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Research

Perceived efficacy and student profiles in the university Service-Learning

Eficacia percibida y perfiles estudiantiles en el Aprendizaje-Servicio universitario

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Abstract

The Service-Learning methodology at the university offers professional training related to the development of formative, academic and civic competencies linked to university studies. Its implementation makes it possible to bring the university closer to society by providing a service to the community. However, it is necessary to establish strategies in its application, to enhance the contributions that this methodology can offer to the educational field. In this context, the aim of this paper is to assess the effectiveness of the Service-Learning methodology from the perception of university students, analysing the existing differences between the sociodemographic variables: studies, gender, age, course and ownership of the centre, identifying, in turn, student profiles that show the level of applicability of University Service-Learning. Through a non-experimental exploratory study, information was collected from a total of 304 students from public and private universities in Spain. Within the Service-Learning methodology, three dimensions of the applied instrument (Formative, Learning and Service) are analysed. The results obtained suggest a greater approach to service in entailment with the learning obtained at the university.

The differential studies show the lack of recognition in the students of the bachelor's degree in social education, as well as the scarce response of the experience to their formative and academic expectations. Women show greater reflection and social sensitivity than men. Regarding the ownership of the centre, students from private universities show a greater sense of service development. In addition, three student profiles are obtained with a variety of characteristics regarding the way in which the methodology is applied. The study concludes with the detection of the need to generate strategies to improve the Service-Learning methodology, with emphasis on favouring a more conscious learning about the competencies acquired in university degrees.

Keywords: service learning, high education, training, learning, community services, civics, education methodologies.

Resumen

La metodología Aprendizaje-Servicio en la universidad ofrece una formación profesional ligada al desarrollo de competencias formativas, académicas y cívicas vinculadas a los estudios universitarios. Su implementación permite acercar la universidad a la sociedad mediante la prestación de un servicio a la comunidad. Sin embargo, es preciso establecer estrategias en su aplicación, con la finalidad de potenciar las aportaciones que esta metodología puede ofrecer al ámbito educativo. En este contexto, el objetivo del presente trabajo es valorar la eficacia de la metodología Aprendizaje-Servicio desde la percepción del estudiantado universitario, analizando las diferencias existentes entre las variables sociodemográficas: estudios, género, edad, curso y titularidad del centro, identificando, a su vez, perfiles de estudiantes que muestren el nivel de aplicabilidad del Aprendizaje-Servicio Universitario. A través de un estudio no experimental de carácter exploratorio, se recoge información de un total de 304 estudiantes de universidades públicas y privadas del territorio español. Dentro de la metodología Aprendizaje-Servicio se analizan tres dimensiones que recoge el instrumento aplicado (Formativa, Aprendizaje y Servicio). Los resultados obtenidos sugieren un mayor acercamiento al servicio en vinculación con el aprendizaje obtenido en la universidad. Los estudios diferenciales muestran la falta de reconocimiento en los estudiantes del Grado en Educación Social, así como la escasa respuesta de la experiencia a sus expectativas formativas y académicas. Las mujeres presentan mayor reflexión y sensibilidad social que los hombres. Y respecto a la titularidad del centro, los estudiantes de universidades privadas manifiestan un mayor sentido del desarrollo del servicio. Además, se obtienen tres perfiles de estudiantes con variedad de características en torno a la forma de aplicación de la metodología. El estudio concluye con la detección de la necesidad de generar estrategias que mejoren la metodología Aprendizaje-Servicio,

poniendo énfasis en favorecer un aprendizaje más consciente sobre las competencias que se adquieren en los grados universitarios.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje-servicio, educación superior, formación, aprendizaje, servicios a la comunidad, educación cívica, metodologías educativas.

Introduction

Service-Learning (SL) is an educational methodology based on learning through action, cooperation with the community and reflection on the process itself (Dafonte-Gómez, 2023). These elements are merged into a single project with the purpose of addressing and improving the needs of the environment. SL projects emerge in response to real needs, seeking to effect significant improvements. This approach leads to the acquisition of both transversal and basic competencies by the participating students, generating an increase in their social commitment. Likewise, these projects provide a professional training pathway by connecting students with the reality of the workplace and encouraging them to resolve situations in the professional sphere (Belando-Montoro et al., 2022). From this perspective, the SL methodology has been used in the university environment to achieve learning that goes beyond those associated with strictly academic competencies, such as achieving civic competencies by providing a service to the community. At the same time, Service-Learning at the University [SL(U)] involves learning practices related to the students' professional future (Gómezescobar & Simón-Medina, 2022; Ruiz-Montero et al., 2022). These qualities have motivated processes of institutionalisation of SL(U) which, in European universities, have developed unevenly (Meijs et al., 2019). This global concern led Lough and Toms (2018) to conduct a study to assess the strategic trajectories needed for growth in the field. The researchers identified several priorities, including sharing best practices and building a 'knowledge community', as well as greater engagement and preparedness of both students and host communities.

On the other hand, other authors (Belando-Montoro et al., 2022; Blanch et al., 2020; Duque, 2018; Gil-Gómez et al., 2016; Ibarrola & Artuch, 2016; López-Fernández & Benítez-Porres, 2018; Ruiz-Corbella & García-Gutiérrez, 2020; Pérez-Pérez et al, 2019; Ruiz-Montero et al., 2022; Soneira, 2019) highlight that SL(U) favours the development of fundamental competencies and qualities in professional practice, as

well as other benefits directed towards the person him/herself and his/her commitment to social justice. León-Carrascosa et al. (2020) present the contributions of SL(U), collected by the aforementioned authors, classifying them into three dimensions: *Formative*, *Learning* and *Service*, placing within each one the elements that would correspond to it, bearing in mind the interrelation that could exist between them due to the multidimensionality of the methodology itself.

The *Formative* dimension would include the consolidation of academic knowledge, the acquisition of professional competencies and practical knowledge, the development of self-training and the capacity to learn in new contexts. In the *Learning* dimension, the acquisition of greater social responsibility and personal growth, communicative competence, the practice of professional tools and the development of links with the profession, as well as the promotion of educational and civic commitment to the construction of the common good would be highlighted. In the *Service* dimension, it is worth highlighting the reinforcement of the capacity for initiative in decision-making and the increase in commitment to the services with which the students are linked, as well as the strengthening of their critical thinking, the improvement of their capacity for organisation and planning, together with the increase in participation in evaluation processes.

At the same time, the scientific literature has addressed different perspectives of SL(U), thus contributing to a better understanding of its conceptual aspects as well as its evaluation and impact. Thus, for example, the application of SL(U) has been the subject of research that has emphasised its contribution to linking theory and practice (Resch & Schrittesser, 2023). In the case of Spain, there is a predominance of work involving students from educational degrees; Early Childhood Education Teacher (Blanch et al., 2020), Primary Education Teacher whose service is carried out in Primary Education centres (Mayor & Rodríguez, 2015), at university (Suárez-Lantarón, 2023), and in different collectives of minors (Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2020; Gómezescobar & Simón-Medina, 2022; Soneira, 2019), Bachelor's Degree in Social Education (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2020; Ruiz-Corbella & García-Gutiérrez, 2020), Bachelor's Degree in Pedagogy (Sotelino et al., 2019), Degree in Early Childhood Education, Degree in Primary Education and Degree in Pedagogy (Carrica-Ochoa, 2017), Degree in Early Childhood and Primary Education and Official Master's Degree in Special Education (Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2019) and Degree

in Primary Education and Degree in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences (García-Rico et al., 2023).

In these studies, the results following experiences in SL(U) activities, mostly linked to one of the subjects, are somewhat disparate in terms of competencies developed and evaluations made by the participants. Thus, in the case of the study by Chiva-Bartoll et al. (2020), it was shown that the systematic reflection provided by ApS(U) produces meaningful and applicable learning in real contexts. This linking of theory and practice was also revealed in the studies by Mayor and Rodríguez (2015) and Suárez-Lantarón (2023).

Other studies compare the results of students who participate in these experiences with those who choose to carry out other types of work within the same subject. This is the case of the study by Sotelino et al. (2019), linked to a subject of the bachelor's degree in Pedagogy. In the analysis carried out to compare the acquisition of civic-social competencies in both groups, it was found that the students who had taken part in this experience obtained slightly higher averages. This type of competence has also been assessed in other experiences. Blanch et al. (2020) found that participants showed a significant improvement in competencies related to cooperation, participation, social responsibility, perseverance and effort. García-Rico et al. (2023) also reveal that students highlight greater social awareness and consciousness, as well as ethical demands towards the recipients of the service. Participants in Soneira's (2019) study highlighted the development of critical citizenship, learning to diagnose problems and proposing knowledge-based solutions. In Ruiz-Corbella and García-Gutiérrez's (2020) project, the most valued objective was civic engagement and intercultural dialogue. However, similar results have been found in experiences that have been carried out in other degrees. One of them is the one carried out in the Faculty of Psychology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona with Romani communities and public schools. Among the contributions highlighted by the students is the acquisition of competencies related to the ethical and social dimension, such as the need for socio-educational intervention or awareness of diversity (Lalueza et al., 2016).

Rodríguez-Izquierdo (2020) and Hervás-Torres et al. (2022) found that the SL(U) methodology influences students' academic engagement. In this sense, Martínez Lozano et al. (2018) highlight the importance of influencing competencies such as the capacity for initiative and procedural evaluation for this engagement to be effective.

On the other hand, there are studies on the implementation of SL(U), such as those described below, which establish significant differences depending on some of the variables already mentioned, such as the *studies* taken by participants in projects based on this methodology or others such as *gender*, *age*, *year* and even the university in which they are enrolled.

With regard to the gender and age variables, studies such as that of Ruiz-Montero et al. (2022), which aims to examine the perception of professional competence of students studying Physical Activity and Sport (PAS) and participating in SL(U) projects, show the existing relationships between both factors, as well as with the typology of the recipient groups. Women participants in this study show a greater relationship with groups with functional and social diversity, while men show a greater capacity to relate to groups with cultural and/or religious diversity. Regarding the predominant age of the participants, it is in the range between 21 and 24 years, followed by a second range of <20 years. Other studies such as that of Solomon and Tan (2021) also highlight the determinant role of age and gender in the development of experiential learning in SL(U), especially in first- and second-year undergraduate students, as well as in those who have had no previous experience in this methodology. Studies such as that of Lacalle and Pujol (2019) highlight the participation and involvement of women in the SL(U) project carried out, as well as a greater willingness to express their impressions of the experience, even considering a specific approach to this issue from the perspective of gender studies in future SL(U) experiences.

Focusing on the *course* variable, works such as those by Deeley (2015) argue that the application of SL(U) in more advanced courses provides greater preparation for their professional future. On the other hand, works such as that of McIlrath (2012) show how the implementation of the SL(U) methodology in the first year of the degree, despite the fact that this condition requires greater teaching and institutional support, allows contextualising and situating the learning from the beginning of the studies, thus achieving more significant and, therefore, deeper learning for the following years. In the work of Mella (2019), students in the first two years of undergraduate studies show greater satisfaction with their training and general self-efficacy, together with lower levels of uncertainty about the future. On the other hand, Bringle et al. (2010) consider that the implementation of this methodology in the first year increases students' motivation to enrol in subsequent years.

With regard to the *ownership of* the institution, we find universities and private centres in Spain belonging to the Church, such as those of the Society of Jesus, in which SL(U) is already part of their institutional identity. In these centres, the project "Strengthening Service-Learning at Jesuit Universities in Spain" was launched in 2020 with the aim of institutionalising this methodology in their network¹, through the joint implementation of activities, training and the development of tools for measuring the impact of the methodology. In addition, these institutions already incorporate compulsory subjects based on SL such as "Analysis and Social Action" or the SL subject "Interpersonal Communication", both taught at the Institut Químic de Sarrià (IQS) of the Universitat Ramon Llull, or the completion, also compulsory, of an SL final project, as is the case at the Faculty of Economics and Business Studies of the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas.

On the other hand, in public universities in Spain, we find a growing implementation of SL(U) as a methodology in a wide range of subjects and with notable efficiency in terms of the acquisition of competencies, although, at present, it is not compulsory to take subjects based on this methodology in the syllabus. A good example of the growing development of SL(U) is the data that the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (2023) shows on its website, where in the last 10 years, the number of subjects that use SL(U) has increased from 13 to 42 and the number of participating students has risen from 181 to 518.

Based on the above, this study aims to assess the effectiveness of the SL(U) methodology from the students' perception, analysing the differences according to the different socio-demographic variables referred to (studies, gender, age, year and title), identifying, in turn, student profiles that show the level of applicability of this methodology, which gives it an added value over other studies aimed at a single centre and/or a single degree.

Method

The present study falls within the quantitative methodologies, specifically, it follows a non-experimental design (ex-post-facto) of an exploratory and descriptive nature.

¹ The network of centres is made up of the Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Universidad de Deusto, Esade, Universidad Loyola Andalucía, Institut Químic de Sarrià (IQS, and within it its Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management), Centro Universitario Sagrada Familia (SAFA) and Instituto Nevares de Empresarios Agrarios (INEA).

Sample

The study population is made up of undergraduate university students in Spain who have participated in innovation projects based on the SL(U) methodology. The type of sampling used was incidental, with a sample of 304 students. 66.8% belonged to public centres and 33.2% to private centres. Most of the participants belonged to the area of knowledge of Social Sciences (80.3%), with 57.9% in first grade, 13.5% in second grade, 18.1% in third grade and 10.5% in fourth grade. The socio-demographic data are made up of 82.6% women and 17.4% men, of whom 59.9% are aged 20 years or younger and 44.1% are aged 21 years or older.

Instrument

The measurement instrument that evaluates the Service-Learning methodology designed by León-Carrascosa et al. (2020) was used. This questionnaire consists of 29 items, with Likert scale responses, with 1 being not at all, almost not at all, and 5 totally, very much. The use of this instrument enriches the analysis and research on the evaluation of educational programmes based on the SL methodology. It focuses on three key areas of intervention (Formative, Learning and Service) experienced by the students, thus addressing a gap in the direct measurement of these aspects by the protagonists, as indicated by the authors themselves. In addition, the quality of the instrument is highlighted, supported by construct validation and verification of the dimensional structure (Table I provides details of the dimensions and their respective items).

After obtaining the sample data, reliability was studied to verify the consistency and stability of the measurements over time and in various situations. The results were excellent, reaching a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.943, above 0.9, as suggested by George and Mallery (2003). The high internal consistency between items indicates that the measures are reliable and that the instrument is appropriate for measuring the study variable in the sample analysed.

TABLE I. Descriptive analysis of dimensions and items with means and standard deviations

Dimensions	Items	Mean	Typ. dev.
	The service is related to the curricular contents of my future profession.	4,14	,924
	2. The service is linked to learning at university.	4,02	,844
Formative	3. The learning I have achieved is useful for my training as a professional.		,806
	4. The learning I have achieved is useful for my personal development.	4,48	,792
	5. I have gained practical knowledge through experience.	4,32	,904
	6. I have developed the ability to learn in new contexts.	4,22	,899
	7. I consider that I have acquired greater responsibility for my professional performance.	4,23	,871
	8. I have grown personally during the service.	4,18	,886
	9. I have developed the ability to organise and plan my time.	3,81	1,024
	10. The Service-Learning methodology has helped me to obtain tools for my professional future.	4,17	,907
	11. The experience has provided me with more social reflection linked to my future professional practice.	4,30	,889
Learning	12. I have shared reflections with different people on the practice of service-learning.	3,93	1,125
	13. Teamwork has made it easier for me to create knowledge networks.	3,81	,990
	14. My communication skills have improved.	3,99	,919
	15. I understand the meaning of service performed as a help to others.	4,39	,745
	16. I have been aware of the need to link the reality of society with the university.	4,35	,739
	17. The experience has increased my social sensitivity.	4,31	,830
	18. When necessary, I have made decisions for the smooth running of the service.	3,93	,891
Service	19. I have taken the initiative to put forward different points of view to organise the sessions.	3,78	1,077
Service	20. Overall, the service (project, programme) has met my expectations.	4,25	,907
	21. My service has responded to the needs of the institution/entity where the service is performed.	4,17	,918

(Continued)

TABLE I. Descriptive analysis of dimensions and items with means and standard deviations (Continued)

Dimensions	Items	Mean	Typ. dev.
	22. I have felt committed to the project.	4,41	,843
	23. I have carried out activities according to the needs of the project participants.	4,18	,957
	24. The distribution of tasks has been adequate.	3,99	,946
	25. The project has been evaluated throughout its process.	3,88	1,010
Service	26. My participation has been recognised.	4,14	1,049
	27. I have participated in the organisation and development of the project.	4,16	,971
	28. I have participated in the coordination of activities during the service.	3,88	1,173
	29. My participation has responded satisfactorily to the needs of the institution/entity where the service is performed.	4,33	,839

Source: compiled by the authors.

Procedure

For the collection of information, contact was made by e-mail with different heads of innovation projects located in directories of SL(U) knowledge networks, as well as offices created for their promotion in university centres. In this e-mail, the objective of the study was explained, in addition to guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. Access to the questionnaire was provided through the Google Forms application and the invitation to be disseminated to students participating in projects with SL(U) methodology.

Results

Descriptive analyses

The presentation of the results will be organised according to the dimensions and items of the instrument used to assess the applicability of the SL(U) methodology, which corresponds to the three key areas of intervention defined in dimensions (*Formative*, *Learning* and *Service*). In this sense, the descriptive studies of the items, taking the students, make it possible to assess the strengths and weaknesses in the development of educational experiences through the SL(U) methodology. Thus, the students present averages above 4 in all the dimensions evaluated, but slightly lower in the characteristics of the Service dimension shown below.

In the *formative* dimension, high and homogeneous evaluations were found in the learning obtained in relation to professional and personal training (items 3 and 4, respectively). However, the results drop to around 4 in item 1, which focuses on relating the part of the service to the curricular content of their future profession and its link with learning at university (item 2).

With regard to the *Learning* dimension, there is an increase in social sensitivity (item 17) and greater social reflection linked to professional practice (item 11). Thus, students understand the meaning of service as part of helping others (item 15) and are more aware of the need to link social reality with learning at university (item 16). On the other hand, lower ratings are obtained in students' perception of their ability to organise and plan time (item 9), the creation of knowledge networks (item 13) and the possibility of sharing reflections on the practice of Service-Learning with others (item 12).

Concerning the development of the *Service* dimension, it is perceived that the students felt committed to carrying out the project (item 22), as well as to responding satisfactorily to the needs of the entity where they carried out the service (item 29). However, in those aspects that are more competency-based after the implementation of the service, more dispersed evaluations were obtained and below the overall average, highlighting the development of the initiative in the organisation of the sessions (item 19), the evaluation of the project throughout its process (item 25) and in the participation in the coordination of activities during the service (item 28).

Differential analysis

To carry out the differential studies, we continued taking the items of the instrument, based on the dimensions that make it up, to analyse the existence of significant differences according to *studies*, *gender*, *age*, *year of study* and university *status*. To this end, the following tests are used: Student's t-test and one-factor ANOVA (both for independent groups). A 95% confidence interval is used, leaving a 5% margin of error, i.e. an alpha of 0.05 (p<0.05). Similarly, the effect size is calculated to determine the significance of the inferential results. For this, Cohen's *d-test* (Cohen, 1992) was used for differences with two categories (0.2: small effect; 0.5: moderate effect; 0.8: large effect) and the ETA Squared (η 2) test (Pardo and Ruiz, 2005) for differences with more than two categories (0.01: small effect; 0.06: medium effect; 0.14: large effect).

Depending on the studies, significant results are obtained in the Formative dimension among students of the bachelor's degree in early childhood education, bachelor's Degree in Primary Education and Other studies on the link between service and learning at university, with students of the bachelor's degree in early childhood education perceiving it with lower scores (0.018; p<0.05, with a medium effect size, $n_2 = 0.07$). Students of the bachelor's Degree in Social Education present lower results in relation to students of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education on the usefulness of learning for their personal training (0.001; p<0.05, with a small effect size, η 2=0.058) and the improvement of the ability to learn in different contexts (0.003; p<0.05, with a small effect size, n2=0.05), with the latter having lower means compared to the group of students of other degrees. Finally, significant differences are observed in the acquisition of practical knowledge (0.000; p<0.05, with a medium effect size, n2=0.10) of the students of the Degree in Social Education with respect to the rest of the categories of the variable studies, the results being lower.

Along the same lines, the *Learning* dimension reveals lower scores in the bachelor's degree in social education studies with respect to the others in the acquisition of responsibility for professional performance (0.008; p<.05, with a small effect size, η 2=0.045) and in personal growth after the experience (0.005; p<.05, with a small effect size, η 2=0.049).

Thus, the results show that students of the bachelor's degree in social education perceive the *Service* performed at a significantly lower level (p<0.05) than students of the bachelor's degrees in early childhood education, Primary Education, Pedagogy and other studies, with effect sizes ranging from small to medium (table II).

TABLE II. Differential analysis of items Service according to studies

	p<0.05	Social Ed.	Children's Education	Primary education	Pedagogy	Other	η²
Item 18	0.002	3.58	3.95	3.94	4.03	4.22	0.05
Item 19	0.005	3.43	3.64	3.80	4.15	4	0.04
Item 20	0.002	3.87	4.46	4.31	4.44	4.32	0.05
Item 21	0.000	3.78	4.36	4.39	4.15	4.13	0.06
Item 22	0.002	4.04	4.49	4.55	4.59	4.42	0.05
Item 23	0.000	3.81	4.03	4.44	4.38	4.15	0.06
Item 25	0.005	3.51	4.10	4.06	3.79	3.88	0.04
Item 26	0.007	3.75	4.15	4.35	4.15	4.23	0.04
Item 29	0.000	3.85	4.59	4.53	4.28	4.40	0.10

Source: compiled by the authors.

Similarly, the results reveal significant differences in the *gender* variable in relation to the *Learning* dimension, on the social reflection acquired after the experience and its link with future professional practice (0.004; p < 0.05) and the increase in greater social sensitivity (0.038; p < 0.05), with women having higher scores in both actions (with a small effect size, d = 0.3 and d = 0.2, respectively).

In terms of school *ownership*, private university students show significantly higher levels of *Service* development than public university students (with small to moderate effect sizes) (Table III).

TABLE III. Differential analysis of items Service according to ownership

	p<0.05	Public university	Private university	Cohen's d
Item 19	0.000	3.56	4.24	0.6
Item 22	0.001	4.30	4.63	0.3
Item 23	0.000	4.04	4.47	0.4
Item 26	0.000	3.99	4.47	0.4
Item 27	0.000	3.98	4.53	0.5
Item 28	0.000	3.65	4.36	0.7
Item 29	0.001	4.22	4.55	0.3

Source: compiled by the authors.

It should be noted that no significant differences were found in any of the dimensions and items of the instrument according to *age* and *grade*.

Cluster analysis

This type of analysis will allow us to identify the different student profiles in relation to the application of the SL(U) methodology. This test starts from an initially unclassified data set, in which the distance between elements is analysed through an iterative process, until each element is assigned to a group. Likewise, within the cluster analysis, the K-means method was used, taking into account the number of clusters set, since if the number is too high, we may encounter interpretation problems, and if it is too low, it may be the result of an inadequate representation of the study sample in the clusters.

For this purpose, the categories established for each variable from 1 to 5 (1, Not at all, and 5, Very much) were used as criteria for analysis in order to establish the clusters of the study.

For this purpose, the first cluster analysis, set to 5 clusters, showed the following results: it was observed that there were hardly any differences between clusters 2 and 4, and clusters 3 and 5. Given these results, the number of clusters was changed to 3 (however, a cluster analysis set to 4 clusters was carried out to see how the variables behaved, and we found two clusters with hardly any differences).

In this way, the analysis yielded adequate results that were easy and meaningful to interpret. Table IV shows the results of the final cluster centres where we are going to study the possible profiles identified that refer to the functioning of the SL(U) methodology from the students' experience.

The results with three clusters were satisfactory and each cluster could be defined more precisely: cluster 1 [High applicability of SL(U)], cluster 3 [Medium applicability of SL(U)] and cluster 2 [Low applicability of SL(U)].

To proceed with the description of the profiles, we will follow the guidelines of Hair et al. (2014) that point out the convenience of assigning a label to each cluster that specifies its nature, and the analysis of the means obtained by the elements of the clusters (either through discriminant analysis or analysis of variance). In our case, the analysis

TABLE IV. Final cluster centres. K-means method. Solution 3 clusters

		Conglomerate			
DIM.	Items	1	2	3	
	Item 1	4.40	3.41	3.95	
	item 2	4.24	3.03	3.96	
F	Item 3	4.78	3.16	4.26	
Formative	Item 4	4.86	3.47	4.17	
	Item 5	4.73	2.84	4.09	
	Item 6	4.64	2.84	3.96	
	Item 7	4.62	2.81	4.03	
	Item 8	4.59	2.88	3.92	
	Item 9	4.20	2.47	3.57	
	Item 10	4.58	2.88	3.90	
	Item 11	4.73	3.09	3.95	
Learning	Item 12	4.38	3.03	3.48	
	Item 13	4.14	2.78	3.59	
	Item 14	4.36	2.75	3.78	
	Item 15	4.70	3.50	4.15	
	Item 16	4.56	3.72	4.21	
	Item 17	4.64	3.66	3.97	
	Item 18	4.35	2.78	3.59	
	Item 19	4.20	2.47	3.50	
	Item 20	4.69	2.94	3.94	
	Item 21	4.60	3.06	3.82	
	Item 22	4.86	2.91	4.14	
Camadaa	Item 23	4.66	2.75	3.85	
Service	Item 24	4.44	2.78	3.63	
	Item 25	4.26	2.63	3.63	
	Item 26	4.62	2.56	3.85	
	Item 27	4.61	2.81	3.85	
	Item 28	4.47	2.06	3.50	
	Item 29	4.70	3.13	4.10	

Source: compiled by the authors.

of variance was chosen. First, a preliminary study was carried out to determine whether or not the homogeneity of variances was fulfilled through Levene's test, in order to apply the subsequent contrasts through the Game-Howell statistic (in the case of non-homogeneity) and the Scheffé statistic (for the other cases).

