognized in the “General Law of Education” (Ley General de Educación) of 1970, and also in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. In the first case, the article 65 states “*the right of parents to form part of the associations of parents and of the council of social participation*”. In the Constitution, the Section 27, 7 states: “*Teachers, parents and when appropriate, pupils shall participate in the control and management of all centres supported by the Administration out of public funds, under the terms established by the law*”. This is an important aspect if we consider that the participation of parents in the control and management of schools supported with public funds is regulated by the State and how the Associations of Parents of Students (AMPAS) that exist all over the country should be consider as an effective way to reach this objective.

Along with these regulations, the Organic Act on the Right to Education (LODE) of 1985, recognise parents' freedom of association and the right to participate in the control and management of schools. Consequently, parents may participate and co-operate through Parents' Associations in the establishment of educational tasks. Thus, they can aid in all matters concerning their children's education, collaborate in the educational activities developed in schools, and participate in the School Council.

Spanish Parents' Associations: Two points of view.

In broad terms, there are two confederations of parents that exist within the entire national context and that have representation in all the Autonomous Communities: the Spanish Confederation of Associations of Parents of Students (CEAPA) and the National Catholic Confederation of Parents of Students (CONCAPA).

In the first case, the CEAPA defines itself as a social organization, independent, no confessional, and progressive, integrated with 45 Federations and Confederations and grouping about 12.000 Associations of Parents of Students from public schools of non-university education. More than 8 million of parents integrate this association with their children attending at public schools. Getting a public school of quality for all, the democratization of education and teaching, the improvement of conditions for the development of infancy and adolescence, and educating and defending values as peace and solidarity, and the exercise of tolerance and freedom, are some of the fundamental matters of their educational and social project.

In the other case, the CONCAPA, with the participation of around 3 million of parents, joins the Associations of parents that in their vast majority are Catholics, and share a Humanistic Christian Project as one of their main signs of identity. Their children attend basically the private schools and the *centros concertados*. One of the main goals of this Confederation is related with the right of parents to select the type of education for their children, as well as the 'right' to receive at school the moral and religious teaching according with their

own convictions. Thus, the defence of the family and the freedom in the option of schooling are the principal claims in this type of association.

The right of choice by families in relation to the educational centre they attend, as we mentioned before, is in the educational debate generated in the last years. The position of the *CONCAPA* in this discussion is very clear since they stress and defend the founding of a higher number of class-groups in the *centros concertados* in all of the Autonomous Communities, arguing the right of preference for all the families. This policy is named as 'increasing *clases concertadas*' because permit to obtain a partial founding for the private schools. Although these schools are private, they can have one group of each school grade founding by governmental resources. It is interesting to see how the *CONCAPA* treats in the media some of the questions related with this topic. For example, in their web site the more recent news are those related with the right by parents to select the schools. For example, there is a very descriptive title: 'The *CONCAPA* claps the creation of 793 new *aulas concertadas* in Madrid' (June, 2003). There is also a note in which the *CONCAPA* ask about the resign from the Ombudsman after publishing in 2003 the results of a study regarding 'Schooling of immigrant students in Spain' carried out in all the Autonomous Communities during 2001-2002. This study reveals the unequal proportion of Spanish and 'immigrant' children attending private and public schools. As we mentioned in section 1, the vast majority of 'immigrant' children attend to public schools. Moreover, most of the families of these children belong to a lower socio-cultural status than the rest of them. Moreover, in some schools, 'immigrant' students are the majority of the school population.

Another graphic example about the nature of the current debate upon these issues can be found in an electronic educational publication of the Ministry of Education '*Comunidad Escolar*', where there is a very noteworthy title: 'Without freedom of choice there is no possible education'. This reference is especially attractive if we take into account that it is a review about a symposium organized by the *Madrilean Association of Private Enterprises of Teaching (AMEPE)*, a group directly connected with different Confessional Associations of parents. It seems that in this symposium participated a great number of teachers, students, and parents of the *centros concertados*. Basically, the main ideas addressed in this meeting had to do –one more time-

with the right of parents to select the appropriate education. They recalled the idea that without this freedom of choice there is no possible to get any educational right, nor even education itself.