When analysing the subsequent studies, it was observed that all the dimensions showed significant differences between all the groups fulfilling the following criteria: cluster 1 showed higher mean differences with respect to cluster 2, and more moderate differences with respect to cluster 3; also, cluster 3 showed higher scores with respect to cluster 2. Therefore, when presenting the results, we will limit ourselves to highlighting the significant differences in the variables that we observed to be most relevant for each cluster in the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the scale.

Cluster 1 [High applicability of SL(U)] is made up of 55% of the student sample. It is characterised by a high level in all the characteristics that measure the development of the SL(U) methodology, as well as the competencies acquired by the students when participating in this type of experience. However, lower scores can be observed in linking the service with learning at university (item 2), planning and organising time (item 9), teamwork for the creation of knowledge networks (item 13), development of initiative (item 19) and student involvement in evaluation processes (item 25).

34% of the student sample belongs to cluster 3 [Medium applicability of SL(U)]. It is characterised by students who maintain high levels in the Formative dimension and medium levels in the Learning and Service dimensions. Likewise, we observe a series of variables with high scores that correspond to the Learning dimension, such as the improvement of communication skills (item 15) and the understanding of the service performed (item 16). Similarly, in the Service dimension, we have high scores in the commitment acquired through participation in the project (item 22) and in the response to the needs of the organisation after student participation (item 29). On the other hand, there are different variables with lower scores, notably the development of reflective competence (item 12), taking initiative (item 19) and coordinating activities (item 28).

Finally, cluster 2 [Low applicability of SL(U)] is made up of 11% of the student sample. It is characterised by a low level in the Service dimension, and medium-low in the Formative and Learning dimensions.

This group of students highlights low ratings in the *Formative* dimension focusing on the acquisition of practical content (item 5) and the development of the ability to learn in new contexts (item 6). In most of the competencies and skills linked to the *Learning* dimension, the results are low (communication, teamwork, personal growth and organisation); however, the variables centred on social commitment and awareness and the need to link social reality with the university (items 15, 16 and 17) stand out with higher ratings. Finally, in the *Service* dimension, lower scores are observed in the coordination of activities, taking the initiative and project evaluation (items 28, 19 and 25, respectively), with a notable feeling of lack of recognition in the participation of the service provided (item 26).

Discussion and Conclusions

The results obtained have made it possible to achieve the proposed objective and to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Service-Learning methodology at university [SL(U)]. After a more detailed analysis, it can be affirmed that students value the use of this methodology positively. The conclusions are presented below in relation to each of the dimensions evaluated: from a *formative* (as an end), *learning* (as a means) and *service* (as a commitment to the community) perspective (León-Carrascosa et al., 2020).

In the *Formative* dimension, the students show low scores in the connection of the service with the curricular contents of their future profession, as well as with learning at university. These results differ from those obtained in the study by Mayor and Rodríguez (2015) between the University of Almería and a public Primary Education centre, in which positive results were obtained in terms of linking theory with practice in the case of university students (students of the bachelor's degree in Primary Education). On the other hand, and according to Duque (2018), students value the learning obtained for their professional and personal development at a high level.

With regard to the *learning* generated after the service experience, it is suggested that it not only contributes to learning the subject matter, but also provides opportunities for students to develop fundamental time management skills. It also highlights the importance of creating

knowledge networks and reflective spaces to help ensure continuous learning, in line with the findings of Lough & Toms (2018). Students show greater sensitivity and social reflection linked to professional practice and helping others, thus enriching the development of interpersonal skills. Several studies support this aspect, highlighting the transformative role of the experience, which contributes significantly to the comprehensive training of students (Belando-Montoro et al., 2022; Gómezescobar & Simón-Medina, 2022; Ruiz-Montero et al., 2022). Finally, they are aware of the need to link the reality of society with learning at university. This reflects a critical and conscious perspective of students on the relevance of their education in the current social context (Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2020; García-Rico, et al., 2023).

The students value the *service* performed positively, highlighting their commitment to the project and their action in response to the needs of the entity where they carried out the service. However, emphasis should be placed on the competence aspects that the SL(U) methodology provides in practice. In accordance with the observations of Martínez Lozano et al. (2018), it is essential to direct their actions towards the optimisation of strategies for the development of the initiative during the sessions, the approach of procedural evaluations and the establishment of guidelines to promote good practices in the coordination of activities.

Differential studies have shown that there are no significant differences in the *age* and *course* variables in any of the dimensions of the methodology. However, it is crucial to highlight the value of adapting the methodology to different courses, either from an experiential approach in the early years (Solomon and Tan, 2021) or from a more professional and future-readiness perspective in the later years (Deeley, 2015). In addition, age is considered a relevant aspect to understand the demographic profile of students involved in SL(U) projects (Ruiz-Montero et al., 2022), as well as their engagement and level of autonomy in the application of the methodology (Pérez and Ochoa, 2017).

On the other hand, different values were found for other sociodemographic variables. Thus, some of the most relevant conclusions are the following:

■ With regard to the *study* variable, students on the bachelor's degree in early childhood education show a lesser link between service and university learning, while students on the bachelor's

degree in social education express a greater disconnection in all dimensions of SL. In this context, in the Formative dimension, they highlight the scarce usefulness of learning and its transfer to different contexts. In terms of Learning, they perceive less responsibility for professional performance and personal growth. In contrast, in the Service dimension, low scores are observed in most of the items except those referring to the organisation, coordination and planning of tasks. However, in this group of students, there is a lower sense of commitment to the service, of recognition of their participation and a low response of the project to their expectations. This situation may be due to the numerous experiences related to teaching and pedagogy degrees, where training in the school environment is more relevant than in the social environment, leading to a mismatch between academic training and future professional practice (Blanch et al., 2020; Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2019).

- As a function of *gender*, women have higher scores in social reflection in the development of the experience and greater social sensitivity (coincident results in Lacalle & Pujol, 2019; Ruiz-Montero et al., 2022).
- In terms of *tenure*, students from private universities show a greater sense of *ownership* of the development of the service. This is reflected in a greater initiative and commitment to the activities, participating in the study of needs, the organisation of the project and coordination with other professionals. Similarly, students at privately owned universities feel that their participation is recognised and are more satisfied with their social work in response to the needs of the institution. These data are relevant due to the lack of studies that show differences between private and public universities, most of them being focused on experiences and research carried out at the same site (case studies, action research) (Blanch et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2020; Soneira, 2019; Sotelino et al., 2019).

The results obtained through the cluster analysis allow us to identify three different profiles of applicability of the SL(U) methodology, according to the students' responses. The conclusions derived from these analyses are shown below:

- High applicability. These are students with a high level of acquisition of the competencies involved in the SL(U) methodology in all the dimensions measured by the study: *Formative, Learning* and *Service*. As expressed by León-Carrascosa et al. (2020), Meijs et al. (2019) and Pérez-Pérez et al. (2019), its functionality is to generate qualities that are associated with academic competencies in connection with the formative development of the person from a learning experience while providing service to the community.
- Medium applicability. These are students who are aware of the *formative* value in the development of the SL(U) methodology, but with average results in specific competencies focused on *Service Learning*. This profile highlights the need to establish actions that involve an increase in reflective competence in the learning processes, generating greater initiative and coordination in response to the development of the service (Blanch et al., 2020; Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2020; Ruiz-Corbella & García-Gutiérrez, 2020).
- Low applicability. These are students who are concerned with the *formative* and *learning* aspects in the development of the methodology, but who are characterised by a low level in the *service* dimension. This type of student maintains a high level of commitment, sensitivity and awareness of the needs of the institution (Lalueza et al., 2016), however, there are low evaluations of formative (learning functionality), academic (communication, personal growth and evaluation) and social (coordination, teamwork and lack of recognition) competencies. On the other hand, several authors defend the SL(U) methodology as part of university education, as it allows for generating a high academic commitment in students, influencing numerous professional and personal competencies (Hervás-Torres et al., 2022).

In view of the results obtained and the conclusions outlined, it can be affirmed that the study provides valid and relevant information to the scientific community with the aim of continuing to deepen the application of the SL(U) methodology. Likewise, the study makes it possible to establish strategies and tools to improve the students' learning experience in the development of the service, taking into account the characteristics defined in the study and the competencies to be acquired by the participants. However, the study is not without its limitations,

which makes it necessary to raise a number of issues. Firstly, the reliance on a validated instrument with a small sample, even with similarities to our study, could affect the generalisability of the results. We highlight the possible predominance of the self-complacency factor in the data collected, which may influence the high responses to each of the items due to the participants' connection with the social reality, lived experience and possible bonds established during the experience. Similarly, the lack of a greater number of socio-demographic variables to be included in the questionnaire has prevented further differential studies. Nevertheless, the research carried out has the added value of having analysed both private and public institutions, as well as different degree programmes, which has enabled us to gain a broader understanding of the functioning of the SL(U) methodology, as well as to delve deeper into its application and the development of the competencies of those who participate in it. In any case, it is necessary to continue researching the possibilities of improving SL, both in the university environment and in experiences carried out at other educational levels, in order to reinforce and consolidate the methodology throughout the educational community. Likewise, within the framework of higher education, it is proposed to deepen the relationship between SL and the preparation of students for their future employment. This implies a special focus on curricular optimisation, in which strategies are investigated that favour a more effective integration of SL(U) with curricular content. The aim is to deepen transversal competencies and to carry out specific studies in various degrees, adapting SL(U) to different profiles and contexts. This would strengthen the connection with training for future employment, promoting a comprehensive higher education aligned with social demands.

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Socioeconomics, care alternatives and parenting values in access to the 0-3 stage of early childhood education

Condicionantes socioeconómicos, alternativas de cuidado y valores de crianza en el acceso a la etapa 0-3

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Abstract

In recent decades, most European educational systems have undergone reforms aimed at increasing early schooling. However, enrollment in the first cycle of early childhood education (i.e., preschool from age 0 to 3 years old) continues to be unequal among the different social groups, thereby reducing its efficiency in promoting educational and social equality. Consequently, the personal and institutional conditioning factors that influence access to early childhood education must be uncovered in order to guide public policies. Most of the previous research uses data prior to March 2020, mainly includes socioeconomic variables and limits its analysis to schooling at this stage. This article addresses the effect of variables related to parenting values and other childcare alternatives and analyzes the fit between the actual age and the ideal age for accessing these services, as well as the reasons parents give for not enrolling

their children in this early stage of preschool. Descriptive analyses and binary logistic regression models were carried out using data from an online survey conducted in 2021 among 3112 parents with children between 0 and 6 years of age. Among other variables, non-enrollment or enrollment later than desired is found to relate to the employment situation of both members of the couple, the belief that the child is too young, the availability of childcare alternatives and the price. Moreover, being a woman increases the probability of considering that they have accessed this service too late. Although the socioeconomic situation and how the supply is designed are determining factors in access to this stage, both the parenting values and the availability of childcare alternatives emerge as key elements in the decision-making process.

Keywords: early childhood education, preschool, childcare, right to education, inequality, public policy.

Resumen

En las últimas décadas se han sucedido reformas en la mayoría de los sistemas educativos europeos encaminadas a aumentar la escolarización temprana. Sin embargo, la escolarización en el primer ciclo de Educación Infantil sigue siendo desigual entre diferentes grupos sociales, lo que reduce su eficiencia en la promoción de la equidad educativa y social. Por ello, se hace necesario conocer los condicionantes personales e institucionales que influyen en el acceso, a fin de orientar las políticas públicas. La mayoría de las investigaciones previas utilizan datos anteriores a marzo de 2020, incluyen fundamentalmente variables de tipo socioeconómico y limitan su análisis a la escolarización en esta etapa. Este artículo aborda el efecto de variables relativas al modelo y las alternativas de crianza, incluyendo un análisis del ajuste entre la edad real y la edad ideal de acceso a estos servicios, así como las razones identificadas por los progenitores para no escolarizar en esta etapa. Se realizan análisis descriptivos y modelos de regresión logística binaria a partir de datos de una encuesta online realizada en 2021 a 3.112 madres y padres con hijos/as entre 0 y 6 años. Entre otras variables, la no escolarización o la escolarización más tarde de lo deseado encuentra una relación positiva con la situación respecto al empleo de ambos miembros de la pareja, la creencia en que el/la hijo/a es demasiado pequeño, la disponibilidad de alternativas de cuidado y el precio; ser mujer aumenta la probabilidad de considerar que se ha accedido a estos servicios demasiado tarde. Aunque la situación socioeconómica y el diseño de la oferta son determinantes en el acceso a esta etapa, tanto los valores en torno a la crianza como la disponibilidad de alternativas de cuidado emergen como elementos clave en el proceso de toma de decisiones.

Palabras clave: educación infantil, cuidados infantiles, derecho a la educación, desigualdad, políticas públicas.

Introduction

Recent decades have seen a considerable increase interest in developing models of early child education and childcare as well as policy reforms designed to increase enrollment at this stage (European Commission, 2020). This trend responds to evidence on early schooling in terms of both individual development and compensation for inequalities in the mid and long term (European Commission, 2022). Thus, enrollment in early childhood education programs has been linked to stimulation of cognitive capacities such as reading and achievement in later stages (Cebolla-Boado et al., 2017) as well as non-cognitive ones such as creativity, work capacity, socialization, personal autonomy, motivation, perseverance, and self-confidence (Mancebón et al., 2018), with relevant effects in the short term as well as in the mid- and long term (Heckman, 2017). The literature has highlighted that early childhood education benefits all students, although especially those who come from more unfavorable socioeconomic backgrounds, given its capability for compensating and for enhancing social inclusion (OCDE, 2017) and equality (Espinosa Bayal, 2018).

This makes it essential to take precise and accurate stock of the factors relating to access to formal early childhood education services. Despite a significant increase in research into this field recently, especially in Spain, there are still a great deal of relevant gaps. For example, most of the quantitative studies carried out used data from prior to March 2020 and only analyzed socioeconomic variables. Therefore, they fail to consider the parenting values and to delve deeper into the reasons the parents themselves give for not availing of these services. Similarly, no research was found that explores not only whether or not these services are accessed but also when that access occurs in relation to the parent's preferences.

This paper aims to contribute to fill in these gaps. It does so by analyzing data from a questionnaire carried out in 2021 on a broad sample of parents of children aged 0 to 3. The survey was specifically designed to capture how the families organize the care and education of their children. The objectives of this paper are therefore the following: (1) analyze the factors regarding schooling and enrollment in the first cycle of early childhood education in Spain (i.e., preschool for ages 0-3 years old); (2) analyze the factors regarding access to these services being

later than the parents deemed suitable; (3) identify the reasons given by the parents for not using the first cycle of early childhood education. Among these reasons, differences are found between the ones related to the institutional design of the service offered, as well as the ones related to their preferences regarding parenting and other childcare alternatives.

In the case of Spain, there are major differences in access to the first cycle of early childhood education depending on family characteristics (Velaz-Medrano et al., 2020). These differences are related to the nature of such preschooling: the first cycle, which covers ages 0 to 3, is voluntary and not free of charge. Therefore, the education authorities are not obliged to ensure that each child has a place. This limited public supply leads to having educational services and early childhood attention be taken up largely by the private sector, whose presence is indeed greater at this stage than at stages later on (León et al., 2022). Insufficient public investment means that families have to bear greater costs, which generates significant inequalities in access (Navarro-Vara y León, 2023). Thus, a great deal of literature confirms the positive relation between the parents' use of these services and their socioeconomic situation (Save the Children, 2021) as measured, among others, through the educational background of the mother (Palomera, 2022), the parents' national origin (Sola-Espinosa et al., 2023), the parents' employment status (Romero-Balsas et al., 2022), and their income (Navarro-Varas, 2022).

In addition to the socioeconomic factor, enrollment in 0-3 preschool is also conditioned by other types of elements (Romero-Balsas et al., 2022): (1) elements regarding the parents' level of need for childcare, (2) their preferences with respect to parenting, and (3) their accessibility to the different childcare options. The literature has highlighted the existence of greater needs for care services according to the child's age (Kulic et al., 2017), the number of children (Legazpe y Davia, 2017), the condition of a single-parent household (Sola-Espinosa et al., 2023), the parents' job intensity (Romero-Balsas et al., 2022) and their work schedule (Río et al., 2022). Enrollment in 0-3 preschools is also condition by the parents' own values and preferences regarding care (Inglehart et al., 2014) and the gender roles of the couple (Lowe and Weisner, 2004). In that regard, it has been observed that certain ethnic groups or migrants with a strong family-oriented culture consider that the community and family are the main socializing agents for children (González-Motos and Saurí, 2022). However, different researchers have questioned the scope of cultural

factors in the lower enrollment in early childhood education services (Pavolini and Lanker, 2018; León et al., 2022). Family preferences are themselves conditioned by the availability of the services, such that a smaller supply in the area, a greater incompatibility of the schedules, and a lack of accessibility would all lead to less consideration in making use of childcare services (Lancker, 2018).

Lastly, the decision whether to use these services depends greatly on how accessible they are for the family and what other childcare alternatives are available. Families in which the mother does not work are less inclined to turn to formal service (Palomera, 2022). This effect is also consistent when comparing unemployed vs. inactive mothers (Sola-Espinosa et al., 2023) and mothers with vs. without leave from work (Romero-Balsas et al., 2022). Similarly, the presence of grandparents in the household correlates negatively with enrollment in 0-3 preschools (Moreno-Mínguez, 2007). From the perspective of the supply, the shortage of openings at nearby schools (Save the Children, 2021), overly restrictive placement criteria (León et al., 2022), timetables (Río et al., 2022)—especially for families in atypical job situations (Palomera, 2022), and a lack of information on the enrollment process and bureaucratic formalities (Abrassart and Bonoli, 2015) all constitute relevant barriers to accessing this stage of education.

Method

This study is based on the *Quidan Survey* given online to 3100 parents with children under the age of 7 residing in Spain. Recent research (Schumann and Lück, 2023) has shown that the use of self-administered online surveys is more reliable than face-to-face surveys for studying family relations, among other elements. The fieldwork was carried out in May and part of June 2021. Samples were evenly distributed by sex and age of the child, and proportionally to the level of education and place of residence. The data were weighted to counter the demographic oversampling of parents of children between 0 and 1 years old to ensure statistical representativity.

The dependent variables considered, whose distribution can be seen in Table I, refer specifically to the interviewee's youngest child. For the variable "attends preschool", an answer was deemed to be affirmative if they responded that their child attends preschool (for ages 0-3) (38.6% of the sample) or attends nursery school, or similar (3% of the sample). They were considered as not attending this type of service when they stated they did not (56.5%) or that they were cared for at "daycare" (0.9%). The variable "ideal age to start preschool" was drawn from the question At what age do you think children should start preschool (or school)? The reasons for not enrolling their child in preschool come from the answers to the question What are the main reasons why you do not take your youngest child to preschool?, which were the following (multiple choice): There aren't any openings nearby, The price, The timetable doesn't fit our schedule, Preschool doesn't fit in with our way of parenting, They don't seem safe because of COVID-19, The child's grandparents or some other family member can take care of them, We can afford to hire someone to look after them, and My child is too young.

The independent variables considered, whose categories are featured in Tables II, III, and IV, were as follows:

- Sociodemographic and socioeconomic variables (some of these variables also reflect accessibility to forms of childcare other that preschool): sex and age of the interviewee, highest level of education of each parent, employment situation of each parent, financial hardship, size of the town, national origin of each parent, and time it takes for the nearest grandparents to reach the home.
- Variables on the family's degree of need for childcare: the age of the youngest child, presence of siblings, and the interviewee's taking care of another dependent family member.
- Variables on values, preferences, and practices in parenting: difference in the daily amount of caregiving time in the couple (measured by means of a diary where the interviewee was asked to indicate who was taking care of each child, in 15-minute intervals, during the last workday between 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m., the extent to which they agree with the statement "fathers should spend just as much time taking care of the children as mothers", extent to which they agree with the statement "if I could go back and start again, I wouldn't have children", and the interviewee's religious beliefs.

The methodological strategy consisted of designing several different models of binary logistic regression regarding the three types of variables described below:

TABLE I. Distribution of dependent variables and sample size

	% / average (standard deviation)	N (un-weighted)
Attends 0-3 preschool (youngest child 5-31 months old) (%)	42.6	529
Enrolled child before parent deemed suitable (%)	43.9	866
Enrolled child when parent deemed right (%)	20.9	413
Enrolled child later than when parent deemed suitable (%)	35.2	695
Age when child started 0-3 preschool (months)	17.3 (11.6)	2035
Ideal age to begin school (months)	19.6 (15.9)	2747
Parents who think the ideal age to begin school is after 36 months (%)	28.7	2747
Difference between age of beginning school – ideal age (months)	-2.0 (15.4)	1850
Reasons for not enrolling the child in 0-3 preschool (multiple choice)		
No openings in nearby schools (%)	4.3	36
Price (%)	14.6	106
Scheduling conflict (%)	1.9	20
Nursery school does not fit in with our parenting style (%)	8.4	53
They don't seem safe because of covid-19 (%)	18	127
The grandparents or some other family member can take care of the child (%)	23.1	193
We could afford to hire someone to take care of our child (%)	1.4	17
Our child is too young (%)	56.7	452
Other reasons (%)	22.6	164
Reasons concerning the supply (%)	18.5	143
Reasons concerning parenting style and alternative ways of caretaking (%)	75.1	608

TABLE II. Logistic regression model on enrollment in 0-3 preschool at age 0-3 years

	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender (ref: Male)	0.347	1.203
Interviewee's age	0.319	0.981
Couple's highest level of education (ref: neither with university studies)	0.084	
One with university studies	0.019	1.731
Both with university studies	0.101	1.473
Not applicable or no answer	0.222	3.518
Difficulty making ends meet (ref. difficult or very difficult)	0.304	
Some	0.168	0.654
Little or none	0.143	0.663
Population of town/city (ref: fewer than 20,000 people)	0.823	
20,001-100,000	0.843	1.049
More than 100,000	0.548	1.146
Couple's employment situation (ref: both have a job)	0.000	
One works, the other does not	0.000	0.268
Both are unemployed or other status	0.001	0.183
Not applicable or no answer	0.032	0.084
National origin of each partner (ref: both from Spain)	0.898	0.962
Age of youngest child, in months	0.000	1.153
Has siblings (ref: No)	0.211	1.262
Time it takes to get to grandparent's home (ref: Less than 15 minutes)	0.018	
15-40 minutes	0.776	1.065
Longer than 40 minutes	0.003	2.812
Not applicable or no answer	0.158	1.490
Daily or weekly caregiving (ref: No)	0.350	0.699
Difference in time partners spend on caregiving (ref: same amount of time)	0.021	
Difference between 1 minute and 5 hours	0.069	1.584
More than 5 hours of difference	0.465	0.839
Not applicable or no answer	0.155	1.703
Agreement that fathers should spend the same amount of time taking care of the children as the mothers (ref: Neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree)	0.001	2.211
If I could go back and start again, I wouldn't have kids (ref: Disagree or strongly disagree)	0.038	1.793

TABLE II. Logistic regression model on enrollment in 0-3 preschool at age 0-3 years (Continued)

	Sig.	Exp(B)
Religious belief (ref: Agnostic, atheist, or indifferent)	0.490	
Catholic or believer in another religion.	0.243	0.803
No answer	0.952	1.031
Idea age to start school (ref: 12 months or less)	0.000	
Between 13 and 24 months	0.000	0.409
Between 25 and 36 months	0.000	0.131
37 months or more	0.000	0.137
No answer	0.395	1.316
Constant	0.008	0.110
Nagelkerke's R squared		0.423
Sig. Hosmer and Lemeshow test		0.465
N		789

TABLE III. Logistic regression model on access to preschool (age 0-3) later than deemed suitable

	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender (ref: Male)	0.010	1.473
Interviewee's age	0.253	1.017
Couple's highest level of education (ref: neither with university studies)	0.345	
One with university studies	0.719	0.938
Both with university studies	0.278	1.217
Not applicable or no answer	0.323	2.805
Difficulty making ends meet (ref: difficult or very difficult)	0.055	
Some	0.287	0.760
Little or none	0.018	0.562
Not applicable or no answer	0.131	0.441
Population of town/city (ref: fewer than 20,000 people)	0.510	
20,001-100,000	0.494	1.141

(Continued)

TABLE III. Logistic regression model on access to preschool (age 0-3) later than deemed suitable (Continued)

	Sig.	Exp(B)
More than 100,000	0.246	1.219
Couple's employment situation (ref: both have a job)	0.002	
One works, the other does not	0.888	1.026
Both are unemployed or other status	0.001	5.605
Not applicable or no answer	0.144	0.230
National origin of each partner (ref: both from Spain)	0.593	0.875
Age of youngest child, in months	0.133	0.994
Has siblings (ref: No)	0.039	0.741
Time it takes to get to grandparent's home (ref: Less than 15 minutes)	0.143	
15-40 minutes	0.333	0.849
Longer than 40 minutes	0.892	0.967
Not applicable or no answer	0.023	0.620
Daily or weekly caregiving (ref: No)	0.008	2.453
Difference in time partners spend on caregiving (ref: same amount of time)	0.045	
Difference between 1 minute and 5 hours	0.943	0.987
More than 5 hours of difference	0.340	0.839
Not applicable or no answer	0.006	0.355
Agreement that fathers should spend the same amount of time taking care of the children as the mothers (ref: Neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree)	0.139	0.761
If I could go back and start again, I wouldn't have kids (ref: Disagree or strongly disagree)	0.543	0.894
Religious belief (ref: Agnostic, atheist, or indifferent)	0.665	
Catholic or believer in another religion.	0.397	0.887
No answer	0.659	0.805
Constant	0.194	2.416
Nagelkerke's R squared		0.083
Sig. Hosmer and Lemeshow test		0.439
N		995

TABLE IV. Logistic regression models on reasons for not enrolling in 0-3 preschool

	Model 1. Alleges reasons regarding the supply / does not allege these reasons		Model 2. Alleges reasor on style of parenting or other childcare alternatives / does not allege these reasons	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender (ref: Male)	0.909	1.032	0.521	0.848
Interviewee's age	0.900	0.997	0.691	0.990
Couple's highest level of education (ref: neither with university studies)	0.782		0.190	
One with university studies	0.804	0.921	0.124	0.636
Both with university studies	0.633	1.177	0.870	1.056
Difficulty making ends meet (ref: difficult or very difficult)	0.001		0.507	
Some	0.067	0.495	0.135	1.809
Little or none	0.000	0.230	0.292	1.455
Not applicable or no answer	0.503	0.427	0.561	2.153
Population of town/city (ref: fewer than 20,000 people)	0.390		0.332	
20,001-100,000	0.242	1.507	0.278	0.710
More than 100,000	0.946	1.023	0.795	1.083
Couple's employment situation (ref: both have a job)	0.019	1.979	0.017	0.528
National origin of each partner (ref: both from Spain)	0.547	1.262	0.306	1.504
Age of youngest child, in months	0.005	1.036	0.002	0.965
Has siblings (ref: No)	0.652	1.126	0.278	0.767
Time it takes to get to grandparent's home (ref: Less than 15 minutes)	0.668		0.155	
15-40 minutes	0.286	1.391	0.033	0.536
Longer than 40 minutes	0.788	0.846	0.881	1.091
Not applicable or no answer	0.819	0.914	0.257	0.670
Daily or weekly caregiving (ref: No)	0.277	1.819	0.034	0.356
Difference in time partners spend on caregiving (ref: same amount of time)	0.084		0.289	

TABLE IV. Logistic regression models on reasons for not enrolling in 0-3 preschool (Continued)

	Model 1. Alleges reasons regarding the supply / does not allege these reasons		on style of	
Difference between 1 minute and 5 hours	0.541	0.789	0.135	1.835
More than 5 hours of difference	0.027	0.510	0.880	1.043
Agreement that fathers should spend the same amount of time taking care of the children as the mothers (ref: Neither agree or disagree, disagree or strongly disagree)	0.173	1.683	0.610	1.174
If I could go back and start again, I wouldn't have kids (ref: Disagree or strongly disagree)	0.803	1.101	0.669	0.857
Religiousness (ref: Agnostic, atheist, or indifferent)	0.355		0.741	
Catholic or believer in another religion.	0.150	0.674	0.648	0.892
No answer	0.901	0.905	0.578	1.655
Constant	0.222	0.240	0.024	11.929
Nagelkerke's R squared		0.166	0.15	
Sig. Hosmer and Lemeshow test	0.720		0.390	
N	428		428	

- A model with the dependent variable "attends/does not attend the first cycle of early childhood education" to which the independent variables described above were added. This model was applied to parents who, as of the date of the survey, had at least one child of proper age for the first cycle of early ahildhood education.
- A model with the dependent variable "enrolled their child at the time they deemed suitable/enrolled their child later". Those who expressed the opinion that the ideal age for enrollment was 36 months or more were excluded from the analysis because they presumably had no intention of enrolling their child in the first cycle of early childhood education. This model included parents

- with a children between 0 and 6 years old who were currently attending the first cycle or had attended it previously.
- Two models on the reasons given for why their child does not attend the first cycle of early childhood education. Both analyses exclude those who chose the statement "Schools don't seem safe to us because of COVID-19" (67 cases) from all the possible options, since in the context of the pandemic, this option implied that other reasons were not given due thought:
 - Model 1: the dependent variable bundles together those who gave "reasons related to the supply" (insufficient vacancies available nearby, problems with the price or incompatible schedules) in contrast to those who gave other reasons.
 - Model 2: the dependent variable bundles together those who gave "reasons related to their model of parenting or other childcare alternatives" (the nursery school did not fit in with their model of parenting, they have the child's grandparents or some other family member to care for the child, they have hired a babysitter, or they do not wish to send them to school so young) in contrast to those who gave other reasons.