However, the position hold by the Confessional Associations of Parents is very different of that maintained by the No Confessional Associations. That is, while the former tend to stress the right to choose, the latter tend to advocate in favour of an education of quality for all, in which there should be no place for the current disequilibrium existing in the Spanish educational system. The social impact of this last position can be illustrated by one example. In 1997, the CEAPA, along with other educational organizations, and trade unions, called for a mass congregation in favour of the public education with a high level of participation from diverse places around Spain.

Demand for schooling in public and private schools

With respect the specific nature of the Spanish educational system it is important to consider some recent data appeared in the national press (*El País*, July, 2004). The data offered by the Ministry of Education show that 62% of the students in the Autonomous Community of Madrid attend to a public school, while the rest (38%) goes to *centros concertados* (see Table 1). In addition, in the specific case of Madrid this pattern is even more significant, being only 41% of the students in public schools, while the 59% of them goes to *centros concertados*. These data show that in the last years there has been an important tendency for increasing the creation of *centros concertados* in compulsory education.

Table 1. Public and private schools of compulsory education in the Autonomous Community of Madrid supported by public funds (2004).

	Public schools	Private schools financed by public funds (<i>centros concertados</i>)	Total
Number of students in the Autonomous Community of	358.973	218.169	577.142

Madrid			
Percentage of students (%)	62	38	100
Money for each educative system (in euros)	2.106.596.311	535.610.840	

(Source: Dirección General de Centros Docentes de la Comunidad de Madrid)

Another important data is that 88% of the *centros concertados* in the Autonomous Community of Madrid are Catholic ones. However, maybe the most significant question is that in many cases it is not possible to find out to which religious organization they belong. The Ministry of Education only have supervision and control of aspects related to the educational project of the schools, the infrastructure, or the teacher staff. In addition, in so many cases there is no way to find out how much public money they receive since some support comes directly from the governmental institutions, but also they obtain complementary resources of public dominion as terrains for building new schools or founding to pay the salaries to the religion teachers.

It is expected that in the next academic course there will be 90.000 'immigrant' children studying in the Community of Madrid, while in 1999 there were no more than 20.000. As it was stated before, 'immigrant' students tend to go basically to public schools, producing a great disequilibrium in some districts, and in some cases, creating authentic 'ghettos' and contexts of exclusion instead of inclusive ones. This 'problem' has been stated very clearly in 2003 in a Report of the Ombudsman (see Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of students with an immigrant origin by type of school, 2001-2002 (*)

	Public schools	Private schools financed by public funds (<i>centros concertados</i>)
Percentage of 'immigrant' students	82,01	17,99
Total number of 'immigrant' students	69.117	15.159

(*) This study was conducted in the following Autonomous Communities: Andalusia, Aragón, Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Catalonia, Ceuta y Melilla, Extremadura, Galicia, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra, Basque Country, and La Rioja.
(Source: *Ombudsman Report*, 2003).

In fact, it is very significant that 82,01% of the immigrant students schooled in Spain that come from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, East Europe and Asia study in public schools. Nevertheless, what really is occurring is the fact that the *centros concertados* tend to avoid the presence of 'immigrant' children arguing diverse reasons but at the same time, defending vigorously the freedom of choice of schools by parents. Thus, if we analyse the data provided by different public institutions, it can be observed that there is an indirect process of selection of immigrant students in the '*centros concertados*'. Aspects like an extra payment in concept of an 'extra-hour of class', services like the lunch one, or the elevated cost of school-dresses, for example, seems to assure the selection of students in that kind of centres. Moreover, it is a way to guarantee the Spanish parents who do not want their children to be mixed with 'immigrant'. Of course, this controversial situation tends to be in opposition with some of the basic principles established for schools in Spanish legislation. In this case, the LODE Act of 1985 (the Organic Act on the Right to Education) established that both public education and private education financing by public funds are cost free. Moreover, this law stated that in both cases it has to be carried out by the same criteria for schooling.