In order to maintain the representativity of the sample and ensure the consistency of the results, the category "No answer" was added to variables large enough to meet the statistical requirements (Garson, 2016).

Results

As our results show, 42.6% of the children between the ages of 5 months and 3 years attended the first cycle of early childhood education (Table 1), a figure very similar to the enrollment rate published by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP, 2023). The average age of access to 0-3 preschool is 17.3 months, while the age deemed to be the most suitable for that access is 19.6 months. Some 43.9% of the sample stated that they had enrolled their child earlier than they deemed suitable, 20.9% at just the right time, and 35.2% later than suitable. Roughly 28.7% of the parents think that the ideal age for enrollment is later than the age for starting the first cycle of preschool (36 months or more). Regarding the reasons for not enrolling their child in 0-3 preschool (multiple

choice), 56.7% stated that the child is too young, 23.1% that the child's grandparents or other family members can take care of the child, 18% said that schools did not seem safe due to covid-19, 14.6% mention the price, 8.4% because it does not fit in with their style of parenting, 4.3% because there were no openings at nearby schools, 1.9% because of scheduling conflicts, and 1.4% because they could afford to hire someone; 22.6% answered "other reasons". Furthermore, 18.5% mentioned at least one reason concerning the supply and 75.1% gave a reason concerning the style of parenting or other childcare alternatives (Table I).

Table II features the model that explores the factors relating to enrollment in this cycle and shows the significance of the three types of variables described above. The likelihood of enrollment goes down by roughly 73% when one member of the couple is unemployed and goes down even further when both members are unemployed (82%), in comparison with families in which both members are working. When one member of the couple has university studies and the other does not, they are 73% more likely to enroll their child in 0-3 preschool than couples in which neither member has university studies. This likelihood is 2.8 times greater for those who live more than 40 minutes from the child's nearest grandparents, with respect to those who have a grandparent less than 15 minutes away.

The child's age is a particularly significant variable: for each month the child gets older, the likelihood of being sent to 0-3 preschool increases by 15%. Thus, in comparison with parents who think children should start school at 12 months or younger, those who set the ideal age to start school between 12 and 24 months are 59% less likely to send their child to 0-3 preschool. In contrast, when the ideal age is higher, the likelihood goes down by 86%. Parents who express more egalitarian roles in caregiving are more than twice as likely to enroll their child in the first cycle of early childhood education. Finally, children of parents who admit to regretting having children are 79% more likely to attend this first cycle of preschool.

Table III shows the model that analyzes the likelihood of enrolling their child later than the parent(s) interviewed deemed suitable. The interviewees in a couple where both partners are unemployed are 5 times more likely to enroll their child later than they would have liked, in comparison with couples in which both partners work. Those with little or no trouble making ends meet are 44% less likely to enroll their child after their idea age, compared to parents that have some or great difficulty making ends meet. Daily or weekly caregiving to other family

members increases the likelihood of stating that they sent their child to school later than they would have liked by nearly two and a half times. Lastly, women are 47% more likely than men to think that they sent their child to school later than the age they deem optimum.

Table IV shows the models on the variables relating to both types of reasons. With respect to the factors regarding not enrolling the child in preschool because of the supply (model 1), the interviewees in couples in which one partner is unemployed were twice as likely to allege these reasons than couples in which both partners are employed. In comparison with the families who find it "difficult or very difficult" to make ends meet at the end of the month, the families with "little or no difficulty" were 77% less likely to allege problems in the supply. Moreover, couples with less evenly shared child caregiving (5 or more hours of difference daily) are 49% less likely to allege problems in the supply. Finally, for every month more in the child's age, the likelihood of alleging this type of reason increases by 4%.

Model 2 (Table IV) shows the factors regarding not enrolling the child due to reasons one the style of parenting or other childcare alternatives. Survey-takers in couples in which at least one partner is unemployed are 47% less likely to give this type of reason, in comparison with dual-income couples. The likelihood of stating reasons related to the style of parenting or other childcare alternatives is 46% lower in families who have a grandparent between 15 and 40 minutes away, in comparison to those with a grandparent less than 15 minutes away. With respect to the child's age, each additional month lowers the likelihood of giving this type of reason by 4%. Last, those who habitually take care of other family members are 64% less likely to give reasons regarding the style of parenting or other childcare alternatives.

Discussion

The statistical analyses performed confirm some of the findings from previous research and shed new light on the access to the first cycle of early childhood education. In keeping with the earlier literature, differences are found in the socioeconomic profile of the pupils who access this stage. The differences are particularly consistent with the employment situation of the child's parents. The conception of early

childhood education as a tool to support employment and conciliation, together with the shortage of enough public openings on offer (the supply), make it such that those who are unemployed have greater obstacles to using these services (Lancker and Ghysels, 2014).

Regarding financial resources, the model that analyzes access (Table I) does not identify economic hardship (affordability) as being significant, as has also been shown in recent research (Sola-Espinosa et al., 2023). This may be due to the fact that the couple's job situation also contains information about the amount of time available and about the family's economic situation, which may annul the effect of the variable "difficulty making ends meet".

The presence of alternative childcare givers other than 0-3 preschool (father, mother, or someone outside the couple, such as grandparents or hired caregivers) intensely conditions the parents' decision of whether or not to have their child start school. This is also in keeping with recent research on the context in Spain (Romero-Balsas et al., 2022). In particular, the results here confirm that not having any grandparents living nearby plays a relevant role in increasing the rate of early schooling (Moreno-Mínguez, 2007).

As regards the style of parenting, the fact that the variable "regret having had children" and enrollment in 0-3 preschool have a positive correlation, which also came up in previous research (Meil et al., 2021), might reflect that enrollment increases (a) when there is less emotion bonding with the child, and/or (b) when there is a situation of family stress that lowers the interviewee's well-being (for example, for job or financial reasons). In these cases, sending the child to the first cycle of early childhood education may act as a buffering mechanism from the demands of parenting and its negative effects on the individual's quality of life as perceived by the person interviewed. This may be reflecting new ways of understanding maternity and paternity, even in contexts that are favorable for parenting (Bodin, 2022).

Along the line of a shift in values toward greater co-responsibility in childcare, our results indicate that those who express more egalitarian values are significantly more likely to make use of formal childcare services. These services therefore seem to be perceived as tools that can help make a fairer distribution of childcare duties (Meil et al., 2021). Lastly, and in that same vein, women are more likely to think that they enrolled their child in school later than the most suitable age. This seems

to reflect their wish not to delay returning to work to avoid the high costs of motherhood and thereby strike a balance between work and family life (Goldscheider et al., 2015).

The analysis of the gap between the ideal age and the real age of schooling offers new, complementary information that can give a more accurate picture of the effect different factors have on accessing formal childcare services. The results of this analysis show that economic hardship significantly increases the likelihood that a parent will enroll their child in school later than they would like. These results indicate that economic resources are key to fitting the timing of these services in with the mother and father's parenting preferences and career timeline, as well as showing the relevance of the associated costs on decision-making (Río Ruiz et al., 2022). Moreover, joblessness is found to affect not only the likelihood of early schooling but also of fitting it in at the desired time. Having alternative caregivers other than preschool also seems to facilitate that fit.

Although most prior researchers highlight the role cultural factors can play in enrollment in early childhood education, they usually assume that what determines access to schooling at this stage are the structural elements (availability, accessibility, and affordability of the service, mainly) (León et al., 2022; Palomera, 2022). However, the results of our research suggest that most families who have not sent their children to this stage of school are also driven by motives not directly related to the supply. In fact, most people surveyed mention parenting values and childcare alternatives much more often than price, schedule, or availability of vacancies nearby. In particular, the belief that the child is still too young seems to have a strong effect on the likelihood of not enrolling in the first cycle of early childhood education. These findings are in line with previous qualitative results that indicate that some parents consider that formal childcare services are more suitable as of a certain age (Jurado et al., 2012) and fit in with a view of early childhood education as somewhere children attend rather than somewhere they go to learn (Espinosa-Bayal, 2018). These ideas therefore emerge as a key element to understanding why children are not enrolled in the first cycle of early childhood education.

Our results show that the reasons parents give for not making use of formal childcare services are not distributed randomly, but rather, they are affected significantly by the financial situation and employment status: families with more financial resources and in which both partners hold a job place less importance on supply-related factors. These families run into fewer barriers to participating in the early childhood education because of their greater ability to afford its expenses (Sola-Espinosa et al., 2023) and to accessing a public-school vacancy, given that admissions criteria often give priority to families in which both partners are working (León et al., 2022). In contrast, in the case of families with greater economic hardship and less access to employment, the motives involving the style of parenting take back seat, since they are more constrained by the availability and price of these services.

That said, despite the innovation and relevance of our study, it does have a few limitations. First, some of the terms used as synonyms in fact allude to realities that contain some differences, such as early childhood education, formal childcare, and preschool, and nursery school services. The reason for this is basically that in Spain there are few formal alternatives to childcare other than schooling, so in our context they become much alike (Meil et al., 2021). Secondly, the responses analyzed are from people from different regions of Spain, with considerably different admissions systems, levels of supply, and coverage rates. This matter limits the reach of any specific public policies. Thirdly, the survey fieldwork was carried out at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the families' situation and behavior. The fact that many parents found themselves unemployed or laid off, more uncertain about the future, or afraid of contagion from the virus had a negative impact on early enrollment rates in early childhood education (Turienzo et al., 2023) and may have affected their beliefs about schooling and thus their answers on the survey. Finally, in fourth place, in the variables on reasons mentioned for not sending their child to formal childcare services, there may be some bias due to social desirability, since individual preferences regarding parenting are in turn conditioned by the families' socioeconomic conditions and their access to other childcare resources (for example, someone unable to afford daycare may allege other reasons for not using it in order to hide their financial constraints).

Conclusions

This article presents new, relevant results on access to the first cycle of early childhood education in Spain. First, in addition to the habitual

variables, our analysis includes factors on the parents' access to alternative childcare resources and on their values and practices of parenting that are customarily missing in the research in this field but are key factors in the decision-making process. Second, this is the first study to analyze the difference between the real age and the ideal age to start school, understanding that the circumstances and values of the family and those of these services may influence the decision not only of whether the child should start school but also when the right time is to do so. Third, this paper includes a pioneer analysis on the reasons the parents give for not enrolling their child in this first cycle.

Our data confirms that social and labor dynamics and the spread of certain values are related to the increase in demand for early schooling. This is the case of phenomena such as geographic mobility, which increases the distance away from older generations, and the generalization of dual-income couples, reflected in our analysis in the statistical significance of distance from grandparents and the couple's job status. Moreover, the relevance of the idea of gender equality and individualist values is made manifest in our results in that more women perceive that they send their child to school later than suitable and in that those who show some degree of regret of having children tend to make more use of formal childcare services. Furthermore, the greater demand for these services makes the barriers to accessing them more visible. Thus, our analysis reflects that the decision on schooling does not depend only on socioeconomic variables--which are still determinant--but also on factors regarding the availability of childcare alternatives, the ideal model of parenting, the couple's ideas on gender roles, and the design of the supply.

The data as a whole reveals the need to progress on several types of policy. On one hand, the fact that some differences in access, and the possibility of matching the real time of access with the ideal time, are associated with the family's socioeconomic situation suggests the need to implement measures that ensure the accessibility and affordability of this stage of schooling. Especially relevant here is the cost of the service, which remains as one of the reasons parents give for not enrolling their child in early childhood education at this stage. Establishing price rates and discounts seems to be one of the main solutions to reduce bias that favors the wealthiest groups (Palomera, 2022), although the results so far are modest (Sola-Espinosa et al., 2023). Making early childhood

education totally or partially free is a feasible alternative in terms of the public budget (Castellano and Perondi, 2022), but if it is combined with insufficient supply it may become quite regressive. In a context of insufficient vacancies, it may be very relevant to design admissions policies under the conception based on improving the rights of the child that favor underrepresented groups such as pupils at risk of social exclusion.

Lastly, some parents are found who not only do not send their child to these services but also consider it unsuitable to send a child to school in the first cycle of early childhood education. From the public policy perspective, it would be advisable to check the extent to which some families' rejection leads to processes of self-exclusion that aggravate the child's own vulnerability. One possible approach to take in this regard is to make the benefits of early schooling more apparent. In this regard, evidence indicates that, unless accompanied with tools to promote schooling of the most disadvantaged groups--currently underrepresented, policies focused exclusively on increasing the number of openings may make investing in this stage even more regressive.

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Gender differences in the profile of new students at the University of Andorra. Evolution in the last decade

Las diferencias de género en el perfil del estudiante de nuevo acceso de la University of Andorra. Una evolución de la última década

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Abstract

This article analyses the profile of students starting their first year of an inperson bachelor's degree course at the University of Andorra and its evolution over the years, from the 2012–2013 academic year to the present (2022–2023), with a gender perspective. The data used in this work is drawn from a questionnaire about academic and family profile and a mathematical reasoning test completed by the students analysed. We obtained a sample of 924 students from a population of 1119. To analyse the relationships between variables, as distributions are not normal, we used the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test to study the relationship between gender and numerical variables and the chi-square statistic for relationships between factors. Every year, significant differences are observed between gender and different variables, such as entrance scores (higher for women) and the result obtained in the mathematical reasoning test (higher for men). At the same time, results over the years show that the gradient between both scores increases over the years, and that, while the entrance score increases for both men and women, the result obtained in the mathematical reasoning test

follows the opposite trend. Finally, another clear trend elucidated in this work is the high level of feminization of nursing and education studies, contrary to what happens with computer science studies. Given the repercussions that this gender segregation in university studies may have on the professional future of students in terms of consolidation of the wage gap between men and women, it is important to act to implement policies that manage to break down this segregation in the academic environment.

Keywords: gender differences, gender gap, STEM, stereotypes, university studies, feminization.

Resumen

En este trabajo se analiza el perfil del estudiante de nuevo acceso a los estudios reglados presenciales de la University of Andorra y su evolución a lo largo de los años, desde el curso 2012-2013 hasta la actualidad (2022-2023), desde una perspectiva de género. La recogida de datos se ha realizado mediante un cuestionario sobre el perfil académico y familiar, y una prueba de razonamiento matemático, a los estudiantes objeto de estudio. Obtuvimos una muestra de 924 estudiantes de una población de 1119. Para el análisis de las relaciones entre variables, al no cumplirse el supuesto de normalidad, se ha utilizado la prueba no paramétrica de U de Man-Whitney para estudiar la relación entre el género y las variables numéricas y el estadístico Chi-cuadrado para las relaciones entre factores. Todos los años se observan diferencias significativas entre el género y distintas variables, como son la nota de acceso (siendo más elevada para las mujeres) y la nota en la prueba de razonamiento matemático (siendo en este caso más elevada para los hombres). En cuanto a la evolución a lo largo de los años, se encuentra que el gradiente entre ambas variables es creciente, y que, mientras la nota de acceso va en aumento tanto para hombres como para mujeres, la nota de la prueba de razonamiento matemático sigue la tendencia opuesta. Finalmente, otra evidencia que se muestra en este trabajo es la elevada feminización de los estudios de enfermería y educación, al contrario de lo que pasa con los estudios de informática. Dada la repercusión que esta segregación de género en los estudios universitarios pueda tener en el futuro profesional de los estudiantes en términos de consolidación de la brecha salarial entre hombres y mujeres, es importante actuar en políticas que consigan romper esta segregación que se produce en el ámbito académico.

Palabras clave: diferencias de género, brecha de género, STEM, estereotipos, estudios universitarios, feminización.

Introduction

Since the second half of the twentieth century, access to higher education studies has improved globally. According to UNESCO data, this massification of higher education has been more beneficial for women, because the gender parity index in enrolment rates has increased (UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2018). However, though undoubtedly positive, this evolution still has room for improvement, especially in terms of gender segregation by fields of knowledge, as well as in the masculinization of some professional sectors. In the academic field, while some areas are more feminized and others have reached parity. there is still a very low percentage of women in engineering, technology, physics and mathematics studies, which belong to the so-called STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). Despite the efforts made to reverse this situation in the last 25 years in many countries, both in terms of scientific research and political intervention, representation of women in these fields of study is still very low (Watt, 2010). Meanwhile, studies indicate that women obtain better academic results in everything except mathematics (Fernández-Herrero et al., 2022) and that there are more women in universities. However, this advantage is not subsequently reflected in the professional sphere (Dancausa et al., 2021).

The aim of this study is to analyse whether there are gender differences in the profiles of new students at the University of Andorra and how they vary over the years. The specific objectives focus on three areas: differences in the students' family environment according to gender, differences in overall academic level and mathematical competence, and difference in choice of studies. To carry out this study, we have analysed data collected from the 2012–2013 academic year to the 2022–2023 academic year from new students starting their on-site degree courses at the University of Andorra, in the fields of Business Administration, Nursing, Education and Computer Science. These students answered a survey on their profile, motivations and family environment and took a mathematical reasoning test when they joined the university. With these data, we have analysed the significant relationships between the variables collected and gender and observed that this relationship is repeated over the years with some variables (university entrance score, competence in mathematical

reasoning and chosen studies). Another result obtained is that there are variables that do not show a significant relationship with gender, like the family environment (socio-economic level and parents' studies). Finally, this analysis identifies possible strategies to guarantee more equal and universal access to higher education studies for the Andorran population.

Theoretical framework

As mentioned above, the literature features numerous studies that have analysed the underrepresentation of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) studies (Hill et al., 2010; Tejuca Martinez, 2020; Watt, 2010; World Bank, 2012). Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015), focusing on Gender Equality, is to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', and equal access to education without gender segregation by field of study can certainly contribute to this. In order to work towards this goal, many studies have analysed the possible causes of gender segregation in the academic sphere. Some studies have revealed lower academic expectations in women than in men when they start their university studies (Diniz et al., 2018; Lopez, 2014), but there is no consensus on this subject, as there are also studies that show precisely the opposite (Mau and Bikos, 2000; Mello, 2008). Within these expectations, women tend to have a lower self-perception in terms of mathematical ability (Sáinz and Upadyaya, 2016; Sax and Harper, 2007; Watt, 2010), which may explain women's lesser attraction to university studies in this area. The work of Sax and Harper (2007) highlights other aspects in which women have a low self-perception: emotional health, artistic and academic ability, competitiveness and leadership. This poorer perception, also shown in the work of Sánchez García et al. (2011), can certainly influence their choice of academic field.

Meanwhile, in terms of academic results, women have the advantage (Fernández-Herrero et al., 2022; Tsaousis and Alghamdi, 2022). Studies by Parajuli and Thapa (2017); Plazas, Aponte and López (2006), and Sarmiento et al. (2012) also conclude that academic performance is higher in women. However, when differentiated by fields of study, many studies suggest that women perform better in language proficiency

(Deary et al., 2007; Spinath et al., 2010), but not in STEM scientific proficiency (Lakin, 2013; Strand et al., 2006). Furthermore, despite the fact that girls achieve equal or higher grades than boys in all subjects throughout their education, gender stereotypes result in differences in interest in pursuing subjects such as mathematics, science and certain computer-related courses, where the interest for girls is lower (AAUW, 1998, p.28).

Other factors that may explain gender segregation according to area of study, apart from academic expectations, are diverse in nature. Some studies put the lower representation of women in STEM fields down to differences in cognitive skills between men and women, finding that men have better mathematical skills (Bharadwaj et al., 2012; Kahn and Ginther, 2017). However, more numerous than these studies are those that find explanations in a combination of factors, among which are social and psychological factors that influence the development of differentiated preferences between men and women (Antecol and Cobb-Clark, 2013; Buser et al., 2014; Zafar, 2013; Martín Carrasquilla et al., 2022), as well as socio-cultural barriers (Smith, 2011).

Fernández-Herrero et al. (2022) analyse various data such as early school dropout, school failure and PISA 2018 results in mathematics and science, and find that females are better in everything compared to males except mathematics results.

If we delve deeper into social and psychological factors, we find numerous studies that show gender differences in this regard. Some of them reveal that women have a greater emotional dependence on and attachment to their families during the first year of university studies (López, 2014; Sax and Harper, 2007), which translates into a need to remain close to them. In addition, Sax and Harper (2007) indicate that women are more oriented towards social activism, while men are more status-focused. The same study points to differentiated life goals and career choice motives according to gender, with women being more interested in starting a family and less politically engaged, while men maintain a greater interest in contributing to science. Donoso et al. (2011) also find a need to reconcile work with other life roles among female university students. Moreover, Andrew et al. (2022) highlights the influence of private life on women's involvement in their studies, and more specifically, the influence of their heterosexual relationships, which in many cases must end so that they can continue their studies.

Outside the academic sphere, in the workplace, trends in female participation have not been homogeneous. As an example, Klasen's 2019 study notes a decline in female labour force participation rates in South Asia. Moreover, sectorial segregation occurs in the labour market, where women are more employed in only a few sectors (Borrowman and Klasen, 2020), which may explain the persistence of the gender wage gap (Blau and Khan, 2017).

Given that the origins of these gender differences can be traced to before university studies are started (Goy et al., 2018; Santana-Vega et al., 2012), and that they are consolidated throughout university studies (Whitt et al., 2001), reversing this situation requires educational policies that begin before higher education and continue through university. Considering the influence of parents and teachers on women's choice of university studies (Larose et al., 2008), other policies aimed at reversing this situation should also target these agents (family environment, teachers and school counsellors), as well as focusing on women's empowerment, given that the perception of gender stereotypes plays an important role in defining women's futures (Santana-Vega et al., 2023).

Gender segregation in academia not only affects STEM studies, where there are fewer women, but also has an impact in the opposite direction, in the fields of nursing and education (Porto, 2009). The work of Bosch Fiol et al. (2006), cited in Porto (2009), finds that women prefer studies that respond to traditional values and roles, such as education and care, while men are oriented towards technical degrees.

Any analysis of gender segregation in academic fields must take into account its impact at the occupational level (Bieri et al., 2016; Flabbi, 2011; Van Puyenbroeck et al., 2012). When we consider the fact that femaledominated careers tend to be of lower status and consequently come with lower salaries (Watt, 2010), a solution to this problem becomes even more urgent if we want to build a more egalitarian society. This problem starts at the pre-university stage; this is precisely when we have to act, given that gender-differentiated trajectories at school level – i.e. the choice of field of specialization during secondary school, which conditions the choice of university career and, in turn, the fact that women are less represented in scientific studies – impact future occupational segregation and the gender pay gap (Sahoo and Klasen, 2021).

In this unfavourable scenario for women, Astin et al. (2002) provide some reason for optimism by showing a reduction in the gender gap over the years, in terms of university success and professional aspirations. Furthermore, the considerable amount of scientific production aimed at analysing this situation and working towards the SDG in the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) augurs a better scenario in the near future.

This paper aims to contribute new knowledge in the field of gender differences in the university environment in order to find new proposals to contribute to reducing these differences.

Method

The University of Andorra is a very small university that offers four first-cycle studies courses, consisting of bachelor's degrees belonging to the European Higher Education Area in the fields of Business Administration, Education, Nursing and Computer Science. Overall, the number of students has grown over the years, as recognition of the institution within the country has increased. Nonetheless, student numbers remain very small, in line with the size of Andorra.