The choice for schooling: some critical issues

As some authors have argued in the last years, the exercise to choose the adequate school by parents is an essential strategy for getting economic resources. That is, it is a kind of a new 'public market', free and without limitations to private agents, with the sole mission of public authorities of redirection to this centres the public incomes collected by taxes (Gewirtz, Ball y Bowe, 1995; Tiana, 2002). Nevertheless, the evidence from the study conducted by the Ombudsman in all Spanish Autonomous Communities seems to confirm the idea that this freedom is far away from promoting competence between schools. Rather, seems to be generating an increasing social

polarization in terms of an enormous disequilibrium in schooling. This is evident taking into account that the right to choose the school it is not reached by all the families in the same way, in accordance with the results obtained also in the experience of Spain and other countries as England and New Zealand. In fact, as we already mentioned, the situation in Spain is specially unequal in some Autonomous Communities where the proportion of 'immigrant' students is higher than in others, such as is the case of the Community of Madrid, Catalonia, or Andalusia (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 3. Proportion of 'immigrant' students in compulsory education by Autonomous Communities, 2001-2002.

Autonomous Community	Percentage of students of immigrant origin
Andalusia	9,26%
Aragon	2,18%
Asturias	0,95%
Balearic Islands	3,21%
Canarias	6,83%
Cantabria	0,95%
Castilla-La Mancha	3,24%
Castilla y Leon	2,73%
Catalonia	21,94%
Extremadura	1,15%
Galicia	1,80%
Madrid	34,57%
Murcia	2,90%
Navarra	1,33%
Basque Country	2,77%
La Rioja	0,76%
<i>Comunidad Valenciana</i> (*)	7,14% (*)
Ceuta y Melilla	3,43%

(*) The data sent by the *Comunidad Valenciana* indicate only the total percentage of foreign students with no specific reference to their zone of origin. For that reason, it is not possible to know the real percentage of immigrant students in this Autonomous Community.

(Source: Spanish Ombudsman Report, 2003)

According to the data presented in Table 3, it can be observed that is in the Autonomous Community of Madrid where there is more than 1/3 of the immigrant students schooling (34, 57%) in Spain, followed by Catalonia (21, 94%). In addition, to a certain distance are Andalusia (9, 26%), Canarias (6, 83%), Castilla-La Mancha (3, 24%), and Balearic Islands (3, 21%).

Participation of parents in schools: Membership of Parents' Associations

Analysing the data offered by the National Institute of Quality and Education of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport (INCE, 1999, 2000, 2002), we can notice that, in general terms, a high proportion of students attending Primary and Secondary education have parents belonging to the associations in their schools (65% and 58%, respectively) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Membership of Parents' Associations (AMPAS) by type of school. Percentage of students, 1999-2000.

		Total	Public schools	Private schools
Primary education	Membership	65	62	72
	Only pay the fee	76	72	83
	Pay the fee and participate	24	28	17
<hr/>				
Secondary education	Membership	58	53	68
	Only pay the fee	85	84	86
	Pay the fee and participate	15	16	14

(Source: INCE, 2002).

However, it is important to point out that in both cases, the great majority of these parents just participate paying the fees, while the real and active participation is rather low in the case of Secondary (15%) and a little superior in the case of Primary schools (24%). Thus, the real participation by parents through the AMPAs is quite low, although there is a considerable difference if we compare Primary and Secondary education. At the same time, the

participation of parents with university studies in this type of Associations is slightly higher in both educational levels (see Table 5).

Table 5. Maximum level of studies of parents that belong to Parents' Associations in Primary and Secondary schools. Percentage of students, 1999-2000 (*).

Educational Level	Maximum level of studies	Total
Primary education	No studies or Primary studies	58
	Baccalaureate or Specific Vocational Training	69
	University studies	76
	Total	65
Secondary education	No studies or Primary studies	48
	Baccalaureate or Specific Vocational Training	61
	University studies	69
	Total	58

(*) The data were obtained through parents' answers of students who were in the last course of primary compulsory education (6^o primary) in 1999 and the last course of secondary compulsory education (4^o ESO) in 2000. (Source: INCE, 2002).

Comparing the data from public and private schools, it should be noted that, parents show a higher level of studies in the case of private schools than in public schools; both in primary and secondary centres (see Table 6).

In addition, it is interesting to notice that the percentage of parents with university studies is higher in Secondary education than in Primary education. Nevertheless, it is worthy of mention that in the private schools the percentage is considerably greater than in the public ones (28% and 14%, respectively).

Table 6. Percentage of parents of Primary & Secondary school children by their maximum level of studies

Level of studies	Public schools		Private schools		Global	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
No studies or incomplete Primary studies	28	23.5	11.5	13	19.8	18.2
Complete Primary	41	41	31	30.5	36	35.7

studies						
Baccalaureate or Specific Vocational Training	21	21.5	32.5	28.5	26.8	25
University studies	9	14	25	28	17	21

(Source: Adapted from INCE, 1999).

Development of parental participation in private and public schools

When comparing the data obtained in different studies conducted by the INCE (1999, 2000) about parents participation in public and private schools some interesting results emerge. One of them is the difference found between the distribution in the two educational levels and type of schools analyzed in these studies with respect their participation. As it can be observed in Table 4, the membership of parents associations is higher in the case of private schools than in the case of public ones. However, at the same time, parents belonging to these associations take part more in Primary education (24%) than in Secondary education (15%). Thus, families of children in Primary education not just pay the fees but instead they participate in an active way and tend to be a dynamic component in the control and management of the schools.

Another remarkable result, inferred from the data obtained in these studies (INCE 1999, 2000), is related with some important changes that have been produced between the two different educational levels in the last years. That is, if we compare the data obtained in 1995 and 1999 for Primary education, we found at least two tendencies: parental membership to parents associations is higher in 1999 (65%) than in 1995 (57%), but at the same time there is a lower active participation in schools, descending from 56% to 24% in these years. A different pattern can be observed in Secondary education. Parental participation in secondary schools show a slightly decreasing tendency when comparing the data from 1997 to 2000, descending from 62% to 58% in the belonging dimension, and from 17% to 15% in the participation one in these years. Finally, data between the different educational levels from 1995 and 1997 showed a higher proportion of parental membership to these associations

in Secondary centres than in the Primary ones, while this tendency seems to be the opposite in 1999 and 2000.

Parents' participation in the School Council

In the last years, the level of participation and collaboration of parents in schools through Parents' Associations and the School Council seems to follow a decreasing tendency both in secondary and primary education. Along with these data, there is a very low level on participation of parents in the elections for the School Council, which is the maximum body of representation and participation for the different members of the educational community in the public centres.

The Organic Act on the Right to Education (LODE) of 1985 regulates that the members of the educative community may take part in the control and management of schools, through the School Council. Thus, this is the highest-ranking governing body by which the educational community can participate. In the School Council, parents and pupils are represented. In public schools, in both Primary and Secondary Education, the following members compose this body: the Headteacher, who chairs it; the Head of Studies; one Municipal Council member; and a number of representatives of teachers, pupils, parents, and administrative and service staff. This number is established in each Autonomous Community.

Some of the main functions of the School Council are the following: sets out the guidelines for formulating the '*educational project*' of the centre; adopts a set of norms and dispositions in order to regulate the organization and functioning of the school; take decisions on admission policy; recommends the renovation of school facilities and equipment and monitors their upkeep; adopts and assesses the establishment's annual programming and complementary and extracurricular activities; analyses and assesses the general functioning of the centre and the evolution of academic performance of the school.

Although the functions established by this Act are very extensive and relevant, the fact is that it seems to be a general concern and a critical attitude on the part of the parents with respect to what they really can do in the schools.