The data used in this study were collected from a questionnaire and a mathematical reasoning test detailed in the instruments section, with questions to be processed using a quantitative methodology. The procedure section describes the different quantitative techniques used to analyse the data collected.

Sample

The population of this study is the new students in on-site bachelor's degree courses at the University of Andorra, from the academic year 2012–2013 to the current academic year (2022–2023), which constitutes a total of 1,119 students. The sampling is accidental, since these are the students who attended the on-site session on the day of the mathematical reasoning test. There may be a selection bias, since this sampling is carried out with new students in the first semester of each academic year and does not consider those in the second semester (Lohr and Velasco, 2000). This lack of coverage is not important since the number of incoming students is very small in the second semester.

TABLE I. Population and sample by academic year

Academic year	Sample	Population	Return rate	Sampling error
12-13	86	95	91%	3,30
13-14	70	112	63%	7,20
14-15	73	88	83%	4,80
15-16	70	89	77%	5,40
16-17	76	89	85%	4,30
17-18	82	93	88%	3,70
18-19	95	95	100%	0,00
19-20	77	132	58%	7,20
20-21	89	97	92%	3,00
21-22	108	126	86%	3,60
22-23	98	103	95%	2,20

The sample consists of 924 students. The return rate is 82.6% and the maximum margin of sampling error is 1.3%, considering a 95% confidence level and the maximum possible variance of 0.25. These results confirm that the sample is representative of the population as it has the same characteristics, the return rate is high, and the margin of sampling error is very low. Table I details these values for each of the years studied. It shows that the sampling error is less than 5% in 8 of the 11 academic years, and is less than 7.5% in the others.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample students

What follows is a description of this study's sample in terms of sociodemographic characteristics. Table II shows the details, which indicate a greater presence of male students, most of whom are under 22 years of age, live at home and are exclusively dedicated to their studies.

Table III contains data on the employment status and educational level of the parents of the students participating in the study. We observe that, regardless of gender, there are more parents with the lowest level of studies.

TABLE II. Description of the sample: gender, age, residence and employment situation

Gender	Male		Female	
	44.1%		55.9%	
Age	Mean		Standard deviation	
	21.4 years		5.9 years	
	<22 years [22.26] years		[27,31] years	>31 years
	72.9% 15.5%		4.3%	7.3%
Residence	Family residence		Independe	nt residence
	78.6%		21	1.4%
Employment situation	Not working Part-time		(<50%)	Part-time (≥50%)
	59.4% 26.5		5%	14%

TABLE III. Distribution according to parents' educational and employment status

Level of studies	No studies/ Compulsory studies	Professional studies/ High school	University studies
		Father	
	53.4%	29.6%	17.0%
		Mother	
	48.4%	31.8%	19.8%
Employment status	Entrepreneur	Employee	Other
	Father		
	26.6%	59.4%	14.0%
	Mother		
	16.2%	63.5%	20.3%

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Instruments

The first instrument used in this study is a questionnaire about the profile and environment of new students at the university. It is based on the one developed and validated by the University of Barcelona's Research Group on Academic and Work Transitions on prior academic competences and

family support in the transition to university. It contains the following sections:

- Personal profile
- Academic pathway prior to entry to the University of Andorra
- Influencing factors in the choice of university
- Influencing factors in the choice of studies

The other instrument used is a mathematical reasoning test based on entrance tests at different educational levels carried out in Andorra according the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2000). To succeed, only basic mathematical concepts are necessary. The test includes the following:

- Two questions to assess aptitude for manipulating elements according to learned rules
- Four questions to assess deductive logical reasoning
- One question with ten sections to assess the ability to read and interpret graphs
- Four questions on analytical reasoning to understand the information given and to solve specific problems in different contexts

Some examples are: interpreting a histogram, calculating the final mark on an assessment with exams and papers with different weightings, calculating percentages applied to prices in sale periods, calculating proportional distributions and calculating values in series.

We pilot-tested the two instruments during September 2011, then developed the final instruments used for the 11 years studied.

Procedure

Data collection took place in person during the month of September of the 11 years between 2012 and 2022. The students were informed that the data obtained would only be used for research purposes and with the utmost confidentiality. The mathematical reasoning test took place in the classroom under teacher supervision. It was distributed in paper format and the students were not allowed to use a calculator. Then, the questionnaire was completed after the test had been taken in the

classroom. In 2012 and 2013, it was in paper format; since then, it has been in digital format.

We applied univariate descriptive statistics to analyse the student profile and its evolution during the period analysed, expressed with trend lines. For the analysis of the relationships between variables, it was not possible to apply parametric techniques widely used in previous studies, such as t-Student or ANOVA, because the assumption of normality – which we analysed by means of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test – was not fulfilled for the numerical variables used ('mathematical reasoning test score' and 'university entrance exam score'). In this situation, the bivariate analysis was carried out through the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U Test in order to study the relationship between gender and the numerical variables, while the Chi-square statistic was used for the relationship between factors. Non-parametric tests are not as efficient as parametric tests, which is why, in order to avoid bias, stronger evidence is needed, such as a large sample (Triola, 2004), as can be found in this study.

Results

This section details the results of the variables with significant relationships obtained, considering the gender factor. These differences are significant at 90% confidence level when applying the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 16.773$, gl = 10, p = 0.080) in the distribution of the sample by gender and academic year, with women predominating over the years, as can be seen in Graph I.

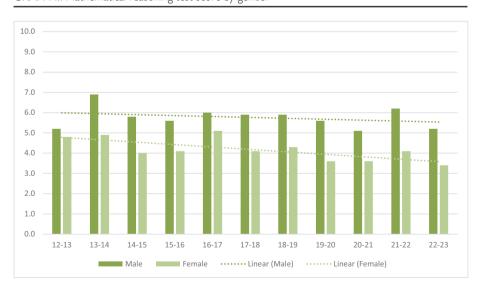
This higher representation of women at university translates into a higher proportion of female university graduates among the adult population in all OECD countries, as shown in the Spanish Education Outlook Report (OECD, 2023). This report contains data for the year 2021, where the average for OECD and EU25 countries was 55% and 54.9% women, respectively. The United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden are the countries with the largest difference, while Germany and Japan had a difference of no more than 2.2 percentage points.

As the variable 'mathematical reasoning test score' does not have a normal distribution, we performed the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test to study the relationship between gender and this variable. We

GRAPH I. Students by gender



GRAPH II. Mathematical reasoning test score by gender



Source: Compiled by the authors.

TABLE IV. Mann—Whitney U test values between the reasoning test score variable and gender for each academic year

Academic year	Mann-Whitney U test	z	Р
12–13	830.500	-0.775	0.438
13–14	269.500	-3.660	<0.000
14–15	321.500	-2.881	0.004
15–16	383.000	-2.546	0.011
16–17	523.000	-1.746	0.081
17–18	473.500	-3.266	0.001
18–19	571.500	-3.403	0.001
19–20	388.000	-3.377	0.001
20–21	385.000	-2.811	0.005
21–22	606.000	-4.400	<0.000
22–23	601.500	-3.715	<0.000

Source: Compiled by the authors.

obtained a statistically significant difference at 99% (with Mann–Whitney U=59258.000, Z=-10.091, p<=0.000), with the difference for men always being superior. In this case, the trend over the years is downward for both sexes, but is not heading towards parity; instead, the gap is increasing. These results are illustrated in Graph II. Table IV shows the results of the statistics for each academic year, which indicate statistically significant differences at 99% in all years except 15–16, which is significant at 95%; 16–17, with 90%; and 12–13, which accepts the Ho of equality between both sexes.

This result is consistent with the findings of the work by Fernández-Herrero et al. (2022), which highlights women's low results in the 2018 PISA tests in mathematics and science. Other studies point to women's early drop-out from mathematics education options in pre-university studies (Watt, 2010).

Another variable that does not have a normal distribution is 'average university entrance qualification'. Again, we used the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test to study the relationship between gender and this variable. Significant differences were observed at 95% (Mann–Whitney

GRAPH III. University entrance marks by gender



Source: Compiled by the authors.

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} TABLE~V.~Values~of~the~Mann-Whitney~U~test~between~access~mark~variable~and~gender~for~each~academic~year \end{tabular}$

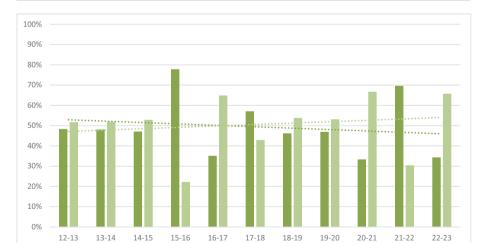
Academic year	Mann-Whitney U test	z	Р
12–13	493.500	-1.016	0.309
13–14	367.000	-1.077	0.282
14–15	231.500	-1.950	0.051
15–16	390.000	-1.638	0.101
16–17	537.000	-0.505	0.614
17–18	557.000	-0.236	0.813
18–19	709.000	-1.438	0.137
19–20	400.000	-0.810	0.418
20–21	714.000	-1.663	0.096
21–22	1045.500	-1.667	0.096
22–23	943.500	-0.730	0.465

Source: Compiled by the authors.

U=74295.000, Z=-2.208, p=0.027) and, in this case, they were more favourable for women. This trend is upward for both sexes, but the gap also tends to increase, as can be seen in Graph III. Table V shows the results of the statistics for each academic year, which indicate statistically significant differences at 90% in the years 14–15, 20–21 and 21–22.

In this case, the result is consistent with the data collected by the AAUW (1998), which show that girls obtain equal or higher grades than boys in all subjects throughout their education. Meanwhile, it is striking that, although the university entrance mark has increased over the years, the mark obtained in the mathematical reasoning test follows the opposite trend.

Regarding gender segregation by studies, the results of this study confirm the situation shown in the literature analysed, with a considerable masculinization of technological studies and a feminization of Education and Nursing studies, with this segregation being maintained over the years. Business Administration is the only area in which parity is observed; ten years ago, there was slightly more male representation, but this trend has been reversed, with a greater representation of



Female Linear (Male)

GRAPH IV. Bachelor of Business Administration students by gender

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Male

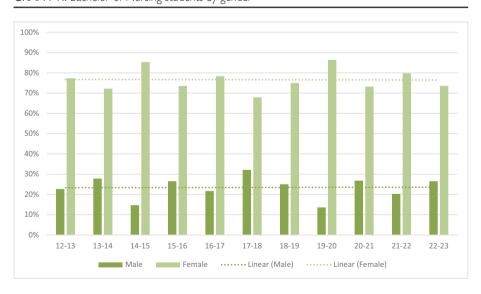
· · · · · · I inear (Female)

GRAPH V. Bachelor of Education students by gender

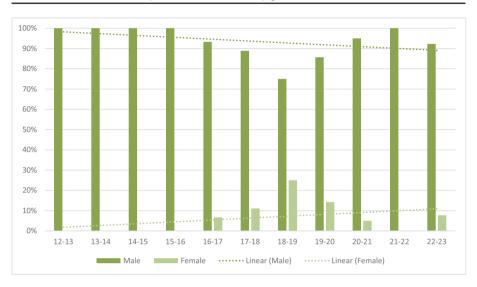


Source: Compiled by the authors.

GRAPH VI. Bachelor of Nursing students by gender



Source: Compiled by the authors.



GRAPH VII. Bachelor of Computer Science students by gender

Source: Compiled by the authors.

women at present. This information is illustrated for each field of study in Graphs IV to VII.

Other studies that have pointed to strong feminization in education and nursing courses are Grañeras Pastrana et al. (2001) (cited by Porto, 2009) and Ariño et al. (2022). The latter study also shows greater parity in the fields of economics, business and tourism. These gender differences by field of study also occur in all OECD countries: 'Women are in the majority in the field of health and welfare for all countries among those entering short tertiary cycles' (OECD, 2023), with data for the year 2021.

This final graph reflects the masculinization of technology studies, as other research has also highlighted (Ariño et al., 2022; Hill et al., 2010; OECD, 2023; Tejuca Martínez, 2020; Watt, 2010). Although the trend seems to be moving towards a reduction of this difference, the starting point is such a low representation of women in these studies that it is difficult to reach the desired parity, and the extreme categorization of highly masculinized studies proposed by Ariño et al. (2022) has continued to apply. In the data from 2021 published in the report on the education panorama (OECD, 2023), we observe that, on average in OECD countries,

women are under-represented in the STEM fields but over-represented in the fields of health and welfare and education. In health and welfare and education, the average for these countries is a percentage of between 79 and 80% of women, with an even higher figure in Spain (90.9%). However, in the STEM field, women make up less than 25% of the OECD (24.1%) and EU25 (23.5%) averages. Once again, the gender gap is wider in Spain, where women represent only 15.6% of the total. Considering these data, we can see that, for the year 2021 (academic year 2021–2022), the gender gap in the area of health and welfare in Andorra is the same as the average of the OECD countries, but with a slightly lower gap than the average for studies in the area of education. Meanwhile, the gender gap in Andorra is higher than the OECD average in the field of technology. One point to be considered, however, is that there is only one degree available in each of these fields in Andorra, whereas the range of degrees in other countries is much more diverse.

Conclusions

This paper aims to explore where there are gender differences in university studies and how they have evolved over the years. Like the work of Watt (2010), this study shows that, despite the efforts made with national policies to increase female representation in STEM studies, the expected results are not being obtained and there has still been a great degree of masculinization in these studies at the University of Andorra over the years.

Considering the risks pointed out by work such as that of Bieri et al. (2016) pertaining to the consequences of this masculinization of studies for the future professional sphere, as they lead to jobs related to a higher socioeconomic status (Watt, 2010) – a fact that may contribute to consolidating the gender gap in professional salaries in the country – new measures that contribute to reversing this situation must be analysed urgently. The study by Sahoo and Klasen (2021) also points to the need to intervene in early educational stages to avoid gender segregation in university studies, which has repercussions on future professional segregation and consolidates the existing gender wage gap in today's societies. Only in this way can we work in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015) determined by the 2030 agenda.

With the aim of providing information that may be useful for defining effective policies in this area, we analysed the profile of new students joining the University of Andorra over the years. The literature shows that gender differences in the choice of field of study exist from early stages (Goy et al., 2018, among others), and this may explain both the lower female representation in STEM studies and the worse results obtained in the mathematical reasoning test sat by newly admitted students on bachelor's degree courses at the University of Andorra, as detailed in the results of this study. This signals the need for early intervention in the country's schools, focused on empowering girls in order to fight against the stereotypes and expectations that determine their future academic choices according to previous studies analysed in this paper (Antecol and Cobb-Clark, 2013; Buser et al., 2014; Matín Carrasquilla et al., 2022; Santana-Vega et al., 2023; Zafar, 2013).

Another result observed in this study, and one in which female students come out on top, is the university entrance score, in line with other studies that show a better academic profile for women (Fernández-Herrero et al., 2022). The trend towards an increase in this access mark over the years observed in the data obtained in this study also points to a good prognosis, in this case for both men and women.

Despite this positive scenario, future research must explain how, in this context, the trend in mathematical reasoning test results is the opposite. It should be foreseeable that with a new entrant profile with an ever-increasing average academic score, the results in this test would also follow the same trend. Another piece of information revealed by this work is that the distribution of students by field of study has remained the same over the years. Moreover, the gradient between these two scores is increasing, which is contradictory and should be analysed by future research.

A significant relationship has also been found between gender and the result of the mathematical reasoning test, in this case in favour of male students, in line with previous studies (Fernández-Herrero et al., 2022; Lakin, 2013; Strand et al., 2006, among others).

The results presented in this study are based on a sample that is a faithful representation of the population, with a high return rate and a small sampling error, which is one of this paper's key strengths. On the other hand, as a weakness, we should consider that, since the distribution of the numerical variables does not follow a normal distribution, we

need to use non-parametric statistical techniques, which are less robust. Another limitation of this study is the small number of university courses considered (four); nonetheless, this is the total number of on-site bachelor's degrees offered by the University of Andorra and representative of four different fields.

As a final conclusion, we would like to point out that another way of working towards reducing the wage gap between men and women in the professional environment could also be greater recognition of the professions that are more feminized, which stem from university courses that show this tendency, as proven by the results of this work, as well as that of Porto (2009), in the case of nursing and education studies. Along these lines, the University of Andorra is working to raise society's awareness of the fundamental role played by these professional profiles and to design second-cycle university programmes (master's degrees) in these specializations, which will contribute to the definition of new professional profiles related to higher levels of competence and remuneration.

Practical implications

After analysing the results of this work and detailing the conclusions reached, we propose some practical implications that could contribute to overcoming the challenges regarding gender equality in academia in today's society, in line with Goal 4 and Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015).

From the university sphere, some measures that can contribute to improving gender inequalities, as pointed out by Ariño et al. (2022), include mainstreaming teaching and research with a gender perspective. To this end, training programmes aimed at teaching staff and specific to fields of study could be proposed, to provide them with tools to apply this new pedagogical approach. It is also important for higher education institutions to introduce the issue of work-life balance to students by facilitating the possibility of education for people with family responsibilities and for the whole population in general. Another aspect that can contribute to reducing the significant masculinization or feminization of university studies, depending on the field of study, is to

give greater visibility to the less represented genders and students in all public and social events at universities.

Finally, and as a practical implication of greater impact, according to the recommendations highlighted in the literature reviewed (Basler & Kriesi, 2019; Sánchez García et al., 2011; Manic & Trajkovic, 2019; Sahoo & Kasen, 2021), action can be taken at early educational stages to contribute to changing established stereotypes and eliminating prejudices and lower academic expectations on the part of women, especially in STEM fields (Sáinz and Upadyaya, 2016; Sax and Harper, 2007; Watt, 2010). Measures to mainstream gender-responsive teaching, targeting teachers from primary schools onwards, could also serve this purpose. A more balanced gender ratio in academic professions exposes children to a more diverse environment and contributes towards breaking down stereotypes and countering the perception of early childhood and primary school teaching as a female profession (McGrath et al., 2020; Peeters et al., 2015; Warin, 2019). As proposed by Huang and Wang (2019), in order to break down the gender stereotypes that reduce the percentage of women in STEM, we should take three measures: (1) not differentiate according to gender in the relationship between teachers and students; (2) adopt a collaborative learning strategy in STEM fields; and (3) increase opportunities for girls to participate in STEM academic activities.

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The new role of the Child and Adolescent Well-being and Protection Coordinator in educational centers: comparative analysis of the regulatory development in the different autonomous communnities

La nueva figura del Coordinador de Bienestar y Protección en los centros educativos: análisis comparado del desarrollo normativo en las diferentes comunidades autónomas

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Abstract

The protection of children and adolescents is a global priority for today's societies. Data from different official bodies on the different types of violence in childhood are more than worrying. Among the possible causes are the absence

of a comprehensive approach to child protection, the lack of teacher training, the lack of coordination of the professionals involved, and the scarcity of resources. In this context, the Organic Law 8/2021, the LOPIVI (2021), arises and, with it, the new figure of the Child and Adolescent Well-being and Protection Coordinator (CWP) in educational centres. This law proposes a holistic approach to the prevention of child violence, generating protective environments in coordination with professionals from different fields. It is up to the Autonomous Communities to specify its implementation. A content analysis of the regulations developed on CWPs by the different autonomous communities up to December 2021 is proposed. Different categories have been established to compare the legislation: implementation of the figure, type of legislation developed, professional profile, aid for developing the functions and types of activities carried out. From the analysis, it can be seen that the enacted legislation is unbalanced and does not follow a common pattern, either in terms of the requirements demanded or the functions to be carried out, with wide divergences, ranging from communities that have not implemented it to others that assimilate it to existing figures. The main conclusion is the prematurity and precariousness of its implementation, highlighting the lack of prior and global reflection to structure and guide this process. At present, this can be considered a situation of inequity in Spain due to the educational inequalities it generates between some communities.

Keywords: childhood, adolescence, child protection, legislation, content analysis.

Resumen

La protección a la infancia y la adolescencia es una prioridad mundial para las sociedades actuales. Los datos de los distintos organismos oficiales sobre los diferentes tipos de violencia en la infancia son más que preocupantes. Entre las posibles causas se señalan la ausencia de un enfoque integral en la protección de la infancia, la falta de formación del profesorado, la poca coordinación de los profesionales implicados y la escasez de recursos. Es en este contexto donde surge la LOPIVI (2021) y con ella la nueva figura del Coordinador de Bienestar y Protección a la Infancia y Adolescencia (CBP) en los centros educativos. Esta plantea un enfoque holístico en la prevención de la violencia infantil, generando entornos protectores y en coordinación con profesionales de distintos ámbitos. Son las comunidades autónomas quienes deben concretar su implantación. Se plantea un análisis de contenido de las normativas desarrolladas sobre CBP por las distintas comunidades autónomas hasta diciembre de 2021. Se han establecido distintas categorías para comparar la legislación: implantación de la figura, tipo de legislación desarrollada, perfil profesional, ayudas para el desarrollo de las funciones de actividades desarrolladas. Del análisis realizado, se colige que las legislaciones promulgadas son desiguales y no siguen un patrón común, ni en requisitos exigidos, ni funciones a desarrollar, existiendo grandes divergencias,

desde comunidades que no la han implantado a otras que lo asimilan a figuras existentes. La principal conclusión es la prematuridad y precariedad con la que se ha producido su implantación, poniendo en relieve la falta de una reflexión previa y global que estructure y guíe este proceso. En el momento actual, este hecho puede considerarse una situación de inequidad en España por las desigualdades educativas que genera entre unas comunidades y otras.

Palabras clave: infancia, adolescencia, protección de la infancia, legislación, análisis de contenido.

Introduction: The need to improve the protection of children and adolescents in today's societies: What's going wrong?

Investment in child protection is an unavoidable requirement for the development of today's societies, as evidenced by Goal 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), which calls for an end to all forms of violence against children. There is also an international concern for child protection and the regulatory development for its guarantee, but the data on childhood violence are extremely worrying. In Spain, 55,354 complaints were filed in 2021 with a child or an adolescent as the victim (Ministerio del Interior, 2022). Of these, 8,317 complaints of crimes against sexual freedom and indemnity stand out, of which 1 out of 2 complaints refer to children and adolescents as victims. Other studies indicate that 7 out of 10 cases of sexual violence reviewed by the Supreme Court in 2020 refer to children or adolescents as victims (Poder Judicial España [Spanish Judicial Branch], 2021). According to data from the Fundación ANAR (2020), the growth rate of cases of sexual abuse was 300.4%, indicating that they have been multiplied by 4, increasing from 273 cases in 2008 to 1093 cases in 2020. Likewise, cybercrime figures continue to rise: according to data from the Ministerio del Interior, 2020, 3430 cybercrime complaints against minors were filed in Spain, compared to 2286 filed in 2017. In addition to violence habitually produced by adults, we can add peer-produced violence, especially in the educational setting, as attested by the international report by UNESCO (2021), where 1 out of 3 students suffered bullying at least once in the month before the survey (32% of the total). In this regard, the Health Behaviour in Schoolaged Children (HBSC) study is a large school survey that is carried out

every four years in collaboration with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, which informs that around 1 in 10 (11%) boys and girls reported having been bullied at school at least 2-3 times a month in the last two months (Cosma et al., 2024). In the Spanish context, we can highlight the UNICEF study that indicates a prevalence of victimisation between 19.9-33.6% and cybervictimisation between 12.2-22.5% in a representative sample of Compulsory Secondary Education schoolchildren (Andrade et al., 2021). In 2023, the Colacao Foundation's study with a large sample of schoolchildren, including primary school students from fourth grade, places the prevalence of victimisation at 6.2% (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2023). In addition, a slightly lower percentage of victims or cybervictims can be considered stable after more than 12 months of reporting suffering from this problem in the Spanish context (González-Cabrera et al., 2021; González-Cabrera et al., 2022). In this line, data from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, Spanish acronym MEFP, 2023) on the telephone service created to attend to cases of bullying in schools answered 10835 calls between September 2021 and 2022, of which 33% were classified as bullying with the corresponding treatment.

The data indicated are only a part of those that exist in this reality, showing that violence against children and adolescents persists in the school and social environment. Moreover, it is latent and difficult to eradicate. Despite the figures, the number of violence cases detected is far from the actual cases, as they depend on the professionals' detection and notification capacity and the victims' access to assistance and legal resources (Plataforma de Infancia [Childhood Platform], 2021).

We cannot forget the problems related to mental health in childhood and adolescence. There is considerable evidence linking mental health and psychological well-being and their importance when defining the results that are expected to be achieved in life. However, the impact of mental illness on the affected human lives is incalculable (UNICEF, 2021c). The data should raise concern: every year, nearly 46,000 children and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 take their own lives. Suicide has become the fourth leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 19 (UNICEF, 2021c) and is currently a topic of social and political concern in the face of the increase in cases.

All the above makes it clear that society is facing a widespread problem of great magnitude because it affects children and adolescents of all ages and cultural and economic levels. It also occurs in multiple contexts: family, peers and the online reality to which youth is increasingly exposed (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2010), especially in the school setting.

However, despite international concern and legislation, the figures continue to increase. The Save the Children (2018) report on child abuse points to three main factors: firstly, the teachers' lack of training, as they are the ones who spend the most time with the students. There is a gap in their initial training, as well as in the permanent training of in-service teachers, in content related to the prevention, detection, and intervention in cases of child violence. We also note that no clear protocols in schools describe the steps to be followed and the professionals involved in them. Secondly, there is evidence of a lack of coordination between workers in the different areas involved in cases of violence: educational, judicial, and health services, because the procedures to be followed are unclear, and there is no integrated system that facilitates the follow-up of the cases. Finally, there is a lack of resources in all the sectors involved in child protection, which materialises in the work overload of these professionals from social services, protection, or the system.

Given the above, the need to address and strengthen the comprehensive approach to preventing violence and protecting children in schools is obvious. This is what UNESCO (2016) calls the *Whole School Approach*, and it proposes to address the needs of students, staff, and the broader community within the curriculum and throughout the school and learning environment. It involves collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour, and wellbeing, as well as the conditions that underpin them.

The new role of the Child and Adolescents Well-being and Protection Coordinatior in Sapnish schools

It is clear that the objective of any educational system is for the children to learn, but there is ample evidence of how the lack of child protection affects school performance, school adaptation and cognitive difficulties (Polanin et al., 2021). For this reason, schools must guarantee this protection as an initial prerequisite, and it is in this context that the Organic Law 8/2021 of June 4 on the integral protection of children and adolescents against violence (hereafter, the Spanish acronym

LOPIVI, 2021) and the role of the Child and Adolescents Well-being and Protection Coordinator (CWP) emerged. This new regulatory framework underlines the need for a holistic and comprehensive approach to the prevention of child and adolescent violence, generating protective and coordinated environments with different networks of professionals from different fields, with the requisite involvement of the entire educational community and society.

Its ultimate purpose is to guarantee the protective function that school environments should exercise, previously contemplated in the Organic Law 2/2006 on Education. Thus, it establishes that, in accordance with Article 124 of the aforementioned law, all educational centres will prepare a Coexistence Plan. This Plan must include the promotion of good treatment and peaceful conflict resolution (article 31.1), the teachers' functions in the different posts and positions they may occupy concerning the promotion, recognition and protection of children's rights in the face of any form of violence that occurs, both within and outside the school, and in the application of the mandatory protocols in each case (Articles 31.2 and 31.3). The law guarantees the supervision of staff recruitment in educational establishments with the provision of a negative certification from the Central Register of Sex Offenders, both for teaching and non-teaching staff who work in the institution on a paid or voluntary basis (Article 32).

However, the most innovative proposal is the creation of the figure of the CWP (Article 35). This regulatory framework must be developed by the autonomous communities (hereafter, ACs) to which the competencies in the field of education were transferred. Organic Law 3/2020, in its sole Article 66, has added Article 124 to Section 5, which establishes that the education administrations will regulate the action protocols against any manifestation of violence, as well as the requirements and functions of the CWP (in any centre, regardless of its ownership). This person will act under the supervision of the centre's director, and the ACs will determine the CWP post's requirements and functions, although the minimums are established by the law itself (Sánchez-Barroso, 2022). The ultimate goal is to turn the school into a factor for protecting children and adolescents. To carry out this mission comprehensively, a proactive culture of child protection must be created with the rest of the social institutions involved. Collaboration is therefore key: either with the management team, which bears the final responsibility, or with the tutors,

through tutorial action, and with the educational guidance team, which had already been participating in tasks such as applying the coexistence plan. However, this depends on the regulatory development carried out in each AC within the framework of its competence adequacy, which may lead to differences and doubts, as warned by Sánchez-Barroso (2022).

To date, there seem to be no empirical studies analysing the impact of the CWP figure. However, several previous works on this subject have been carried out, using more legal and informative approaches (Cabedo-Mallo, 2023; Sánchez-Barroso, 2022). Therefore, our field still needs to address a critical vision of the current time.

Table I summarises the functions attributed to the CWP in the LOPIVI (2021). Their lack of specificity is striking. However, after the 2022/23 academic year had begun, the MEFP published a guide for the Coordinator of well-being and protection in the school community (Espinosa, 2022). To a large extent, this guide is based on the proposals made by UNICEF (2021b) and offers some guidelines for their implementation in schools. Table I shows the original functions of the LOPIVI (2021), organised by

TABLE I. Functions of the CWP and phases of the process of action in schools

PHASES OF ACTION	CWP'S FUNCTIONS INDICATED IN THE LOPIVI (2021)	SPECIFICATION OF THE FUNCTIONS FROM THE MEFP (Espinosa, 2022)
Planning	h) Coordinate the coexistence plan referred to in Article 31 of the LOPIVI with the management of the educational centre k) Encourage healthy and nutritious food in the school, which enables children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable, to eat a balanced diet	+ Develop a protocol that includes the different actions that will be carried out when detecting a situation of violence against children attending the school + Assign functions to each of the people in charge who are involved in the different actions throughout the process
Prevention	d) Promote measures to ensure the maximum well-being of children and adolescents, as well as a culture for their good treatment f) Promote respect for students with disabilities or any other special circumstance of vulnerability or diversity	+ Disseminate Children's Rights among the members of the school community + Promote childhood participation + Encourage positive parenting

(Continued)

TABLE I. Functions of the CWP and phases of the process of action in schools (Continued)

PHASES OF ACTION	CWP'S FUNCTIONS INDICATED IN THE LOPIVI (2021)	SPECIFICATION OF THE FUNCTIONS FROM THE MEFP (Espinosa, 2022)
Training • Level 1: for the entire teaching community • Level 2: qualifying training for the CWP • Level 3: specific training for CWPs in at-risk population	a) Promote training plans in prevention, early detection and protection of children and adolescents, targeting school staff and students. Priority will be given to training plans targeting students for their acquisition of skills to detect and respond to situations of violence. Likewise, in coordination with the Associations of Students' Patents, such training should be promoted among the parents, tutors, guardians, or those who foster care functions f) Inform the centre's staff about the protocols for the prevention of and protection from any form of violence existing in their locality or AC	+ Train the centre's professionals in the use of the protocols on prevention and protection from any form of violence against children and adolescents existing in their locality or AC + Coordinate training activities together with the Associations of Students' Parents on child protection + Plan actions so that students acquire skills to respond to situations of violence
Detection	c) Identify themselves to the students, the school staff and, in general, the educational community as the main point of reference for communications related to possible cases of violence in the school itself or its environment i) Promote, in those situations that pose a risk to minors' safety, immediate communication by the educational centre to the Security Forces and Corps j) Promote, in those situations that may involve the illicit processing of minors' personal data, immediate communication by the educational centre to the Data Protection Agencies	+ Have instruments for detecting situations of violence against children and adolescents + Design a protocol of action for the detection of situations of violence against children and adolescents + Establish an agile and effective communication channel to report situations of violence against children and adolescents + Equip children and adolescents with the skills to detect situations of violence against them + Make the educational community aware of the existence of this figure and its functions in the school + Design a protocol for the illicit processing of minors' personal data

(Continued)

TABLE I. Functions of the CWP and phases of the process of action in schools (Continued)

PHASES OF ACTION	CWP'S FUNCTIONS INDICATED IN THE LOPIVI (2021)	SPECIFICATION OF THE FUNCTIONS FROM THE MEFP (Espinosa, 2022)
Intervention	b) Coordinate, following the protocols approved by the educational administrations, the cases that require intervention by the competent services and, if deemed necessary, inform the corresponding authorities without prejudice to the duty of communicating the cases provided for by law	+ Protect the victims' privacy at all times and in all types of actions + Design measures specifically aimed at avoiding the stigmatisation of those groups of children and adolescents who are in a situation of greater vulnerability + Promote educational measures that help victims overcome the academic, social and emotional consequences derived from the traumatic situations experienced + Coordinate intervention protocols with the competent services within and outside the centre

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Espinosa (2022), LOPIVI (2021), UNICEF (2021b).

phases of action according to the type of activities carried out, together with the subsequent specifications of the MEFP. This organisation was used a posteriori to unravel the results in terms of the proposal of the CWP's functions implemented with the analysed regulations, which generates a common thread for the present work.

Methodology

An exploratory and cross-sectional comparative research design was used. Specifically, the qualitative analysis technique proposed by Flick (2004) was used in the research with the following phases: 1) Define the material based on the research questions; in this case, the sample was represented by the CWP regulations in the different ACs until December 2023; (2) Data collection: The regulations were obtained by the researchers from the websites of the different ACs; (3) Material Features: All the documents analysed are educational regulations of different ranks (instructions, resolutions and orders). (4) Definition of the direction

of the analysis of the text based on the following research questions, subsequently proceeding to (5) the establishment of categories and (6) the interpretation of the results based on the research questions. The following research questions were posed.

- 1) How have the CWP's functions and actions been legislated and specified in the different ACs? Have regulations been developed in this regard? Do CWPs specifically carry out their functions?
- 2) What is the CWP's professional profile? What type of specific training has been considered by the different educational administrations? Are their functions followed up?
- 3) Have the CWP's functions in the educational centre been specified, and the internal and/or external coordination with other professionals involved in child protection?

Different procedures have been used to decompose and classify texts based on thematic categories, where inference is highlighted as a central element. This way, the analysis established the categories based on the research questions according to the aspects of interest indicated in the

TABLE II. Categories analysed in the educational regulations on the figure of the CWP

1. Implement the figure (yes/no) /Type of regulation developed

- 2. CWP Professional Profile
 - 2.1. Professional teacher proposed for the post
 - 2.2. Required training prerequisites
 - 2.3. Specific "ad hoc" and permanent training for the post
 - 2.4. Management's follow-up of the functions
 - 2.5. Appointment of the post
- 3. Supports for the development of functions as a professional CWP
 - 3.1. Specific timetable for the performance of the functions
 - 3.2. Economic remuneration for the post
 - 3.3. Internal/external coordination with other professionals
- 4. Development of the functions: Type of activities carried out in the educational centre
 - 4.1. Planning
 - 4.2. Prevention
 - 4.3. Training
 - 4.4. **Detection**
 - 4.5. Intervention

Source: Compiled by the authors.

specific literature on the subject (Espinosa, 2022; Plataforma de Infancia, 2021; UNICEF, 2021a, b). We used the initial open coding described by Flick (2004), followed by axial coding, where the categories from the previous phase were refined and differentiated, and subsequently, selective coding was performed. All this was synthesised in several categories of analysis that will guide the ordering and presentation of the study results (see Table II). The establishment of the categories in Table II was mixed. On the one hand, previous categories were selected and, on the other, expanded while analysing the information.

Considering the above, we tried to ensure that the categories system was exhaustive, representative, homogeneous, pertinent, univocal, clear and concrete (Guix, 2008). Throughout the block of results, a coding system in tables was performed to facilitate reading and replicability and subsequent reanalysis when the legislative framework is modified.

Results

Implementation of the figure of the CWP: Type of regulation developed

The first distinction made is between the ACs¹ that have implemented the figure of the CWP and those that have not. Of the 18 ACs of Spain (considering the autonomous regions of Ceuta and Melilla), 14 implemented the figure in the 2022/23 school year, 3 did so later, in 2023/2024 (Balearic Islands, Galicia and Catalonia), with Castilla y León being the only one that did not have regulations at the beginning of 2024. In the development of the regulations, there was a great diversity in their typology or rank and their specifications; most of them were low-ranking regulations (instructions for the beginning of the course). In them, there seems to be little development (sometimes none) of the CWP's functions. It should be noted that there was a more extensive and notable development in Andalusia, the Canary Islands, Madrid, Extremadura and La Rioja.

¹ In Spain, an AC is a territorial entity that, within the current Spanish constitutional legal system, is endowed with autonomy, with its own institutions and representatives and specific legislative, executive and administrative powers.

CWP Professional Profile

Under this heading, several key elements are analysed, which are summarised in Table III. Firstly, concerning the professional teacher proposed for the post, there was a group of ACs that indicated that the position would be occupied by the person in charge of Coexistence (Andalusia, Navarre, Valencia and the Basque Country). On the other hand, the Balearic and Canary Islands replaced the coexistence coordinator with the CWP, and La Rioja integrated the two figures, resulting in the creation of the coordinator of coexistence, welfare and protection. Finally, Extremadura initially chose someone from the management team, whereas Cantabria presented the greatest singularity because the task was performed in collaboration with the management, the counselor and Technical Community Service Teachers (PTSC, Spanish acronym of Profesorado Técnico de Servicio a la Comunidad). The rest of the communities indicated someone from the faculty or did not specify who was proposed for the post.

In the schools, mainly the management team appointed the CWP post (Andalusia, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Galicia, Madrid, Navarre, Valencia, Ceuta and Melilla, Extremadura and La Rioja). The prerequisites for training were scarce, with the Canary Islands, Madrid, Extremadura, Galicia and La Rioja establishing levels of prior training (although variable and with different levels of specificity). As for the specific training for the post, only Madrid indicated that it would be necessary to take a training course regulated by the Ministry and, in the case of Asturias, that this training would be contemplated in the Annual Plan for Teachers' Permanent Training. In Extremadura and La Rioja, a commitment to such training was required by those who assumed the CWP post to develop its competencies, but without further specificity. In the case of the Balearic Islands, the administration would provide training. Finally, concerning the Administration's follow-up of the CWP's functions, only the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, Extremadura, and La Rioja explicitly mentioned this point. Table III shows the categories analysed so far.

Development supports for the CWP's functions

Given the breadth of functions assigned to the CWP, the grants contemplated for its development are analysed, taking into account

TABLE III. Implementation, type of the CWP's regulatory development and professional profile

RE	CWP Implementation		CWP PROFS	CWP PROFSESIONAL PROFILE	FILE	
	Type of regulation	2.1.	2.2.	2.3.	2.4.	2.5.
		Professional teacher proposed for the post	Designates	Requires prior training	Specific/ continuous training	Admin. Educational Follow-up
Andalusia	CWP-Specific Instructions	1. CC* (1) 2. MT or Faculty	MT (3)			
Aragon	Instructions for the start of the 2220/23 academic year		US (3)			
Canary Islands	CWP-specific resolution	Teaching staff	ТМ	Yes		Yes
Cantabria	Instructions for the start of the 2220/23 academic year	Collaboration between MT, counsellor and SE ⁽³⁾	SU			
Castilla La Mancha	Organising Order: Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, CSE		US			
Castilla y Leon						
Catalonia	Document ⁽²⁾		SN			
Community of Madrid	Instructions for the start of the 2022/23 academic year		ТМ	Yes	Yes ⁽⁴⁾	
Community F. of Navarre	Resolution of the 2022/23 academic year	*22	ТМ			
Valencian Community	Resolution of the 2022/23 academic year	REC*	МΤ			
Ceuta and Melilla	Instructions for the start of the 2022/23 academic year		ТΜ			Yes

(Continued)

ABLE III. Implementation, type of the CWP's regulatory development and professional profile (Continued)

Extremadura	CWP-Specific Instruction	In ECPE (3): MT	Ε	Yes	Yes	Yes
		or at the proposal of the				
		ΕΣ				
		In CSE: SE (3) or at the				
		proposal of the MT				
Galicia	Order 2023/2024	Permanent teachers	Ψ	Yes		
Balearic Islands	Balearic Islands Resolution 2023/2024		Ψ		Yes	Yes
La Rioja	Decree regulating	1. Permanent teachers	Τ	Yes	Yes	Yes
	coexistence and Order	2. PTSC or SE				
	promoting coexistence	3. Non-permanent teaching				
		ѕтап				
Principality of	Circular at the beginning of	Teaching staff	Faculty		Yes	
Call las	alle 2022/23 acadellile year					
Region of	Order of the 2022/23		Σ			
Murcia	academic year					
Basque	Resolution of the 2022/23	REC*	SN			
Country	academic year					

agement Team; US: unspecified, ECPE: Early Childhood and Primary Education, ES: Social Educators, PTSC: Technical Community Services Teacher (Spanish acronym), 4. Madrid carried out Notes, 1. The * indicates the ACs where existing coexistence figures will perform the CWP's functions; the Coexistence Coordinators (CC) in Andalusia and Navarre; those Responsible for Equality and Coeducation (REC) in the Basque Country and Valencia, 2. Document for the organisation and management of the centres. Coexistence and school climate, 3.MT: Mana specific "ad hoc" course for CWPs. CSE = Compulsory Secondary Education Source: Compiled by the authors (2023)

that this professional must also perform their usual teaching functions. No specific time allocation was included in the following CAs for the development of the CWP's functions: Andalusia, Aragon, the Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Catalonia, Navarre, Valencia and the Basque Country. In the rest of the ACs, an effort was made to detail periods dedicated to the role of CWP, although with great diversity, as seen in Table IV. Concerning economic remuneration, only the Canary Islands, Catalonia and Galicia referred to this point through a specific complement for its performance.

Regarding the internal and external coordination of the CWP, although the LOPIVI (2021) clearly alludes to this aspect, it is unspecified in most ACs. Only Madrid, Extremadura, Galicia, and La Rioja described detailed internal/external coordination (coordination with social services for prevention and referral protocols). This point can be seen in Table IV.

TABLE IV. Supports for the development of CWP functions

М	3.1. Specific time allocation	3.2. Economic remuneration	3.3. Internal/external coordination with other professionals	
Andalusia			MT ⁽²⁾	
Aragon				
Canary Islands	2 to 3 hours and 2 complementary hours	Yes	MT (internal/external)	
Cantabria			MT + School Counsellor + PTSC	
Castilla La Mancha	3 to 8 hours (1)			
Castilla y Leon				
Catalonia		Yes	MT	
C. of Madrid			MT (internal/external)	
C. F. of Navarre			MT (internal/external)	
Valencian C.				
Ceuta and Melilla	2 hours and 2 complementary hours		MT (external)	
Extremadura	2 to 3 complementary hours		MT (internal/external)	
Galicia	2 hours and 2 complementary hours	Yes	MT (internal)	

(Continued)

TABLE IV. Supports for the development of CWP functions (Continued)

Balearic Islands		MT (internal/external)
La Rioja	3 to 9 complementary hours	MT (internal/external)
P. of Asturias	1 hour	MT
Region of Murcia		MT (internal)
Basque Country		MT (internal/external)

Source: Compiled by the authors (2023).

Note:1. Hours to be shared with other coordinations, 2.MT: Management Team.

Development of functions by type of activities

The development of the CWP's functions proposed in the LOPIVI (2021), its organisation by blocks and type of activities are outlined in Table V. The Canary Islands, Extremadura, Galicia and La Rioja are the ACs that provide more detail, gathering and expanding the functions indicated by the LOPIVI. Extremadura presented a more definite development of the functions and specified a series of descriptors, professionals, and internal and external coordination networks. La Rioja described in detail the functions in its regulations. Unlike the previous CAs, the Canary Islands organised the functions in three blocks: dissemination, prevention and intervention-coordination, whereas Galicia did this through coordination groups (with the management team, the Guidance Department and the Students' Parents' Association). The Balearic Islands and Catalonia complied with the functions indicated in the LOPIVI. No specification in this regard was found in Aragon, Cantabria, Madrid, Valencia, Asturias or Murcia.

Conclusions

The first conclusion to be drawn from the results is that there is no unified development of the figure of the CWP in Spain. This may be due to the prematurity and precariousness of the development of its regulation. Despite the mandatory application of the figure since 2021, at the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year, the task was still

TABLE V. Development of the CWP's functions: Typology of activities performed out

Autonomous		TYPE OF A	CTIVITIES	PERFORMED)
Communities	Planning	Prevention	Training	Detection	Intervention
Andalusia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aragon					
Canary Islands(1)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cantabria					
Castilla La Mancha	Yes				Yes
Castilla y Leon					
Catalonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
C. of Madrid					
F. C. of Navarre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Valencian C.					
Ceuta and Melilla	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extremadura ⁽²⁾	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Galicia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balearic Islands	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
La Rioja ⁽¹⁾	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
P. of Asturias					
Region of Murcia					
Basque Country	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Compiled by the authors. Note:1. The ACs expand the functions and organise them in 3 blocks: dissemination, prevention, intervention and coordination, 2. The ACs expand the functions of the LOPIVI (2021).

pending in four ACs: Castilla y León, Catalonia, Galicia and the Balearic Islands. In the 2023-2024 academic year, only Castilla y León had not yet incorporated the figure, which has aroused complaints from the teachers' union of that community (Calvo, 2023), as well as demands from the PTSC, who indicate that they have been performing this role since the 1990s (González, 2021). The regulatory developments are also very diverse, ranging from developments virtually identical to those of the LOPIVI (2021) to those that have reflectively adapted the law to their regional peculiarities. This situation implies that students in some Spanish regions may have better opportunities and possibilities than others, potentially generating indicators of educational inequality depending

on the context where they live. Public authorities should consider this potential inequity, and the regulatory development should be reviewed to adjust to minimum standards in all cases. The following paragraphs will extensively and interdependently answer the research questions that have guided the research principles.

In those communities with a normative development, many approaches give rise to unique realities compared to each other. This is reflected in the different aspects analysed: professional profile, training, hours allocated to functions, and internal/external coordination and selection, among others. Regarding the most relevant aspects, such as the professional profile of the person who occupies the post, different trends can be seen: the most frequent is that the CWP post will be occupied by the already existing Coexistence coordinator in the centres; a second solution is that the post falls to the management teams and, in other centres, any member can be the CWP. It seems logical to think that we are facing a complex situation, as it is a question of incorporating a new figure of great relevance and multiple functions, but which has been absorbed by professionals who already had numerous occupations, with the possible saturation implied. Likewise, as indicated by Cabedo-Mallol (2023), several groups have raised their voices, claiming that the CWP's functions have been carried out by social educators, psycho-pedagogs, or PTSCs from the Guidance Department. The demands of years associated with the need for more posts in the educational system for these professionals are now blurred by the incorporation of external staff or the appointment of faculty members without training in specific topics to perform the CWP's functions. In addition, no specific indications have been established concerning the training the CWP should receive in the centre. In fact, only five ACs indicate specific training, where Extremadura is positively highlighted. In contrast, Madrid offers an ad hoc course of 30 hours that does not seem to guarantee a solid and competence-based training for the position, as it is far from the approach of the training proposed by UNICEF (2021b). The lack of a specific profile coupled with the lack of training entails the risk that the person who assumes the post will not be up to the required skill level for the role. This would pose a structural problem for the development of the role and, therefore, for fully meeting the law's purposes.

It is the obligation of the ACs to specify the CWP's functions, including among them at least those proposed by the LOPIVI (Sánchez-Barroso,

2022). The fact that six ACs do not refer to the functions casts doubts on their compliance with the law. In addition, the detailed analysis of the functions associated with the CWP reveals the need for an extensive background and competencies in multiple topics (not necessarily associated with the management of a centre and many additional competencies besides the usual ones of coexistence) for those who will occupy the post. Given this, it seems surprising that only five ACs include, in numerous and different ways, these aspects and the necessary specific and continuous training. The educational administration does not specify how it will monitor the CWP's work, which is a relevant systemic incongruity and a breach of the regulatory framework set out in the LOPIVI (Sánchez-Barroso, 2022). On the other hand, the lack of monitoring of the functions also implies ignorance about the implementation process, not evaluating it or being capable of obtaining feedback to improve it in the academic years.

Given the complexity and diversity of the CWP's work, the need for internal and external coordination is evident, an aspect not specified in the legislation developed. Thus, we see how the vast majority point out the need for coordination with the management team, scarcely mentioning internal (Faculty and Guidance Department) and external coordination with security forces and Social Services (in the case of Madrid). This can be a relevant limitation for many actions requiring additional follow-up or referral to respond to the problems detected adequately.

The same applies to the "specific support" that facilitates the CWP's work. We find that only a few of the ACs have assigned an exclusive number of hours for the CWP to carry out their work, and this is always subject to the needs of the service. Only the Canary Islands, Catalonia and Galicia contemplate the specific economic remuneration for the CWP figure. This way, due to the absence of a clearly defined profile and solvent specific training, one could conclude that the CWP post's implementation will have considerable room for improvement in successive years, and that the same human resources will continue to be overloaded with functions.

As for the functions and activities to be carried out by the CWP, many are textually limited to the proposals of the LOPIVI (2021). Special mention should be made of Extremadura, which has prioritised the primary prevention of violence, following the indications of UNICEF (2021b), and which, together with the Canary Islands and La Rioja, has expanded the functions proposed by this law. The same applies to the

instruments for detecting violence, which are only mentioned by La Rioja. Finally, it is worrying that only two ACs (Extremadura and La Rioja) mention actions referring to risk groups, which are also indicated by law as a priority.

In future research, the functions of the CWP should be monitored over time to see how its implementation develops in the different ACs in all the points contemplated in this manuscript. Likewise, it is necessary to differentially study the evolution and usefulness of the CWP figure in communities with a more solid regulatory framework and more developed coexistence structures and compare them to ACs without such structures. We need empirical studies that allow us to know current CWPs' perceptions of the adequacy of the practical reality of the LOPIVI (2021) and to compare what is indicated by the norm and what is really being carried out or could be carried out to produce the necessary adjustments.

Final recommendations

We conclude this work with some proposals for the implementation and actions of the CWP based on the need for and relevance of this figure in educational centres. However, its mere creation in a law does not guarantee that it will be properly developed or that it will serve the purposes for which it was designed. The planning of a law and its application must be associated with contingent lines of training, recognition and monitoring that do not seem to have occurred in the 2023/24 academic year, opening the debate for the lines to be followed by the political authorities in the coming years. Some of the ideas that we offer are:

- Equity in education systems is essential to ensure that they equally promote social justice, human development and social cohesion. Therefore, it seems obvious that the starting point is that this resource should be available in the same way in all educational centres in our country and for all children and adolescents, regardless of their place of birth, economic resources or the type of school they attend.
- 2) We need to specify the CWPs' performance in terms of their functions, resources, and training forms, leaving each AC to seek ways to implement them, considering their particularities. This would avoid the current disparity existing in Spanish territory.

- 3) It is necessary to outline the spaces and tasks of this new figure differentially with the Guidance Departments or the coexistence coordinators that already existed in the centres. Establishing a differential profile would greatly help schools and professionals in their daily operations and avoid overlapping functions.
- 4) When applying and developing the LOPIVI (2021), it is necessary not to merge these functions with school management tasks because the people in charge would be overloaded.
- 5) Concrete economic and material actions should be contemplated so CWPs can perform their work properly. The available human resources should clearly describe the key issues (training or specific schedule). All this requires allocating a specific budget item for this purpose and perhaps increasing the staffing to address these problems. This should not be a matter of goodwill on the part of the ACs or the professionals who hold the post.
- 6) Another relevant aspect is a model of initial and continuous training of CWPs at the national level, which would consider the work that must be carried out and the difficulties encountered. Establishing a training network would allow for exchanging experiences among professionals from all over Spain.

Considering all the above, it can be said that the state of application of the LOPIVI (2021) in Spain is uneven in terms of the figure of the CWP, and it is necessary to improve its implementation and development in the coming years to provide a real response to the fundaments pursued in the law.