In addition, this seems to be a general opinion -at least between many of the parents who participate more actively in these matters- with respect to the little level of action in the processes of decision-making on some of the important tasks and educative proposals related to the centre. For instance, they believe that their participation is usually focused on economic tasks, activities related to the supervision of infrastructure aspects of the school, or in the collaboration of specific additional or extra-curricular activities such as celebrations or artistic and leisure activities. And having, therefore, a lower participation in issues such as the discussion of pedagogical themes and educative proposals, or in the design, management and evaluation of distinct types of educational activities and projects carried out in the schools. It is worthy to mention here that most of the proposals that are discussed in the School Council are usually those that the teachers propose, leaving to the parents a more informative role instead of a more collaborative one. Other issues such as the lack of communication between families and teachers, the lack of information from the parents with respect to the norms and functioning of the School Council and to the different educative Acts, or even sometimes with respect their own rights, are also some of the important problems that have to be faced out in order to achieve a greater level of compromise and participation. These facts have caused that some groups of parents question themselves respect which are the real functions of this type of participation in the government of schools and what can be made in order to improve it. In general terms, what it seems to be clear from this discussion is the idea with respect to the great importance that social participation of families may have in the educative process of their children. For this reason, promoting a culture of participation would have to become an important educational goal if we want our children to live and to participate in a democratic society.

Participation of parents of 'immigrants' students.

In recent years, a number of important studies conducted in different Autonomous Communities (Informe del Defensor del Pueblo, 2003, Cuesta Azofra, 2000; Colectivo IOE, 1996, 2002) have shown significant data concerning the 'immigrant' population establish in Spain and their participation

in schools. In general, the teachers of primary and secondary schools from all over the country tend to share the idea of the lower participation by parents of 'immigrant' students compared with the participation of Spanish ones. What it is more interesting is the explanation offered by teachers: the scarce mastery of the language, a low participation in the educational process of their children, and their low educational level of studies. If we attend to the results offer by the study of the Spanish Ombudsman (2003), we find that one of the principal factors that explain this low participation is the one related to the scarce mastery of the language. By contrast, with respect the other two reasons maintained by teachers, the study of the Ombudsman shows that the educational level of immigrant parents, especially those who come from Latin-American and East European countries tend to be higher than the level of the Spanish parents. In addition, it seems that their implication in the educational process is very similar between them.

3. The attitudes and expectations of parents about schools.

Parental opinions about schools.

Other topics included in the study carried out by the Spanish Ombudsman (2003), are related with the parental opinions about those schools, which their children actually attend, and the reasons held by them regarding the choice for schooling. In the first case, the data obtained show that the majority of parents, being Spanish or 'immigrants', express a high level of satisfaction with schools' performance in which their children attend to. As it can be observed in Table 7, 61, 7% of the Spanish families and the 64, 5% of 'immigrant' families selected the two positive alternatives. On the contrary, only a scarce proportion of parents expressed the lowest levels of satisfaction.

Table 7. Percentage of parental level of school satisfaction.

Level of satisfaction	Spaniards	Immigrants
Bad or very bad	2,5	1,5
Normal	35,8	34

Good or very good	61,7	64,5
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(Source: Spanish Ombudsman Report, 2003)

In order to evaluate to what extent the parental level of satisfaction was influenced by different type of factors (i.e. the number of ‘immigrant’ students attending the same school) a special question was designed in the study carried out by the Spanish Ombudsman (2003). As Table 8 illustrates, the responses given by parents taking into account the number of ‘immigrant’ students concentrated in the schools their children attend, show a different pattern of satisfaction. Spanish families which children are schooling with less than 10% of children with a distinct ethnic origin, tend to be more satisfied (63,8%) than those families whose children are schooling with more than 30% of ‘immigrant’ children. In this case, only the 47, 6% consider that the school is good or very good.

Table 8. Percentage of parental level of school satisfaction regarding the number of ‘immigrant’ students attending the same school.