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The Francoism educational grants policy in Higher Secondary Education and Vocational Training (1939-1970)

La política de becas educativas del franquismo en el bachillerato y la formación profesional (1939-1970)

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Abstract

Grants programmes, which have been closely linked with overcoming lack of free education for a long time, were extremely weak in the Spanish education system. This research work studies how grants were contemplated during Francoism (Spain) by focusing on interventions in general, and on Occupational Higher Secondary Education and Industrial Vocational Training between 1939 and 1970. To do so, we started by locating primary documentary sources (most unpublished) to then analyse them by following the historic-educational methodology, and placing special emphasis on data triangulation and properly contextualising references in educational, social and political domains. Of the most outstanding sources, it is worth highlighting that two well-defined stages were identified. The first had only a few interventions. As from the 1950s, the second stage was to promote grants as a mechanism to extend schooling fees, and was exponentially intensified in 1961 with the Equal Opportunities Fund. The budget went from 95.5 million pesetas in 1960 to 2,400 million pesetas 7 years later. In 194,6 there were around 1,000 grants, which came close to 150,000 in 1966. Hence the grants policy became increasingly important in the Spanish education system. The programme was conceived by taking a proactive and strictly meritocratic approach, one exclusively for students with few resources and excellent capacity, and with the vocation to study. It was redesigned and supported by the reformist sectors of the Franco regime to fulfil social, cultural and political objectives, and was publicised as one of the most important achievements. Its contribution to updating and modernising Francoism was considerable, it always helped its survival and was never questioned as a political model.

Keywords: francoism, education policy, grants programmes, equal opportunities, secondary education, higher secondary education, vocational training.

Resumen

Los programas de becas fueron durante mucho tiempo extremadamente débiles en el sistema educativo español. Esta investigación estudia cómo los planteó el franquismo, centrándonos en las intervenciones en los itinerarios de los bachilleratos general y laboral y de la formación profesional industrial entre 1939 y 1970. Para ello hemos partido de la localización de fuentes documentales primarias -entre otras, legislación, informes y memorias- la mayoría inéditas, para posteriormente analizarlas siguiendo la metodología histórico-educativa. Se ha realizado especial hincapié en la triangulación de los datos y la contextualización de las referencias en los ámbitos, educativo, social y político. Entre las aportaciones más destacadas cabe señalar la identificación de dos etapas bien definidas. Una primera con escasísimas intervenciones. La segunda, a partir de comienzos de la década de 1950 en que comenzó a impulsarse las becas como mecanismo para ampliar las tasas de escolarización, y que se intensificó exponencialmente en 1961 con la creación del Fondo para la Igualdad de Oportunidades. El presupuesto pasó de 95,5 millones de pesetas en 1960 a 2.400 siete años después y los becarios, que en 1946 rondaba el millar, se acercaban a los 150.000 en 1966. De ese modo, el programa de becas cobró una importancia creciente. Este se concibió con un enfoque proactivo y estrictamente meritocrático, exclusivamente para estudiantes con escasos recursos y con notoria capacidad y vocación para los estudios. Fue rediseñado y apoyado por los sectores reformistas del régimen y buscó alcanzar objetivos sociales, culturales y políticos, siendo publicitado como uno de los logros más importantes. Su contribución a la actualización y modernización del franquismo fue notable y siempre estuvo al servicio de su pervivencia, sin cuestionarlo como modelo político.

Palabras clave: franquismo, política de la educación, programa de becas, igualdad de oportunidades, enseñanza secundaria, bachillerato, formación profesional.

Introduction

It is well-accepted that slowness and unequal development have characterised the implantation of the Spanish education system. The consecutive governments in the 19th century promoted, albeit generally and without too much interest, the creation of schools, colleges and institutes, and set norms, but the majority did not meet the foreseen objectives. Thus, for decades, there was a very wide gap between that prescribed and its practical application (Puelles, 1999).

We can find a good example of this in the development of gratuitousness, which was a key element to promote schooling processes. On this, the Spanish "Moyano" Law in 1857 formally declared the partial gratuitousness of Primary Education in public schools for those pupils whose families did not have the necessary resources. To generalise it to second schooling, now called Secondary Education, more than one century had to go by, practically until the General Education Law (GEL) came into force in Spain in 1970 (Viñao, 2004). Although this is an area with plenty of grey zones, we can state that this regulation often proved useless.

Indeed, the gratuitousness of learning is something relatively recent in Spain. For a long time, people had to pay to study. The families that registered their sons and daughters in private centres had to pay, as did those who sent them to public schools and institutes. The vast majority, save very few exceptions, had to pay: registration fees and rights to sit exams; monthly fees; bonuses; administrative duties, etc. There were also other payments in kind. All this meant that the Spanish education system was based on marked economic discrimination.

To mitigate such a situation, study aid programmes were gradually set up, initially for students with notable intellectual capacities and few resources, which ended up being known as grants. This initiative involved considerable background. Bermejo conducted a detailed study (1971) that carefully traced them by linking them with the consolidation of the liberal state, and also with the slow implantation of the national education system. This grants programme somewhat intensified, but always fell short of the necessary requirements, and so it was that government plans sought to increase schooling as of the 1920s.

By taking all this background into account, the present research work aims to analyse the building and development of the grants programme during Francoism, from the end of the Spanish Civil War (1939) to the end of the 1960s. During this period (1939-1970), we pay special attention to the national funding used to apply the Principle of Equal Opportunities, created in June 1960, which played a very relevant role as both a benchmark of education policies discourse and a mechanism to drive schooling. Although grants covered the whole education system, we concentrate on Higher Secondary Education (HSE) and Vocational Training (VT), which make up today's Secondary Education. We particularly measure their structuring with the changes that the education system underwent.

This theme has barely been investigated from our knowledge area. We found a couple of studies about School Protection Councils during the Second Republic in Spain (in the 1930s), but had very little to do with the school protection of Francoism for being more about administration organisations with no grants competences (Sánchez, 1991 and Fernández, 2017). Delgado (2005) describes the large grants system in force at Occupational Universities, and slightly more attention was paid to the University stage. Without forgetting the historic-educational perspective, we should mention the recent study by González-Delgado and Groves (2024) about the UNESCO grants programmes, or from sociology the work of Alegre (2022) about the evolution of students with grants. A global approach from the legal world about the state's role in grants to study can be consulted in (Canal, 2018).

As we go on to see, this grants programme had some interesting ideological facets, and a marked quantitative dimension appeared with profound educational, social and political implications from the 1960s. As far as we know, this research is the first of its kind, focuses on pointing out the most highlighted traits and leaves open a number of interesting questions for future studies.

We followed the historic-educational method to conduct the present research work. For this purpose, we located and analysed many primary sources, including reports, memorandums, regulations, statements and adopted stances, of which many appear in Ministry publications. They are official political and administration documents whose writings underwent exhaustive triangulation. We also stress the quantitative perspective in an attempt to value as exactly as possible the impact of the various initiatives and their temporal evolution. To properly contextualise studied the debates and the initiatives, we resorted to reference texts from the general history, economic and tax domains.

Education following the Spanish Civil War

Right from the start, Francoism substantially reorganised the education policy. The new regime provided the theme we herein investigate with an outstanding space by passing the School Protection Law in 1944, whose ideological orientation was explicit (Ley de 19 de julio de 1944). When initially presenting the reasons, it claimed that it was oriented by principles of "social justice", which inspired the new regime. Immediately after came: "School protection is not merely charitable work, but the state's duty and a social obligation" (p. 5555).

Article 3 indicated the types and models of school protection with possible economic grants, which were direct, indirect, as credit and as studies material, provision, health care and the so-called supplementary welfare. On administrative organisation, it pointed out the leading role of the Ministry of Education by creating a School Protection Patronage. This was set up with the participation of those who acted as heads of this department, and were answerable to the ministry, and it also included representatives of Foreign Affairs, Work and Home Secretary, plus several delegations of the Secretary General of the Movement with educational competences. This national structure was replicated in every university district with the Rector's Presidency in charge.

This law proved ambitious for covering the whole education system, and included aspects ranging from medical insurance and traditional study grants to school dining halls, and university subsidies, university end-of-career trips, and study grants and pensions for teachers. Intense proactivity was required to attend all this, but reality was quite a different thing and its impact was minimal. Few funds were granted for this purpose in the 1940s, and it was not until the 1950s before they slightly increased. Thus, for instance, it was not until a decade later before anything to do with health care started to be partially applied.

Regarding grants, the crux of the law literally pointed out that five percent of students had to have a grant, but this figure was to become a fantasy. As it shows, we point out that during academic year 1946-1947, the ministry awarded 325 grants of 300 pesetas and 678 half grants of 150 pesetas, which were paid over 9 months for HSE studies (Orden de 16 de mayo de 1946). Although other grants existed, this call handed out the most funds. In round numbers, slightly more than one thousand of the 203,136 students (around 0.5%, one tenth of what the law indicated)

were considered to be grant holders, and only one third were full grant holders (Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, 1966). Pérez (2009) provides references in line with this from a much more specific local perspective. During academic year 1950-1951, the national call awarded 18 grants for Secondary Education for the whole Almería province (south Spain), of which six were for HSE students.

Some changes

Some changes of certain relevance started being applied to such a limited intervention in 1951 when Ruiz Giménez was named Minister of Education. In 1953, the School Insurance Law was passed, which initially covered some aspects of HSE students before shifting to other studies (Ley de 17 de julio de 1953). The next step came in 1955 when, by taking advantage of the reform made to the ministry's organic law, which promoted several study offices, the School Protection and Social Welfare Office (SPSWO) was created (Puelles, 1999). This office was conceived as an *executive organisation* of the patronage, and was in charge of managing anything to do with the matters that we are analysing (Secretaría General Técnica, 1956). In line with what was happening throughout the ministry, its actions were prioritised to respond as efficiently as possible to any existing problems because "Spain's delay in educational matters was considerable..." (p. 1).

This set of measures clearly covered the interest shown at the time in being able to increase schooling fees which, for HSE students, went from starting to open up classrooms to students from other social classes. Ruiz Giménez expressed this on many occasions by clearly stating his position in this outstanding aspect of education policy. He stated that "the most urgent needs of Spanish education" were about "winning the battle of solidarity between all school population sectors and establishing equal rights to education at all its levels" (p. 4).

The reformist consideration was done from the perspective of the theory about putting to better use *human capital*, as set out by one of the people in charge of the SPSWO (Lorenzo, 1963a). "There is awareness of having to avoid wasting the human resources that can be produced, but intelligent young people cannot go to class for not having economic resources" (p. 5). The two pivots on which this programme

was based were indicated. "Two essential requisites overlap: firstly, the *capacity*, the *aptitude for studies* to which they show their vocation; secondly, *not having the economic resources*" (p. 8, the original is shown in italics).

Likewise, other objectives are taken into account beyond what is merely the economic perspective. The General Commissioner (Navarro, 1961b) pointed this out on a different occasion. He believed that a robust and balanced grants programme would be "a powerful incentive for progress and national harmony". Otherwise, if not carefully looked after, negative consequences could come about: "When talent is lost, bitterness is felt, and an opportunity disappears, which means serious harm for the community's interest" (p. 906).

The School Protection Office

Within this framework of ideological and political references, the grants programme had to steer well away from lethargy, and this office was in charge of doing just that. One of the most important actions it took consisted in managing to increase credits, which went from 165,000 pesetas spent in 1951 to grants from the studied courses of 10,173.268 in 1955 (Secretaría General Técnica, 1956). This increase was substantial and involved multiplying the budgeted amount by 60. Increases were even greater in successive years, but were always much less than those in charge hoped for and were far-removed from the 5% grants goal, as Table I shows.

TABLE I. Budget in pesetas and number of grants for HSE (general and occupational) and Industrial Vocational Training (IVT)

Academic year	Grants	Budget	
1956-1957	5,153	15,553.810	
1958-1959	7,542	34,084.500	
1961-1962	9,086	45,669.500	

Source: the authors based on Aparicio 1956, Lorenzo 1959 and School Protection Notes 1961.

The programme's intensification became a regular feature. During academic year 1958-1959, grants increased by almost 50% compared to academic year 1956-1957, with 76% more being offered in 1961-1962 than five years before. This increase was even bigger in the budget. By taking academic year 1956-1957 as the starting point, which was the first academic year that this office led the grants programme, the quantity virtually doubled in two academic years and had tripled four academic years later.

The value of grants also considerably increased. In 1955, the modules for non-university students were 1,350 and 1,800 pesetas depending on place of residence and type of studies. In 1958, they went up to 2,250 and 6,000 pesetas, and those for IVT for academic year 1960-1961 were 7,500 pesetas, (Spanish Ministry of Education, 1961). Those in charge were critical about their low value and constantly reminded everyone of the objective that the 1944 Law set out by indicating that 3,500 grants for 1957 only represented 1.3% of those registered for HSE (Aparicio, 1957).

Accordingly, grants doubtlessly became a preferential objective of the education policy. Without forgetting most of the rhetoric linked with the Spanish Civil War, interventions in education began by it being supplemented with more ambitious reformist initiatives.

From this perspective, what we believe is a particularly relevant, albeit rarely reviewed, fact must be stressed. This reformist orientation did not undergo any amendments with the change that came about from the 1956 governmental crisis, as specified in education, when Joaquín Ruiz Giménez was replaced with Jesús Rubio García-Mina. Despite their different bones, the former from a Catholic family and the latter a Falangist, continuity prevailed and the reforming orientation was made a priority, which enabled the efficiency of the taken initiatives to continue, and to even increase.

In parallel to reinforcing grants, the SPSWO was internally reinforced. In February 1956, José Navarro Latorre, who was then a professor at the Ramiro de Maeztu Institute, was appointed as General Commissioner of School Protection. He had shouldered different responsibilities in organisations corresponding to the Secretary General of the Movement in both Zaragoza, where he was born, and Madrid (Actualidad educativa, 1956). Jesús Aparicio Bernal, another interesting figure, also had other responsibilities, such as technical advisor to the SPSWO. A Falangist, and

with an outstanding background in the Spanish University Trade Union (SEU), which he headed from 1957 to 1962, he later performed important tasks like the General Director of Radio Broadcasting and Television, and also in private firms.

The actions taken by the SPSWO were also characterised by another series of remarkable traits. First of all, he made considerable effort by integrating different grants to technically help procedures and by unifying administrative management. Previously each university district had its own award criteria. However, "... as of academic year 1956-1957, school grants started being awarded nationally by public calls and, in accordance with objective criteria, were generally applied nationwide" (Lorenzo, 1963a, p. 6).

The SPSWO, which acted as a branch of the School Protection Patronage, also knew how to maintain the head of the Ministry of Education as opposed to the other departments, particularly before delegations of the Movement, such as the SEU, the National Delegation of the Youth Front and the Trade Union Organisation. It had the support of Government's Cabinet Office, and of the actions taken by the aforementioned Navarro Latorre and Aparicio, both with acknowledged careers in the Movement, which proved extremely helpful (Order of the Government's Cabinet Office, 1957 and Technical Secretary of the SPSWO, 1957).

We complete the present analysis of general references with another about the specific distribution of grants. Data refer to the academic year 1958-1959 call and provide us with detailed information about them, as Table II shows.

TABLE II. Distribution of grants per types of centre for academic year 1958-1959

Type of centre	Grants	Amount
Institutes	1.894	8,757.000
Private schools	949	6,500.000
Major seminaries	233	104,850
Occupational Institutes	993	4,238.000
Milling machines course	17	104,000
Industrial VT	3,689	14,485.500

Source: the authors based on Lorenzo 1959.

Evidently for these dates the education authorities gave more priority to access VT studies, where we must also include the Occupational Higher Secondary Education (OHSE) course, taught at technical HSE or OHSE institutes. For the students of both these studies, 4,583 grants were available, which was almost two thirds of all grants, and were financed with 18,500.000 pesetas. There were 1,894 grants for the general HSE students registered with institutes, whose budget came to 8,757.000 pesetas. Next came private schools' students with 949 grants and a budget of 6,500.000 pesetas. Their amount is striking because the students awarded grants had to be day students.

When we take into account the total registration of all these courses, their prioritisation comes over much more clearly. The students of such courses were distributed as follows: 420,852 general HSE, 15,536 OHSE and 61,294 industrial VT (Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, 1966). Therefore, 6.01 of the VT students, 6.39% of the OHSE students and 0.67% of the general HSE students obtained grants. When we calculate the amount spent on grants per student, we find that 236.32 pesetas were invested in VT, 272.78 in OHSE and 22.35 in general HSE.

All these figures move in the same direction and endorse the indicated prevalence. In round numbers, the number of grants was 9-fold bigger in the two professional courses than in the general HSE one, and the amount per pupil was between 10- and 12-fold larger. In its low budget, the main objective of the grants programme for that time was for students of the professional courses as opposed to those studying traditional HSE, and for those of OHSE (Lorenzo, 1963a).

The above table is completed with two other more peculiar elements. During that academic year, 17 grants were awarded that totalled 104,850 pesetas for those students registered for the milling machine transformation course. The consulted documents allow us to certainly assume to a great extent that it was a specific initiative of a conjunctural nature that, despite continuing later, was not very large.

The last epigraphy is about 233 grants, valued at 4,500 pesetas, for the students at major seminaries, on whom a total of 104.850 pesetas was spent. As another example of the important role played by the Catholic Church during Francoism, the School Protection Programme also systematically included grants for seminarians and priests. In this case, studies at major seminaries were considered to be the equivalent to those of HSE. However, as part of Higher Education, some grants for

members of the religious order and priests were also found for them to continue their studies at pontifical and civil universities, and in both Spain and abroad, and they could also train in missionary activities (Technical Secretary of the SPSWO, 1957).

Another interesting trait is that the whole programme comes over from the purely meritocratic perspective. Those responsible in ministries made this intention quite clear in numerous reports and statements. One of the most significant intentions is found in the words pronounced by Navarro Latorre during the welcome speech of the First International Colloquium on School Protection, which was held in Madrid in 1957 (*Se celebra en Madrid*, 1957). During his speech, in a grandiloquent tone he clearly set out the Spanish government's objective: "Undeniably this is the time to extend assets of the superior culture to many strata of our people...". These initiatives had to make the following principle quite clear:

Help those who are worthy of it; those who notoriously demonstrate that they have the capacity and vocation to obtain the privilege of higher qualification. But far from us are these confusing forms of false proselytism, which blind us about finding easy paradises with promises of equal advantages for all, and the noble purpose of protecting and helping, but only and exclusively, the best (p. 68).

On many occasions, Professor Navarro insisted on expecting excellent performance, which he believed to be of utmost importance. His criterion was taken into account and he built one of the distinguishing marks of the grants programme (Navarro, 1961a, and Lorenzo, 1963b).

These meritocratic considerations represented a clearly restrictive conception of the right to education: for everyone, but only concerning Primary Education. Then the dual system imposed its law and promoted the grants programme, as the person in charge of it pointed out, and it should be confined only to those boys and girls from less favoured classes who display "notorious capacity and vocation". Only those students could benefit from "the privilege of Higher Education" (p. 68).

Precisely these words pronounced by the person in charge of the grants programme allowed us to make a link with the last trait to be highlighted. The increase in grants carefully took into account the international perspective, particularly the European perspective. The cited event is a good example of this. It was a meeting organised by the International Association of University and Professional School Information, to which

representatives from Germany, Belgium, Canada, the Dominican Republic, France, Israel and Tunisia attended, as did observers from Colombia, Chile, the United States, the Philippines and Persia, as well as delegations from the World Health Organization and UNESCO (*The First International Colloquium*, 1958).

Spanish education authorities were intensely involved in the organisation by sending a delegation with 12 members, when those of other countries only had one member or two. For a greater effect, after a debate and reform process, they presented and managed to get passed a Declaration of Principles about Protecting the Right to Study. It was the so-called *Declaration of Madrid*, which was edited in Latin, French, Spanish, English and German (Lorenzo 1957).

Apart from this colloquium taking place in 1957, the studied documents are full of references made to grants and school protection programmes from other countries (Núñez, 1957). Along these lines, those in charge of the education policy coincided with other departments.

This was how Minister Rubio García-Mina saw it in the National Education Council during a session held on 23 May 1961. While making his speech, he pointed out that a general rule of the Spanish regime was "hostile lack of knowledge". However, something was about to change: "here it is fair to recognise that in both the permanent Geneva Expo and the "Bureau International d'Education Record", or in the corresponding UNESCO Departments, praiseworthy remarks have been repeatedly made to this guiding operation towards Spanish school protection" (Rubio, 1961, p. 1022).

The National Fund for Promoting Equal Opportunities

Such clearly proactive dynamics resulted in the grants programme being incorporated into political discourse by conferring it great importance and stressing its excellent benefits. At the SPSWO, a suitable title was sought: *Doctrine of School Protection in Spain* (Ministry of National Education, 1961). In this way, one of the people in charge described the situation in this way: ".... School Protection activities are performed more. Every year their penetration goes more deeply into problems in broad sectors of public opinion.... It is necessary for such attention to not diminish" (Lorenzo, 1960, p. 64). The promotion to favour public

and political visibilidty aimed to increase assigned credits, which was a largely pursued objective.

Such considerations converge with reformist proposals in economic policy and in administrative organisation, which were being debated at the heart of the Franco government. As a response to the bad economic situation, these initiatives were taking off at the end of the decade. They were specified in the 1959 Stabilisation Plan and in later development plans. Within the new technocratic framework, which the Franco regime delved more deeply into with these measures, the grants programme found the place it was looking for and was well-promoted. A first fact showing its importance took place in June 1960 with the bill *Bases with which certain national funds are created to apply Tax and Savings* (Governance of the Spanish Parliament, 1960).

After this peculiar heading, four funds were created: extending the principle of equal opportunities; welfare work; protecting jobs; diffusing real-estate property. The aim was to increase some social policies that had barely been attended to until that time in the economic reorientation context that was being set up. Of these four, that which interests us is the National Fund for encouraging Equal Opportunities, which was completely limited to the education domain. To finance it, the project set out that it would spend all the money obtained from tax on the general contribution to the grants programme and to School Protection Patronage grants.

This tax was the peculiar and not clearly related background of today's Income Tax for natural persons which, paradoxically, was created in 1932 by Catalanist Republican minister Jaume Carner and only taxed annual incomes over 100,000 pesetas. As a reference and guide, in 1960 only 0.5% of salary earners earned more than 52,500 pesetas a year, while the minimum salary was 1,800 pesetas. So, this tax was paid only by a very few taxpayers (Martorell & Comín, 2002 and Lorenzo, 1963b).

The bill was debated in the Treasury Committee of the Spanish Parliament, where marked differences in opinions were voiced. Some deputies rejected the proposal with arguments like: it was not the right time; a rise in taxes or preferences for tax rebates. Positions in the debate did not change and several reforms were presented for the motion for the rejection of the bill, which they were rejected by 23 votes to 11. The project moved on to the plenary session held on 20 July. The sentence was defended by deputy Díaz Ambrona, who was the President of the cited committee and a well-known Falangist. During his speech,

he pointed out the regulation's close link with the Stabilisation Plan, the favourable results that the new economic policy was yielding and the marked increase in tax collection. He also applied social justice arguments, supported by data from the SPSWO about grant holders' low rate. The law was voted and passed, although 24 deputies voted against it (Creation of National Funds, 1960).

From this time, the grants programme quickly entered a much more ambitious phase. From the administration perspective, it attempted to adapt what then existed to the new context marked by increased finance. As the management structure had been set up and working some years before, it helped this promotion to be carried out without too many problems.

One of the first steps consisted in reorganising the patronage and the SPSWO. The former was transformed to become the Patronage for Promoting Equal Opportunities (PEOs), structured during a plenary session that, in turn, had four work committees and a permanent committee. Committees covered the four stages of the Spanish education system: Primary Education, Secondary Education, VT/OHSE and Higher Education. The Department of Education remained in first place. The minister still occupied the presidency, subsecretary and Vice-presidency, and designated members included all the general directors, protection and school extension commissioners, the SPSWO secretaries, the Industrial VT Board secretaries, the Professional Secondary Education Patronage secretaries, and one representative of the Spanish National Research Council. Two representatives of the Ministry of the Treasury and that of Work, one from the Ministry of Agriculture, seven from various delegations of the Movement with education competences, four representatives of the Church, two representatives of country council offices and two from municipal councils, plus an interventor representative, came to the plenary session (Decree 2420/1960, of 20 December).

It is worth highlighting several of the new organisation's characteristics; firstly, its willingness to reinforce the coordination of the different structures with educational competences; secondly, the interest in facilitating its operation by organising it at several levels, such as permanent, committees and plenary session; finally, the prioritisation of budget streamlining is also stressed, done by including representatives of the Treasury and an interventor representative of the General Intervention of State Administration, who also played the role of Head of Accountancy.

The patronage began its tasks in 1961. The Treasury assigned 600 million pesetas and the SPSWO began devising an investments plan for academic year 1961-1962 (Decree 2412/1960). Credit had substantially increased if we bear in mind that it had received 95.5 million pesetas the previous year, and Plan I implied an increase of more than 600% (Lorenzo, 1963a).

The budget continued to go up in successive years, as Table III shows. The 600 million pesetas in Plan I doubled the following year, and 800 million more were added in Plan III to reach 2,000. There were 2,200 million pesetas for the next three academic years, which once again went up to 2,400 million in Plan VII that corresponded to academic year 1967-1968. The credit for grants had gone from 95.5 million pesetas in 1960 to 2,400 million in 1967, and had multiplied by 25.15 in eight years. Such effort must be considered particularly significant and remarkable from any point of view.

TABLE III. Budget for the Investments Plans of Principle of Equal Opportunities Funds

Plan I (1961-1962)	600 millon pesetas
Plan II (1962-1963)	1,200 millon pesetas
Plan III (1963-1964)	2,000 millon pesetas
Plan IV (1964-1965)	2,200 millon pesetas
Plan V (1965-1966)	2,200 millon pesetas
Plan VI (1966-1967)	2,200 millon pesetas
Plan VII (1967-1968)	2,400 millon pesetas

Source: Plan for 1967-1968, 1967, p. 76.

A comparison to other references allows us to better grade the magnitude of these figures. The credit assigned to Plan II was higher than the 1963 general budgets assigned to each of the following ministries: the Treasury, Housing, Work, Information and Tourism, and Trade and Industry (Lorenzo, 1963b). Let's centre on the Department of Education. In 1963, it received 8,883.5 million pesetas. The 2,000 assigned to the Patronage, whose accountancy was separate, represented almost one quarter or, more specifically, 22.5% more. As one part of this department's structure, only the General Management of Primary Eduction had 6,150 million pesetas, a much higher credit (*Spanish National Education*, 1963).