Level of satisfaction	Spaniards			Immigrants		
	Less than 10%	Between 10 and 30%	More than 30%	Less than 10%	Between 10 and 30%	More than 30%
Bad or very bad	2,5%	2,6%	2,7%	2,2%	0,5%	1,5%
Normal	33,8%	43,8%	49,7%	28,7%	38,8%	34%
Good or very good	63,8%	53,6%	47,6%	69%	60,6%	64,4%

(Source: Spanish Ombudsman Report, 2003)

Nevertheless, a different pattern emerges in the case of ‘immigrant’ families. It does not seem that they were influenced by the distinct concentration of students in the schools. Rather, they express a high level of satisfaction with those schools in which their children attend, independently of this factor. Another interesting data is found when comparing the level of satisfaction by distinct educational levels. In this case, there is a significant difference between the opinions hold by parents if their children go to Primary education or to

Secondary education. As it can be expected, parents expressed higher levels of satisfaction for Primary schools than for Secondary ones.

Table 9. Percentage of parents' reasons for selecting a school.

Reasons	Spaniards	Immigrants
<i>Religious education</i>	4,6	2,6
<i>Students receive a good preparation</i>	29,2	19,8
<i>School Prestige</i>	7,2	5,4
<i>Schooling all type of students (diversity of students)</i>	2,9	13,3
<i>For being close to home</i>	41,9	46,6
<i>Others</i>	14,3	12,2

(Source: Spanish Ombudsman Report, 2003)

With respect the main reasons for schooling their children, the most mentioned criteria by parents, at least in the schools included in this study, was the proximity of home (see Table 9). This reason is shared (in first place) for both Spanish (41, 9%) and 'immigrant' families (46, 6%), being the preparation received in schools the second motive (29, 2%, 19, 8%, respectively). It is very significant how the option '*diversity of students*' obtain a very different acceptance between Spanish families (2, 9%) and 'immigrant' ones (13%). This data seems to confirm the idea that, for Spanish families, cultural diversity is not an important reason for schooling their children.

4. Students' choices and values.

There is evidence on the level of satisfaction of students and parents in a research of the Spanish Ombudsman (2003), with a sample represented by all Autonomous Communities in Primary and Secondary education.

The general level of satisfaction expressed by the students concerning the school they attend is very high. About 70% of Spanish children say that they feel 'enough' or 'much' satisfied with their school, and a similar proportion is found in the responses of 'immigrant' children (71%). Regarding the contents and the process of learning, 80% of Spanish children stated, that they were 'enough' or 'much' satisfied. Once again, the immigrants showed the same

tendency (85%). In relation to the perception they have about the functioning and management of the school, the main difference it is observed between the two educational levels. While in Primary education, 82% of the students were satisfied with the school functioning, in Secondary education this agreement only represents 53%. In addition, in Secondary education the 'immigrant' students were more satisfied with their schools (65%).

The vast majority of the students showed a high degree of satisfaction respect their learning in their school, and only around 5% showed a high degree of dissatisfaction. The majority of children, either Spanish or 'immigrants' said that their school centre liked them very much (just 10% answered in a negative way). However, Primary education children expressed more agreement with their centre and what they learn than Secondary ones. The evaluation given by girls, with respect to different aspects from the functioning of their school, was always better than the opinion of the boys. A relevant finding of this study is that the students who attend schools with more of 30% of 'immigrant' students are more satisfied with its centre than the rest of schools with a lower proportion of 'immigrant' children.

Respect the general motivation for studying and the perception of relevance of education in children's life, there is no empirical information. Nevertheless, in a broad sense it can be said that Primary school children do not have a specific metacognitive knowledge about their learning processes and interests, so it is difficult for them to reflect on this matters. That is, they learn what adults (parents and teachers, and society) decided. Concerning Secondary school students, there is an enormous variability with respect to their academic interests and motivation, depending on different aspects such as their sociocultural origin, family's expectancies, and their peer-group.

Inasmuch as the students' absenteeism, as we know, there is no reliable studies with national coverage since this kind of data generally is processed by the educational authorities from the diverse Autonomous Communities. In general, it can be said that students' absenteeism is usually more common in the last courses of Secondary education, as an acting-out way to jobs insertion, with an extremely low possibility of success. These students usually return to the school for attending to intermediate vocational training with a specific professional objective. Complementary with this idea are the results obtained in

the opinion pool carried out by the Sociological Research Centre about adolescents' habits (CIS, 2003). For example, in relation with their last three months, only 3, 4 % of the teenagers said that they tend to be "bored", whereas 26, 8% of them mentioned that they fell "funny or happy", and 15% fell "stressed". This percentage not only represents being boring in the school, but it is useful to compose a global view of their feelings and emotional states in the Spanish adolescents population.

5. Diversity in the structure of School Systems and Influence over the curriculum.

A general view of the present Educative System in Spain can be drawn on the basis of a double axis (De Puelles, 1996, 2002). One axis is defined by the responsibility of the State in designing and regulating the educative system as well as the responsibility of the Autonomous Communities in the economic financing, and the specification of the educative system to each territorial zone of the state. Although the implication of the Autonomous Communities in the curriculum design is important, it is less relevant with respect to the structure of the educational matters and topics. In addition, in all those Autonomous Communities that have a specific language (Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia, *Comunidad Valenciana*, Balearic Islands, and Navarra) there is an extra concern since it is necessary to incorporate the linguistic competence in both languages (Spanish and the specific language: Catalan, Euskera and Galego) into the objectives of core curriculum.

The second axis is derived from the existence of three networks: public centres, private centres, and private centres with total public founding (*centros concertados*). As we have mentioned before, the public schools are basically financed by the Autonomous Communities, and partially founded by the City Councils. Moreover, there is an important tradition regarding the participation of teachers in the general management of the centre, and in the elaboration of the educative school project. During the decade of 1980, an important increase in the number of centres of Primary education took place. Later, during the decade of 1990 the same happened with respect to the schools of Secondary

education. These Public schools represent approximately 63% of the total of the centres of compulsory education.

As we already mentioned, the Private centres financed with public funds, *centros concertados*, usually are property of diverse sectors of Catholic Church, such as religious confessions, as well as the own Bishopsrics (88% of total of *centros concertados*). The rest of them are property of individuals or associations, but is rare that belong to corporations. The schools that are property of parents or/and teachers associations, only represent a very small proportion (less of 1%). It is supposed that the *centros concertados* must open their places to any family, free of charge, and with the same selection criteria than the public ones- but, as we stated before, this is a main declaration that not always goes with the real functioning of the selection process. In Spain, these types of schools represent more than 25%. However, this percentage is higher (around 50%) in some communities like Basque Country, Catalonia and Madrid, and smaller in communities like Extremadura or Andalusia.

Finally, there are a small and reduced percentage of totally private centres, generally property of business groups or private corporations with links with new private universities, as well as to catholic groups with immense influence in the Spanish Church. In the last years, there is clear evidence in the augment respect to the demand of the *Centros concertados*. This is mainly due to two processes. On the one hand, some regional governments –with neoliberal policies- have preferred to increase the percentage of financing to this type of schools. Usually, this kind of centres receive a greater demand (sometimes higher to the double of the supply), whereas the public schools is decreasing its demand. Among the factors that could explain this situation, there is one clearly noticeable: only one of five ‘immigrant’ students is registered in these schools. This means that the public centres gather near 80% of these children. In addition, the *centros concertados* have different options, and procedures-direct and indirect- to expel the students who move away of the profile of the average students, in terms of qualifications or behaviour. On the other hand, numerous schools that previously were totally private, now have asked for public founding of the State- Autonomous Communities, and usually obtain this founding. However, in many *centros concertados* there is a reaction in the line of the demand of more financing from public authorities. For this

reason, the criteria of 'total free of charge' for parents become a fuzzy concept, since the extra academic or out-of schedule rates by lunch service and other activities (dressing, school material, books, travel or sport additional activities and soon) have increased in the last years, although it is supposed that they are not obligatory. It is important to stand out that the attendance to these private schools has been perceived for many low or middle/low income families as an element of familiar status or social climb. In this sense, it continues being an effect of higher perception of his quality that the few education research findings on this aspect, did not find.