Given this new situation, grants notably increased. During academic year 1960-1961, the last year of the previous stage, 15,000 grants were announced, of which 9,453 corresponded to the three academic years we herein study (Lorenzo, 1963a). In Plan I, they rose to 31,127, which was more than double (Lorenzo, 1963b). The general increase was even more marked. For the education system on the whole, 79,324 grants were assigned, which was more than 5 times those offered the year before. They continued to go up in successive years. For the academic years indicated in Table IV, those corresponding to HSE and VT courses multipled by 4.

TABLE IV. Grants awarded by the Investments Plans of Principle of Equal Opportunities Funds

	Plan I (1961-1962)	Plan II (1962-1963)	Plan III (1963-1964)	Plan VI (1964-1965)	Plan V (1965-1966)
General HSE	12,678	28,548	52,719	75,908	78,167
OHSE	5,460	5,330	11,053	14,354	13,872
Industrial VT	13,179	19,332	27,017	33,457	32,560
Totals	31,317	53,210	90,789	123,719	124,599

Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (MEC; 1966), p. 205.

Those that increased the most were for general HSE, which multiplied by 6, and those for VT and OHSE had multiplied by around 2.5. The OHSE ones lowered for academic year 1965-1966, doubtlessly due to the foreseen unification of this course with the elemental general HSE grade, which took place in April 1967 and put an end to this course (Lorenzo, 1963a, 1963b and J. A. Lorenzo, 2003).

TABLE V. Plan III (1963-1964): registration; budget and grant holders

	Full registration	Grants	Grant holders %	Budget (pesetas)
General HSE	745,044	52,719	9.43%	437,394.700
OHSE	35,821	11,053	30.82%	94,530.500
Industrial VT	96,020	27,017	28.13%	245,774.800
Totals	876,885	90,789	10.35%	777,700.000

Sources: the authors based on the MEC 1966 and the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) 1965.

By carefully analysing the Plan III figures, as the new model started to become quite well-established, we can better see the dimensions and internal reorientations that were carried out. The budget for this academic year came to 2,000 million pesetas, which enabled 777,700.000 pesetas and almost 91,000 grants to be awarded to the courses being studied. Thus 30.82% of the students who had registered to study OHSE, 28.13% of those studying VT and 9.43% of the general HSE students were grant holders. This distribution corresponds to the indicated reorganisation. Although the percentage was still higher for the OHSE and VT students, the number of grant holders in general HSE significantly grew. By taking the figures for academic year 1958-1959 as as reference, the grants awarded for professional-type studies multiplied by between 4.6 and 4.8. Conversely, although there were fewer HSE grant holders, their numbers had multiplied by 14 in one 5-year period.

To this analysis we must add a grant category that appeared for the first time with Plan I, the so-called *access grants*, which were encompassed in the Primary Education block. Its objective was to help Primary Education pupils to go on to study HSE. This category's background was the *rural grants* that had been awarded during academic year 1960-1961. Beneficiaries had to be highly capable boys and girls, their capability was proven by them doing certain tests, and they had to live in towns with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. During this call, they were literally called pupils from "poor rural towns", and they did not live in towns where they could continue their studies. The first selection was done by male and female teachers themselves at schools. Candidates later had an interview with the Provincial Committee with representatives from the inspection department and institutes. The grant included "lodging, meals, books and, in certain cases, clothing and footwear", and its amount was the equivalent to that of university education (National Ministry of Education, 1961, pp. 17-18).

During the first call, they were granted to 18,000 students who had passed the tests prepared by the Centre of Documents and Didactic Orientation for Primary Education (CDDOPE), which consisted in two intelligence tests and one instruction test. The programme was closely followed up by the SPSWO, which evaluated in detail each call's evolution by identifying which aspects were to be improved and by making suitable amendments (Navarro, 1961b and Lorenzo, 1963b).

This major reorganisation of priorities in Secondary Education courses responded to the changes made in the education policy. The education authorities, along with Minister Rubio García Mina at the head, set a new goal. He, in association with the statements made in 1961 to journalists

from various mass media, indicated that given the contemporary world's demands, elemental HSE must be considered "the minimum base for Spaniard's education" (*Editorial. Fomento*, 1961, p. 992). The main person responsible for the Spanish education policy added to this initiative others to "... extend Secondary Education inside and outside urban centres, in suburb districts, in rural centres...". The aim of them all was to attain "better prepared youths for the time we live in", but to also renew the "the features of our own towns" and to revitalise by means of culture "...their spiritual eagerness's and energies towards new courses of prosperity and well-being" (p. 993). The fact that this stance was taken allows us to insist on the wide range of motivations that were related to the reorganisation of the grants policy carried during these academic years (Cruz, 2019).

By taking a more broader approach, when comparing these figures to the 9,453 grants scheduled for academic year 1960-1961, which was almost one tenth of those announced three academic years later, to the budget of 14,485.500 pesetas for academic year 1958-1959, which was 55 times lower, we can better grade the magnitude of change. With these changes, grants stood out for the first time in the Spanish education system for all the educational, social and political implications that this meant, and they coincided with plans to extend the network of institutes (Viñao, 2004).

Likewise, it was in this new stage that study grants were widely advertised as one of the most highlighted social initiatives. We have provided several examples on previous pages. We complete them with the words that General Franco spoke on this matter during his speech on 17 November 1967 when opening the Spanish Parliament's new term of office. From the regime's political dynamics, this was a particularly outstanding occasion, that of making the most of striking a balance for the whole stage and to set out future action proposals.

The Head of State assessed the initiative as follows by framing it within the broadest objectives of the education policy by specifically pointing out that:

Forty years ago, half the population had no schooling of any kind ... Then only half a dozen children studied in towns, the children of the wealthy who lived there; today a modern, diversified Secondary Education system, supported with funds from extremely important grants, reaches the whole country, is available for both sexes, and has become a true cultural revolution... We have taken a historic step with consequences that are impossible to calculate, but is now the present

reality, with future hope that the Native Land has never known (*La Enseñanza media*, 1967, pp. 2337-2338).

Conclusions

So, we conclude that there are sufficient documents that reveal the considerable reorientation of the Francoism grants policy during the study period. After more than one decade of the system initially not proving to be practically useful, it started to be reactivated while Ruiz Giménez was minister, and exponentially grew as of 1961 with the National Fund for Equal Opportunities. Since it was set up, it substantially contributed to the proactive state change that the Franco authorities imprinted on the education policy in general, and on the HSE policy in particular.

According to the studied documents, this reorientation was amply supported, but had certain resistances. It was partially shaped by the successive people in charge of the education policy in the 1950s regardless of it being bonded to different *families* of Francoism. With the later technocratic-type changes, the initiative was considerably reinforced with the support of the new people who governed the economic policy as of 1961. Furthermore, with the creation of the National Fund to encourage Equal Opportunities, the number of grant holders exponentially multiplied.

There is no doubt whatsoever that grants were a powerful instrument to extend school fees, and one of their main objectives was to improve the grade of youths' training. The present study reveals that grants also pursued social, cultural and political goals, and were oriented to follow the wake that other European countries made.

The system was designed and promoted by different Franco sectors to make reforms to respond to the Spanish society's increasing needs, which were especially profound in the education domain. We believe that it is interesting to insist on these particular nuances, the importance of reformist willingness and on how important the education policy was during the study period, because we think that they are not suitably reflected in general Francoism studies.

Regarding limitations, we point out that sometimes we were unable to specify some quantitative references as accurately as we would have wished. Until 1970, Secondary Education included a wide and disperse series of studies —trade, teacher training, reports, artistic teaching, etc.—, although roughly 80% of students concentrated in HSE courses, above all, and in VT ones. This circumstance tends to mean that, occasionally, the located sources do not present homogenous data, which makes preparing statistical series difficult (Cruz, 2016). In any case, possible omissions or inaccuracies do not hinder this work from revealing the most stressed trends and their variations over time, nor the dimension of the main magnitudes. Similarly, studying in detail the subsequent continuity of the grants policy, and its education and social effects, is pending. The indicated changes always took into account the regime's tight margins. They were always taken as an element to ensure the continuity of Francoism as plausibly as possible by adapting it to new domestic and foreign economic, social and political circumstances. In this adaptation and survival strategy, the grants policy played a relevant role, which has not been studied in depth to date. This was an outstanding, interesting and somewhat traditional expression of the leopard skin doctrine using an aphorism: if you want everything to stay as it is now, everything needs to change.

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Key Competences in Education and General Self-efficacy. Validation of COMINT scale

Competencias Clave en Educación y Autoeficacia General. Validación de la escala COMINT

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Abstract

Key competences are one of the basic elements of European curricula to promote lifelong learning through education. However, there are few instruments to assess them among adolescents. For this reason, the Comprehensive Measurement of Competences (COMINT) scale was created as a global construct under the framework of Positive Psychology and Positive Youth Development. Our main objectives were to validate the COMINT scale through the variables of age and sex and analyse the relationships between Key Competencies and

General Self-Efficacy. The adequate adjustment of the psychometric properties of the COMINT scale to a sample of Spanish adolescents, the statistically significant relationships between key competencies and general self-efficacy, and age and sex differences in key competencies were hypothesized. A sample of 1245 adolescents aged 12 to 18 years completed the General Self-Efficacy Scale and the COMINT scale. Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses were performed to evaluate model fit in different samples. Results offered a model with an adequate construct validity and a high level of internal reliability, based on the elimination of two items from the initial scale. The instrument has shown adequate adjustment indices after modifying some initial items. The Structural Equation Model showed a significant association between Key Competences and General Self-Efficacy, with high adjustment indices. Developmental and sex differences were found, with girls in mid-adolescence being the ones who obtained lower levels on both scales. These results and the usefulness and implications of the instrument for the psychoeducational field, both scientific and applied, are discussed. We conclude that the COMINT scale constitutes an adequate and simple instrument to jointly evaluate Key Competences, construct related to General Self-Efficacy.

Keywords: key competences, general self-efficacy, positive psychology, positive youth development, statistical validation, adolescents.

Resumen

Las Competencias Clave constituyen uno de los elementos básicos de los currículos europeos para promover el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida mediante la educación. Sin embargo, existen pocos instrumentos para evaluarlas en adolescentes. Por ello, se creó la escala de Medición Integral de Competencias (COMINT) como un constructo global bajo el marco de la Psicología Positiva y del Desarrollo Positivo Adolescente. Nuestros objetivos fueron validar la escala COMINT a través de las variables edad y sexo, analizar las relaciones entre las Competencias Clave y la Autoeficacia General, y analizar las diferencias en edad y sexo. Se plantearon como hipótesis el ajuste adecuado de las propiedades psicométricas de la escala COMINT a una muestra de adolescentes, las relaciones estadísticamente significativas entre las Competencias Clave y la Autoeficacia General, y diferencias en edad y sexo en Competencias Clave. Una muestra de 1245 adolescentes de 12 a 18 años completaron la escala de Autoeficacia General y la escala COMINT. Se realizaron análisis factoriales exploratorios y confirmatorios para evaluar el ajuste del modelo en diferentes muestras. Los resultados ofrecieron un modelo con una adecuada validez de constructo y altos niveles de ajuste y de confiabilidad interna, tras la eliminación de dos ítems de la escala inicial. El análisis de tal Modelo de Ecuaciones Estructurales mostró una asociación significativa entre las Competencias Clave y la Autoeficacia General, con altos

índices de ajuste. Se hallaron diferencias evolutivas y de sexo, siendo las chicas de adolescencia media las que obtuvieron niveles más bajos en ambas escalas. Se discuten estos resultados y la utilidad e implicaciones del instrumento para el campo psicoeducativo, tanto científico como aplicado. Concluimos que la escala COMINT constituye un instrumento adecuado y sencillo para evaluar en conjunto las Competencias Clave, constructo relacionado con el de Autoeficacia General.

Palabras clave: competencias clave, autoeficacia general, psicología positiva, desarrollo positivo adolescente, validación estadística, adolescentes.

Introduction

Key Competences in Education

The use of the term "competence" has undergone numerous nuances since its first written appearance in the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi (Mulder et al., 2007). It was in the 1970s that applied psychology in business popularized this term to establish criteria that would allow for the "objectification" of human behavior around certain variables that are easy to observe, evaluate, select, train, or reward (Vizcaíno Candela & Medina Ruiz, 2021). However, the term "competence" began to develop in the educational field –more specifically in curricular studies– in the USA as early as the 1960s, and later spread to other countries in mastery learning models in education and vocational training, following Skinner's work on behavioural psychology (Tahirsylaj, 2017).

Starting with UNESCO's report "Learning: The Treasure Within" (Delors, 1996), the term "competence" was introduced into the formulation of educational policies in the European Union (EU). This report marked a shift from educational planning based on learning outcomes (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021) and emphasized the acquisition of skills throughout life in various contexts –academic, social, and professional–. Delors (1996) proposed four pillars for 21st-century education, which should serve as the foundation for educational systems: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. These pillars were the genesis of key competences (KC) in education, linked to lifelong learning, across all educational levels –formal, non-formal, and informal–. Nevertheless, the terminology for competences also varies, encompassing terms such as "21st-century skills", "lifelong learning competencies" (Nordin &

Sundberg, 2021), "life skills", "socio-emotional skills", "soft skills", or "transversal skills" (Sala et al., 2020).

In the 21st century, current socio-economic and cultural characteristics, as well as significant technological advances, have transformed educational institutions (European Union, 2019). These changes have reshaped national educational curricula with an epistemological and institutional rethinking, influencing the educational role of schools. In this context, the EU, as part of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), has promoted competence-based approaches (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021) that individualize and enforce lifelong learning policies (Takayama, 2013).

Competences began to be formally addressed in some educational systems through the DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies) project, launched by the OECD. DeSeCo aimed to define and select, through international agreement, the essential competencies for life and the proper functioning of society (Rychen & Salganik, 2001; 2003a; 2003b). DeSeCo conceptualized competence as the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a specific context by mobilizing psychosocial prerequisites that include cognitive and non-cognitive aspects (Rychen & Salganik, 2001) throughout life. In fact, lifelong learning involves competencies considered key in a knowledge society because they ensure greater flexibility in the labour market and better adaptation to constant change. Competence also increases students' motivation, their attitude toward learning, and their uniqueness (European Union, 2006).

EU (2006, 2019) defined competences as a combination of knowledge (knowing), skills (knowing how to do), and attitudes (knowing how to be) appropriate to the context. The European framework for KC in education for lifelong learning, established under Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on KC for lifelong learning (European Union, 2006; Karatepe & Cenk, 2023), identified and defined eight KC recognized as facilitating access to employment, personal fulfillment, social inclusion, and active citizenship. They were considered essential for the well-being of European societies, economic growth and innovation, and the essential related knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Additionally, there is a particular need to develop KC during initial education and throughout life (European Union, 2006). The eight KC were as follows:

1) Communication in a mother tongue: the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions both

- orally and in writing (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way.
- Communication in a foreign language: shares the main dimensions
 of communication skills in the mother tongue but also requires
 skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding.
- 3) Mathematical, scientific and technological competence: the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking to solve a range of problems in everyday situations (mathematics), use knowledge and methodology to explain the natural world, identify questions, and draw evidence-based conclusions (science), and apply this in response to perceived human desires or needs (technology).
- 4) Digital competence: involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology for work, leisure, and communication.
- 5) Learning to learn: the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organize one's own learning, including through effective time and information management, both individually and in groups.
- 6) Social and civic competences: equip individuals to participate effectively and constructively in social and working life, solve conflicts (personal, interpersonal, and intercultural competence), and fully engage in civic life, based on knowledge of social and civic issues and political structures (civic competence).
- 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship: the ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation, and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects to achieve objectives.
- 8) Cultural awareness and expression: the appreciation of the importance of creative expression of ideas, experiences, and emotions in a variety of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and visual arts.

Key Competences under Positive Psychology and Positive Youth Development frameworks

All KC are considered equally important because each can contribute to a successful life in a knowledge-based society (European Union, 2006). The EU guidelines emphasize the necessity for citizens to acquire KC as an essential condition to ensure their full personal, social, and professional

development, in alignment with the demands of a globalized world, and to enable economic development linked to knowledge. This was established by the Lisbon European Council in 2000 and reaffirmed in the 2009 Council Conclusions on the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ("ET 2020") (Order ECD/65/2015).

The EU's approach (European Commission, n.d.) promotes KC through (1) Providing high-quality education, training, and lifelong learning for all; (2) Supporting educational staff in implementing competence-based teaching and learning approaches; (3) Encouraging a variety of learning approaches and contexts for lifelong learning; and (4) Exploring approaches to assess and validate KC.

This framework is consistent with both the Positive Psychology approach and the Positive Youth Development (PYD) models. Positive Psychology focuses on enhancing individuals' positive attributes through their mindset and willpower, leading to optimal functioning (Seligman & Csíkszentmihályi, 2000; Linley & Joseph, 2004). Research under the Positive Psychology theoretical framework improves our understanding of youth development (see López et al., 2018). Indeed, the concept of PYD has been used in recent years as a synonym for promoting personal and social competences in adolescent development (see Balaguer et al., 2020, 2022; Orejudo et al., 2013; Oliva et al., 2010). PYD focuses on healthy conditions that develop skills, behaviours, and competences that enhance the social, academic, and professional youth lives. In this context, competences combine personality traits, skills, values, and knowledge that enable adolescents' personal development in today's society (Oliva et al., 2010).

The KC self-assessment is related to variables in Positive Psychology and PYD, such as self-concept (Oliva et al., 2010; Sundström, 2006), self-efficacy (Oliva et al., 2010; Olmos & Mas, 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2005), and self-regulation (Gómez et al., 2013; Olmos & Mas, 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2005). Additionally, the developmental perspective is crucial because it allows us to focus our research on prevention (Snyder et al., 2013), emphasizing the promotion of health and competences.

Key Competences and Self-efficacy

The numerous changes that occur throughout the various adolescent stages influence individual beliefs about competence perception. This individual perception of competence enhances youth's self-confidence in their ability to solve problems, make decisions, and face social challenges in different contexts throughout their lives, helping them to overcome barriers (Bandura, 2006). One of the constructs of perceived competence within the framework of Positive Psychology and PYD is Self-Efficacy. This is due to its emphasis on the development of empowerment, which transforms individuals into "self-initiators" of change in their own lives and in the lives of others. In this regard, Self-Efficacy focuses on human potential and possibilities, rather than limitations, making it a truly positive psychology (Maddux, 2002).

General Self-Efficacy (GSE) is a psychological construct that reflects an individual's perception of overall competence and adaptive skills (Bandura, 2006), which are closely related to KC. GSE represents a personal judgment about one's abilities or competences to manage various life stressors (Bandura, 1987, 2006; Baartman & Ruijs, 2011). Based on their self-assessment of competence, individuals organize and execute actions, enabling them to achieve planned performance (Bandura, 1987).

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Baessler, 1996) has been shown to be reliable and valid for evaluating this construct. No significant differences in General Self-Efficacy have been found between sexes among Spanish adolescents (e.g., Balaguer et al., 2020, 2022; Espada et al., 2017; Orejudo et al., 2013), nor among adolescent samples from other countries (e.g., Lönnfjord & Hagquist, 2018; Marcionetti & Rossier, 2019).

However, despite the theoretical relationship between General Self-Efficacy and KC, there is a lack of literature analyzing the relationship between these two constructs.

Key Competences assessment

The KC assessment can assist students in understanding their preferred learning styles and enhancing their autonomy (European Commission, 2018). In this regard, evaluating KC helps students to recognize and communicate their competences when seeking greater learning opportunities or employment (European Union, 2019). The Recommendation 2006/962/EC (European Union, 2006) asserts that the development and validation of KC should be supported through the updating of assessment and validation tools. Indeed, assessment

has a powerful impact on what is taught and learned, as well as on which competencies are developed. The recommendations to Member States regarding assessment emphasize the need to develop evaluation strategies and improve the validation of learning outcomes acquired through non-formal learning (European Commission, 2018).

Given the European Commission's (2018) call for validated instruments to assess KC in education, there is a relevant lack of such tools. Traditionally, different scales have been used to assess various competences in university students (see Braun et al., 2012, for a review; COM-PES questionnaire, Gómez et al., 2013). These instruments are not aligned with the eight KC proposed by the EU (European Union, 2006) but rather with various classical competences related to personal and social development within the PYD framework (Balaguer et al., 2020, 2022; Orejudo et al., 2013; Oliva et al., 2010).

Object of study

In recent years, various scales have been validated to measure the degree of specific KC acquisition. Kabir & Sponseller (2020) developed a scale to assess self-efficacy perception in intercultural communication competence among a sample of Japanese teachers. Similarly, Ramírez-García et al. (2018) presented a questionnaire to evaluate the competency of knowledge and interaction with the physical world among primary education students.

Scales have also been created to assess the entire set of KC. From teacher's perspective, Lleixà et al. (2015) developed a scale for Physical Education teachers in Primary and Secondary Education to evaluate the integration of KC into their teaching curricula. Meroño et al. (2018) validated a questionnaire to understand Primary Education teachers' perceptions of student learning based on KC.

On the other hand, some scales evaluate the entire set of KC from the students' perspective. For university students, Gregorová et al. (2016) proposed a scale validated on a sample of thirty Slovak adults. In adolescent population, Karatepe (2022), in their doctoral dissertation, validated a scale that assesses KC following the EU framework in Turkish population. In Spanish population, Olmos and Mas (2018) developed the AUTOCOM scale in 228 youth population aged 16 to 21 in training programs with low qualifications and early school dropout.

Therefore, there is a lack of instruments to assess KC in the normative adolescent population within the EU. Recognizing the need for an instrument to evaluate KC within the EU framework (European Union 2006, 2018, 2019), the COMINT scale was created. It was designed as one of the instruments to assess the impact of a non-formal education program (Serrano et al., 2013). Table I shows the relationships between the COMINT items and the KC in education (European Union, 2006).

TABLE I. Relation between COMINT y CC items

	COMINT items	Key Competences (KC)
C1	I have the ability to perfectly express what I want to say.	Communication in a mother tongue (Literacy)
C2	I am able to understand and express myself in English.	Communication in a foreign language (Multilingualism)
C3	I know how to plan the financial part of projects.	Mathematical, scientific and technological competence
C4	I handle technology and social networks without problems.	Digital competence
C5	I am aware of everything I learn when I participate in extracurricular activities.	Learning to learn
C6	I meet people who are different from me and I know how to relate to them.	Social and civic competences
C7	I often propose new activities or new ways of doing things.	Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
C8	I can explain cultural aspects of my country in a creative way.	Cultural awareness and expression

Source: own elaboration.

Our objectives were: 1) to validate the COMINT scale within the framework of Positive Psychology and PYD, for use in the psychoeducational field, 2) to analyze the relationships between KC and GSE constructs, and 3) to examine age and sex differences, identifying the factorial structure.

In this regard, the proposed hypotheses were as follows: 1) The psychometric properties of the COMINT scale will exhibit adequate fit indices in a sample of Spanish adolescents. 2) KC and GSE constructs will have statistically significant relationships. Previous research has

not explored the relationship between KC and GSE. 3) There will be differences in KC based on age, as demonstrated by previous research (e.g., Gregorová et al., 2016), and sex (Kan & Murat, 2020; Karatepe & Cenk, 2023).

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from secondary education centres. A stratified random sampling was conducted among schools in the province of Zaragoza that offered one or more types of secondary education as part of the Spanish educational system. Ten schools were randomly selected, ensuring proportional representation of public/private and urban/rural schools: seven public schools (four urban, three rural) and three urban private schools. Among these, seven schools agreed to participate: six public schools (four urban, two rural) and one urban private school. The sample consisted of 1,245 students. By age: <14 years: 55.3% (n=689), ≥14 years: 44.7% (n=556); by gender, 50.1% (n=624) female, 48.5% (n=604) male, and 1.4% (n=17) did not report either of the provided options; by school type: 640 students (51.4%) were from urban public schools, 467 (37.5%) from rural public schools, and 138 (11.1%) from urban private schools.

Instruments

Comprehensive Competence Measurement Scale (COMINT)

The COMINT scale is based on the eight KC in education from the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and the Council (European Union, 2006) and is grounded in the Positive Psychology and PYD framework. It consists of 8 items with 7-point Likert scale (ranging from "nothing" to "a lot"), deemed appropriate according to Martínez-Abad and Rodríguez-Conde (2017). A total score is generated on a single factor. The items are detailed in Table I.

General Self-Efficacy Scale (Spanish adaptation by Schwarzer and Baessler, 1996, validated by Sanjuán et al., 2000)

This scale assesses the stable sense of personal competence to effectively manage a wide variety of situations across all ages. It consists of 10 items with 4-point Likert scale ("I never think this way," "I rarely think this way," "I often think this way," and "I always think this way"), generating a total score on a single general self-efficacy factor. The Spanish version achieved high internal consistency (α = .87). In this study, it was .83.

Procedure

The aims and characteristics of the study were explained to school principals and counsellors. Before completing the questionnaires, families were informed by letter about the purpose and procedure of the study. Participants without parental consent were excluded. The anonymity of participants was guaranteed. Schools were informed of the possibility of excluding students whose families did not agree to their participation. Each school received a report with its own results after data analysis. Ethical guidelines for educational research were followed (British Educational Research Association, 2011). No compensation was given for participation in the study. Ethical approval was obtained from an Academic Committee of the University of Zaragoza.

Statistical procedure

Data Processing

After cleaning the records for inconsistencies in completion, assumptions for normal distribution fitting were evaluated by calculating skewness and kurtosis statistics, with cut-off points proposed by Lloret-Segura et al. (2014) [-2, 2]. Initial reliability values were estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The analyses were conducted using SAS 9.4 and R 4.1.1 software.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

For the validation of the COMINT scale, the sample was randomly split into two groups, each containing approximately 50% of the data. One of these samples (n=602) was used for an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and the remaining sample (n=643) was used for a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). In the EFA, the factor structure was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity with α =0.05. The number of factors was confirmed using parallel analysis. Factor assignment was based on loadings greater than 0.4. Parameters were estimated using maximum likelihood methods. The properties of the selected model were estimated, including item reliability, variance extraction, standardized loadings, and their respective t-test values.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The structure identified in the EFA was confirmed through CFA using maximum likelihood methods. Model fit was assessed using the statistics and cut-off points proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999): 1) Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.95 and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < 0.09; or 2) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.05 and SRMR < 0.06. If the fit values were not achieved, model revision was considered. Modifications were suggested using Lagrange multipliers, the Wald test, and theoretical justification. Changes to the model were accepted if the variation in the χ^2 statistic was significant with p < 0.05.