Another data of this fact is that this *centros concertados* are appraised clearly in the Autonomous Communities with a greater level of rent.

Legal and constitutional possibilities for foundation of schools

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognizes the right to education as a fundamental right that State must guarantee. The 27.2 article regulates the right of parents to choice the moral/religious formation for the children. This Organic Law of Right to Education (LODE, 1985) provides a special regulation of the right to choose the schools. Each Autonomous Community provides specific regulations that must be applied in their territories, by the way of specific schooling commissions who are directed by education inspectors. In any case, all Autonomous Communities must apply the following general criteria in case of more demand than supply in the public schools as well as in the *centros concertados*: level economical rent/or intake, proximity to familiar home or parent's job, simultaneous attendance of brothers/sisters at this school. The entire schools must apply an additional valuation of a fourth parameter, but in general, this value is only less than 10% of the total value. Nevertheless, in many cases, especially in the *centros concertados* is central. For instance, in many of these centres, this fourth criterion weighs the previous attendance of the children to the non-compulsory preschool in the same school. The new Organic Law of Quality in Education (2003) maintains the possibility of founding by public authorities all the 3-6 years old preschool period (without the compulsory dimension). For this reason, the main pressure of the demand is moving from the first compulsory grade (at 6 years old) to the first preschool

grade (3 years old). In any case, there are significant differences between the coverage of this non-compulsory level at this time in this 3-years-old level between the different Autonomous Communities (from nearly 100% to 50% at 3 years). In the next two grade levels (four and five) the educational system supply 100% of demand, but obviously not always in the same schools that parents demand.

The foundation of a new school is a right that is regulated in 1985 Law-Act in the 21st article that that it determines the following rules:

‘21.1 All physical or legal people of private character and Spanish nationality have freedom for the creation and direction of private teaching institutions, within the respect to the Constitution and the settled down thing in the present Law.

21.2 They could not be titular of private centres: a) the people who serve in the state educative administration, autonomic or local, b) who have criminal records or antecedents of lack of responsibility (‘dolo’), c) the physical or legal people specifically deprived of the exercise of this right by firm judicial sentence, d) the legal people in whom the people including in the previous sections carry out positions governing or are titular of 20% or more of the share capital.’

The public schools only could be found by the public authorities (local authorities by agreement of autonomous educational authorities).

Article 27 of Spanish Constitution.

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Freedom of instruction is recognized.
- (2) The objective of education shall be the full development of the human personality in respect for the democratic principles of coexistence and the basic rights and liberties.
- (3) The public authorities guarantee the rights which will assist parents to have their children receive the religious and moral formation which is in keeping with their own convictions.
- (4) Basic education is obligatory and free.
- (5) The public authorities guarantee the right of all to education through a general educational program, with the effective participation of all the sectors

affected, and the creation of educational centres.

(6) The freedom of physical and legal persons to create educational centres, which respect constitutional principles, is recognized.

(7) Teachers, parents, and in some cases, the students, shall participate in the control and management of all centres maintained by the Administration with public funds, under the terms established by law.

(8) The public authorities shall inspect and standardize the educational system so as to guarantee compliance with the laws.

(9) The public authorities shall help the teaching centres which meet the requirements established by law.

(10) The autonomy of universities is recognized under the terms established by law.

Civil society and school curriculum.

The Organic Act to Right to Education (LODE 1985) also establishes the principle of participation of parents and teachers in the control and management of centres which have a public founding (i.e., public and *centros concertados*) by the way of 'school council'. In the next Organic Law from 1991 (LOGSE) it was defined that each school council must elaborated its own 'educational project' on the basis of the common core curriculum of the State with the specific additions of contents (or specific language competences in bilingual communities as Catalonia, Basque Country, Navarra, Valencia, Balearic Islands and Galicia).

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