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

For external validation, the GSE scale was employed within the context of SEM. In the proposed structural model, the level of KC directly influences self-efficacy.

Finally, invariance was tested across four population groups: girls and boys, older adolescents (over 14 years), and younger adolescents (under 14 years), as well as comparisons between the group mean scores.

Results

The initial evaluation of the instrument items demonstrated adequate values related to the normal distribution, so the maximum likelihood method is aligned with the subsequent parameter estimation objectives, as shown in Table II. Optimal values of the Cronbach coefficient were achieved for the required analysis (α = .80). Generally, the lowest correlation values were produced by question C2, Table II.

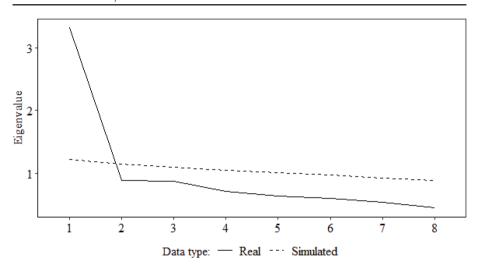
TABLE II. Statistics, Pearson correlation matrix between COMINT items and factor loadings

	Item	Skewness	Kurtosis	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	λ
C1	I have the ability to perfectly express what I want to say.	-0.45	-0.27								.583*
C2	I am able to understand and express myself in English.	-0.20	-0.88	.29							.398
C3	I know how to plan the financial part of projects.	-0.27	-0.29	.42	.39						.625*
C4	I handle technology and social networks without problems.	-1.23	1.12	.31	.25	.34					.505*
C5	I am aware of everything I learn when I participate in extracurricular activities.	-0.92	0.62	.33	.27	.36	.36				.594*
C6	I meet people who are different from me and I know how to relate to them.	-0.90	0.44	.41	.21	.32	.35	.40			.587*
C7	I often propose new activities or new ways of doing things.	-0.32	-0.38	.36	.25	.42	.24	.41	.40		.649*
C8	I can explain cultural aspects of my country in a creative way.	-0.26	-0.49	.43	.22	.41	.24	.37	.37	.52	.637*

Note. λ =factor loadings; * Factor loadings >0,4. Source: own elaboration.

A sampling adequacy measure of KMO=.86 was obtained and the Bartlett test was rejected with p<0.01. The parallel analysis identified only one factor (observed eigenvalue = 3.32 vs. simulated critical value = 1.23), as shown in Figure I.





Note. The number of factors prior to the intersection of the line of observed values with the simulated values indicates the number of factors identified.

Source: own elaboration.

The factor loadings of the items (λ) were estimated from the selected factor. The only item that did not meet the cut-off point was C2, as shown in Figure II. However, the difference was minimal –only a few hundredths of a unit–, so it was considered for re-evaluation in the CFA to decide on its inclusion.

In the model confirmation stage, the CFA, as initially indicated, presented all the initial items, with the exception that item C2 already presented problems of convergent validity. In the first evaluation of model confirmation, it was found that the model did not meet the cut-off points for adequate fit (RMSEA=0.096 and CFI=0.91), as shown in Table III. Therefore, modification indices were evaluated. The Wald test did

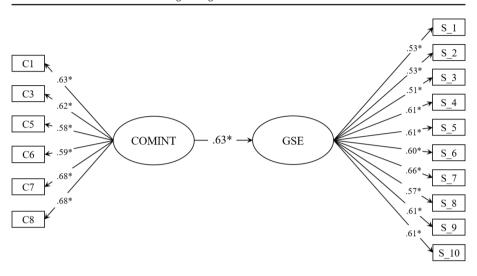


FIGURE II. Model with factor loadings and global correlation

Note. *p <.05. Source: own elaboration.

not found any parameter outside of significance, unlike the Lagrange multiplier, which identified multicollinearity between items C2 and C3. Since item C2 had previously presented convergence problems, the decision was made to eliminate it from the model. In this new model, the CFI criterion still remained below the defined level (CFI=0.949). From the analysis of the Lagrange multiplier index, it was found that item C4 presented collinearity with C8. When analyzing the item, it was identified as a question related to the use of information technologies. Considering that the previously deleted item also had a technological use component, such as English proficiency, one might think that these two items should be evaluated independently.

The new model evaluated without items C2 and C4 achieved optimal fit levels. Their measurement properties were estimated in this final model, as shown in Table IV. Overall, the values were very close to the optimal standards considered for these criteria: reliability >.39, composite reliability: .7 -0.9 and variance extracted >. 49.

TABLE III. Goodness-of-fit indices of the model

Model	χ2	d.f.	Δχ²	Δ d.f.	Prob. > χ²	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	(RMSEA CL90)
Reference model	1393.2	28							
original model	139.3	20	1253.9	8	<0.01	0.91	0.051	0.096	(0.082-0.112)
Model without C2	74.0	14	65.3	6	<0.01	0.95	0.040	0.082	(0.064-0.101)
Model without C4	43.5	9	30.5	5	<0.01	0.97	0.033	0.077	(0.055-0.101)

Note. χ^2 =chi-square; d.f.=degrees of freedom; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; SRMR= Standardized root mean square residual; RM-SEA= Root mean square error of approximation; RMSEA CL90=RMSEA 90% confidence limits. The base model corresponds to the one in which the factorial structure is not considered. Δ , corresponds to the difference between the modified model versus the previous model. *p<0.05.

Source: own elaboration.

TABLE IV. Measurement properties of the final model.

Item	Reliability	Standardized loading	t-value	Estimated variance extracted
	0.81ª			
C1	0.42	0.64	22.68	
C3	0.38	0.61	20.63	
C5	0.37	0.61	20.07	0.42
C6	0.37	0.61	20.43	
C7	0.47	0.69	25.73	
C8	0.50	0.71	27.75	

Note. ^a Composite reliability. Source: own elaboration.

SEM analysis for COMINT validation as a predictor of GSE demonstrated an optimal level of fit for RMSEA, SRMR and CFI (0.05, 0.04 and 0.94, respectively), with the expected significant and positive relationship between the two constructs (β =0.63, p<0.001), as shown in Figure II.

Finally, from the invariance analysis for the four groups (younger boys and girls, and older boys and girls), it was found that the models with no restrictions on either means or covariance structure consistently showed optimal SRMR values, and the best fit values, as shown in Table V, with the exception of the older girls. This result is in line with Hu and Bentler (1999), as they propose that this statistic is sensitive to identify problems in the covariance structure.

TABLE V. Invariance analysis for the four groups

Model	Group	Contribution to χ² (%)	SRMR	GFI	NFI
	Total	100	.078	.98	.80
	Younger boys	19	.069	.98	.83
Invariant	Older boys	25	.080	.97	.80
	Younger girls	29	.070	.98	.81
	Older girls	27	.095	.97	.75
	Total	100	.048	.98	.86
	Younger boys	20	.043	.99	.87
Variant in means and covariance structure	Older boys	22	.046	.98	.88
covariance structure	Younger girls	29	.045	.98	.86
	Older girls	30	.059	.98	.81
	Total	100	.066	.98	.83
	Younger boys	20	.056	.98	.85
Variant in medium structure	Older boys	23	.069	.98	.85
3th acture	Younger girls	28	.061	.98	.84
	Older girls	29	.079	.97	.78

Note. Youngers = Youngest adolescents (12-14 years old); Olders = Oldest adolescents (14-18 years old). Source: own elaboration.

Leaving the covariance structure and means unrestricted for each subgroup, their regressors were estimated, as shown in Table VI. A pattern to highlight in the KC measurement is how the estimators' values tend to decrease for girls when comparing older with younger ones, unlike boys, for whom almost all the regressors increase when making the transition from younger to older ones. The implications of this behavior are given

when considering that these regressors measure convergence degree of the questions to the factor, which would imply that for older boys a more precise assessment of KC is being achieved compared to girls in the same age range.

TABLE VI. Comparison of covariance structure

		MODEL (ESTIMATION, STANDARD ERROR)								
Predictor	Item		Boys		Girls					
		Younger	Older	Change	Younger	Older	Change			
	C1	.636 (.041)	.707 (.038)	1	.633 (.038)	.509 (.055)	1			
	C3	.634 (.041)	.574 (.047)	1	.699 (.034)	.515 (.054)	1			
Key	C5	.575 (.045)	.685 (.040)	1	.535 (.044)	.503 (.055)	1			
Competences (COMINT)	C6	.595 (.043)	.643 (.043)	1	.584 (.041)	.560 (.052)	1			
	C7	.677 (.038)	.708 (.038)	1	.638 (.038)	.681 (.045)	1			
	C8	.633 (.041)	.659 (.042)	1	.740 (.032)	.666 (.045)	1			
	S_1	.430 (.052)	.586 (.045)	1	.562 (.042)	.532 (.050)	1			
	S_2	.513 (.048)	.510 (.050)	1	.560 (.042)	.487 (.052)	1			
	S_3	.501 (.048)	.587 (.045)	1	.474 (.047)	.518 (.050)	1			
	S_4	.561 (.045)	.614 (.043)	1	.619 (.038)	.598 (.045)	1			
General	S_5	.603 (.042)	.685 (.038)	1	.546 (.043)	.568 (.047)	1			
Self-efficacy (GSE)	S_6	.505 (.048)	.585 (.045)	1	.573 (.041)	.704 (.037)	1			
	S_7	.654 (.039)	.719 (.035)	1	.635 (.037)	.637 (.042)	1			
	S_8	.510 (.048)	.576 (.046)	1	.586 (.040)	.597 (.045)	1			
	S_9	.570 (.044)	.614 (.043)	1	.596 (.040)	.632 (.043)	1			
	S_10	.544 (.046)	.585 (.045)	1	.625 (.038)	.615 (.044)	1			
COMINT	GSE	.668 (.046)	.571 (.053)	1	.677 (.041)	.593 (.056)	↓			

Note. Youngers = younger adolescents (12-14 years old); Older = older adolescents (14-18 years old). The arrows indicate whether the estimated value is higher (\uparrow) in older individuals than in younger ones, or vice versa (\downarrow), for both girls and boys. Source: own elaboration.

Finally, the comparison of the mean competence values between the different groups showed no differences at the α =0.05 level. However, at the α =0.1 level, it is observed that the average competence of the older girls is lower than that of the younger girls (Figure III).

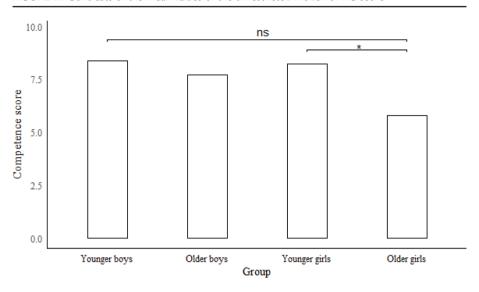


FIGURE III. Contrasts of the mean values of the unrestricted model for KC score

Note. Younger = 12-14 years old; Older = 14-18 years old. Ns = not significant (p < 0.1). *p< 0,1.

Source: own elaboration.

Discussion

The objectives of this research were to validate the COMINT scale within the framework of Positive Psychology and PYD, to examine the associations between the constructs of KC and GSE, and to analyze age and gender differences.

Regarding the first hypothesis, the psychometric characteristics of the COMINT scale, developed under the EU framework (European Union, 2006), are adequate for Spanish adolescents, though the degree of confirmation of this hypothesis requires further clarification. As for construct validity, a unifactorial model was adopted based on the consistency of the CFA. In addition to this unifactorial structure, which presents the model with the best fit among those proposed, a high internal consistency was found, demonstrating the adequacy of all items as indicators of the construct. Thus, the CFA indices reveal that the model provides an adequate approximation to the data.

The COMINT scale is valid in terms of internal structure, as reported in the original unidimensional version. However, differences were found in the factor loadings of the scale, particularly the lower indices for items C2 and C4, which address foreign language and digital competencies, respectively. It seems reasonable that not all KCs have such a close relationship with each other, as a similar functioning within a single factor would be problematic, leading to no differentiation in learning profiles. Therefore, from a theoretical standpoint, removing these items would help preserve the content validity of the instrument towards soft skills. Items C2 and C4 refer to "hard" competencies, which could represent a distinct theoretical factor. The new model evaluated without these two items achieved optimal fit levels. In fact, if the goal were to assess each of the eight competencies, a much larger instrument would be required, risking convergence to a single factor again. As a result, all competencies tend to be assessed by young people as soft skills.

It is also worth mentioning that the COMINT scale, unlike other scales that assess KC under the European Union (2006) framework, has two positive aspects: 1) it considers the items representing the EU KC, and 2) its limited number of items facilitates its implementation in fieldwork. Indeed, our aim was to create a parsimonious instrument that would assess the KC as a global construct, as part of the evaluation of an institutional non-formal education program (Serrano et al., 2013).

Following the second hypothesis, the results confirm that the constructs of KCs and GSE are statistically significantly related, as evidenced by the SEM proposed. There is evidence of convergent validity with GSE, which may reveal a similar competency profile (Bandura, 1987, 2006; Baartman & Ruijs, 2011) in adolescents. Thus, GSE serves as a source for the development of all KC, with common contextual elements for both GSE and KC. This shows that youth's perception of general competence is related to their perception of educational competence, as expected based on previous literature (Rama & Sarada, 2017; Sundström, 2006), and this perception is relevant to the personal assets in PYD (Balaguer et al., 2020, 2022). Therefore, GSE contributes to the development of KC in adolescents. Both GSE and KC share common contextual elements. This result also confirms the external validity of the COMINT scale, as the GSE scale achieved high goodness-of-fit indices for the model.

Considering the third hypothesis, the results reveal developmental and sex differences. Indeed, the group of older girls—representing mid-adolescence—scored lower on both scales compared to the other three groups. In the case of KC, Gregorová et al. (2016) also found a decline in KC means when adolescents reach 14-15 years of age. This could be due to the increasing demands and pressures of the environment as they age (Schunk & Pajares, 2002), thus along adolescence, adolescents judge their abilities more accurately, even though these abilities may not necessarily diminish (Vecchio et al., 2007).

However, the GSE results differ from other studies with adolescent samples, both Spanish (e.g., Balaguer et al., 2020, 2022; Espada et al., 2017; Orejudo et al., 2013) and non-Spanish (e.g., Lönnfjord & Hagquist, 2018; Marcionetti & Rossier, 2019), which did not find significant sex differences in GSE. However, age or developmental stage was not controlled.

In terms of applicability, while the instrument shows adequate indicators of internal and external reliability, the COMINT scale may underestimate scores in late-mid-adolescent girls. In this regard, considering that the unifactorial instrument can be used without restrictions in younger adolescents, an instrument with more than one factor may be necessary for older adolescents. Nonetheless, the COMINT scale is a reliable and valid tool for assessing KC in adolescents in both formal and non-formal educational contexts.

Limitations

Regarding the limitations, on the one hand, the COMINT scale contains only a single item to evaluate each of the KC, which reduces the robustness of the results. However, the tool was primarily designed to assess KC as a general construct in studies aimed at analyzing their relationship with different Positive Psychology and PYD constructs, both individual and contextual, thereby minimizing participant fatigue bias. Given the limited number of items, content validation through expert judgment would enhance validity for future research.

On the other hand, only data on adolescents' perceptions were collected. This introduced a bias that could have inflated the relationship between the different variables analyzed. For instance, the data related to values by adolescent stage again demonstrated a profile linked to biases present in other self-report instruments. Specifically, lower scores

were reported in the KC of older girls compared to early adolescents of both sexes, who theoretically would have developed a lower level of competence than older girls. However, when using a self-report, subjective perception does not correspond to an external criterion, but rather to a personal value judgment. This is, undoubtedly, the major limitation of the instrument. In this case, it would be advisable to establish benchmarks linked to age groups.

As for the participants' scores, they tend to be high across the board. This potential positive feedback bias has also been observed in other competency instruments (Baartman & Ruijs, 2011; Gómez et al., 2013; Olmos & Mas, 2018). One possible explanation for this result could be that few adolescents consider themselves lacking in competencies and self-efficacy, or because, in the case of the GSE, this scale generates a narrow range of response variation. It should also be noted that COMINT shows an invariant factorial structure across differences related to gender and adolescent stage.

In any case, this overestimation of self-perceived competency levels can be a positive and favourable element in self-regulation learning processes, as it contributes to an improved self-concept and confidence in youth's learning potential and educational opportunities (Gómez et al., 2013). Moreover, a slight overestimation of one's own competency level is positive, as it requires boldness, confidence, a favorable self-concept, the ability to tackle complex tasks, and persistence in the face of setbacks (Baartman & Ruijs, 2011), which are prevalent constructs in PYD models (Oliva et al., 2010).

Further research

EU (2006) advocates for the universal right to inclusive, high-quality education, training, and lifelong learning that develop KC for personal fulfillment, development, employability, social inclusion, and active citizenship. To effectively implement a competency self-assessment that fosters autonomous learning, it is essential to obtain valid and reliable instruments that assess KC in young people (European Commission, 2018) with a competency development perspective across different contexts (Balaguer et al., 2022).

The COMINT scale is precisely based on the EU's educational policy framework (EU, 2006) and the scientific framework of Positive Psychology (López et al., 2018; Maddux, 2002) and PYD, focusing on the perception of personal and social competencies (Balaguer et al., 2020, 2022; Orejudo et al., 2013; Oliva et al., 2010). It aims to engage adolescents in the evaluation process, fostering self-reflection and feedback in learning processes within both formal and non-formal educational contexts. The scale promotes an active role in evaluation, encouraging the development of self-regulation strategies (Gómez et al., 2013; Zimmerman, 2005) and the perception of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006; Olmos & Mas, 2018). For future research, it is useful to compare the COMINT scale with other PYD measures.

Scientifically, it is necessary to gather evidence on the relationships between KC and other Positive Psychology constructs (e.g., López et al., 2018) that promote the development of KC. Additionally, future studies should consider comparing adolescents' KC through assessments from their parents and teachers. Furthermore, future research using the COMINT scale is needed to verify its applicability among adolescents in other countries, both in program evaluation and in Positive Psychology and development fields.

Conclusion

Considering the recommendations of the European Union (EU, 2006) and the European Commission (2018) regarding the importance of evaluating KC, the COMINT scale represents a suitable instrument for a comprehensive self-assessment of KC in a quick and simple manner. For this reason, it can be useful, on the one hand, for research in the psychoeducational field, specifically within the domains of positive psychology and PYD. Indeed, it allows for the collection of data in studies that link KC with other Positive Psychology and PYD constructs. On the other hand, in applied contexts, especially in non-formal education, the COMINT scale is appropriate for assessing KC development in young people after participating in formal or non-formal education programs.

The scale also served to help youth reflect on their perceived competences. Through this approach, the aim was not only to gather data on KC but also to ensure that the completion of the self-report involved the implementation of metacognitive strategies that stimulated self-regulation of the learning process (Baartman & Ruijs, 2011) and the recognition of self-efficacy (Rama & Sarada, 2017; Sundström, 2006). In this regard, COMINT, like other competency scales, becomes not only an instrument but also an evaluative task aimed at fostering strategic learning (Gómez et al., 2013).

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Intangible Cultural Heritage and Education: Analysis of the UNESCO Safeguarding Good Practices Register

Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial y Educación: Análisis del Registro de Buenas Prácticas de Salvaguarda de la UNESCO

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Abstract

With the approval of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, UNESCO promoted several initiatives to facilitate the safeguarding of this type of property. In this sense, it created a Register of Good Practices for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which includes all those programmes that meet the criteria of the aforementioned Convention. One of the aspects that is valued is the field of education, formal and non-formal, since it recognises in it a great potential for the development

of actions that contribute to knowledge, assessment and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. This study analyses the educational initiatives included in the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguard Practices programmes, in order to identify trends and facilitate the development of future projects. A content analysis and a statistical-descriptive treatment of the data have been carried out. The results show that education is present in all the registry programmes in terms of the non-formal context, although only half have a defined educational design. Formal education is the area least explored, with primary education being the level towards which the most activities are directed. A lack of participation of educational institutions, families and communities is also identified. In short, education is present in all the projects included in the Register of Good Safeguard Practices of UNESCO, although not as specific or for diverse audiences and ages in all areas. A broader, systematised approach would enable us to achieve more beneficial results for intangible cultural heritage and communities that transmit and enjoy it.

Keywords: heritage education, intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO, educational practices of reference, safeguarding of heritage, content analysis.

Resumen

Con la aprobación de la Convención para la Salvaguarda del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial del 2003, la UNESCO impulsó diversas iniciativas para facilitar la salvaguarda de esta tipología de bienes. En este sentido, creó un Registro de Buenas Prácticas de Salvaguarda del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial, en el que se incluyen todos aquellos programas que cumplen con los criterios de la citada Convención. Uno de los aspectos que se valora es el ámbito de la educación, formal y no formal, puesto que en ella se reconoce un gran potencial para el desarrollo de acciones que contribuyen al conocimiento, valoración y transmisión del patrimonio cultural inmaterial. El presente estudio analiza las iniciativas educativas incluidas en los programas del Registro de Buenas Prácticas de Salvaguarda de la UNESCO, con el fin de identificar tendencias y facilitar el desarrollo de futuros proyectos. Se ha llevado a cabo un análisis de contenido y un tratamiento estadístico-descriptivo de los datos. Los resultados muestran que lo didáctico está presente en todos los programas del registro en lo que a contexto no formal se refiere, aunque solo la mitad disponen de un diseño educativo definido. La educación formal es el ámbito menos explorado, siendo la primaria la etapa a la que más actividades se dirigen. Se identifica también una falta de participación de las instituciones educativas, familias y comunidades. En definitiva, la educación está presente en todos los proyectos inscritos en el Registro de Buenas Prácticas de Salvaguarda de la UNESCO, aunque no en todos los ámbitos, con el mismo grado de concreción, ni para los diferentes públicos o edades. Un enfoque más amplio y sistematizado permitiría alcanzar resultados

más beneficiosos para el patrimonio cultural inmaterial y las comunidades que lo transmiten y disfrutan.

Palabras clave: educación patrimonial, patrimonio cultural inmaterial, UNESCO, buenas prácticas educativas, salvaguarda del patrimonio, análisis de contenido.

Introduction

In October 2003, the General Conference of UNESCO at its 32nd session in Paris adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which aims to safeguard, respect, raise awareness, as well as to provide cooperation and assistance for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) (UNESCO, 2010). The agreements include the creation of three lists at an international level: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The latter, in accordance with approved criteria and at the proposal of the states, annually selects and disseminates programmes, projects, and activities that reflect the principles of the Convention.

At a time when lists of good practices are on the rise, it is of interest to look closer at these in order to detect trends and clarify any possible gaps. The case of the register managed by UNESCO, which provides information and examples of actions developed at an international level, can provide us with an approximation of the most common currents or practices regarding the management of an intangible cultural expression. Consequently, it can also provide us with an indication of what has been achieved from an educational stance, one of the core principles of the international institution.

Heritage education has been linked to UNESCO since 1972 by including chapters dedicated to training or pedagogy in the different conventions or recommendations developed over the subsequent years (Fontal & Ibáñez, 2017). It was in 2003 that this link was established as regards to intangible cultural heritage.

This study aims to analyse what has been done in different territories in terms of pedagogy included in the UNESCO register of good practices, in order to facilitate the design and development of new actions that help to safeguard expressions, traditions or festivals, whether or not they are on the representative list of ICH.

Theoretical basis

Since its creation in 1945, UNESCO has placed education at the centre of its mission, as a tool for peace and sustainable development. In 1972, with the *World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention*, education is strongly linked to heritage (UNESCO, 1972). Subsequent texts or measures of the same entity refer to educational programmes as a guarantor of respect for heritage. At a European level, progress is also being made in this direction and recommendations are defined around heritage education and its innovative approach (Fontal & Ibáñez, 2017).

With the 2003 Convention, education in all its fields is presented as an essential element for the knowledge, appreciation, and transmission of ICH. The subsequent ratification of the Convention by the various states leads to new laws and national safeguarding plans that call for educational measures. Spain, for example, ratified the Convention in 2006 and developed the *National Plan for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (IPCE, 2011), the *National Plan for Education and Heritage* (IPCE, 2013), as well as *Law 10/2015*, *for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

Heritage education is no longer an emerging area of knowledge, it is now an important discipline at academic, social and institutional levels, as it has the capacity to generate research, programmes, and laws (Fontal et al., 2015). UNESCO's register of good practices for the safeguarding of the ICH is a reflection of this, as it provides numerous examples related to pedagogy.

The educational potential of heritage has been identified for several decades. In 1996, Arendt already mentioned that in tradition "we find the key to interpreting the past and reflecting on the future" (p.104). It helps us understand where we have come from and provides us with tools for future action. It is a "resource for gaining knowledge of the social, cultural and natural environment" (Estepa et al., 2005, p. 21) that facilitates the understanding of past and present societies, and contributes to the conscious understanding of our identity (Cuenca et al., 2011).

Contact with heritage can "promote a sense of relevance and involve young people in the construction of their knowledge and their present and future action" (Pinto et al., 2015, p. 125). In the case of the ICH, it also offers the possibility to enhance sociability and active participation in festivals and traditions. In short, it helps to value "one's own identity and the understanding that every individual is a cultural subject" (Santacana & Llonch, 2016, p. 147).

Working with it also allows us to analyse the local elements and then move on to the universal ones, thus establishing possible relations between the local and global elements, making use of the concept of "glocality" (Gil and Vilches, 2004). When seeing what is distant, heritage contributes to the recognition of diversity, cultural and individual, and therefore to the respect and defence of heterogeneity (Cuenca et al., 2011).

Beyond the knowledge of heritage, it facilitates the construction of moral autonomy and critical thinking, forming citizens capable of decoding information, interpreting it and intervening (Estepa et al., 2005). Citizens who value social heritage will protect it when necessary. If we assume that the correct safeguarding of heritage is not limited to having specialists, but rather it must essentially include educational action, thus ensuring its future.

As Fontal and Martínez (2016) point out, pedagogy brings us closer to tradition, in the case of the ICH, it allows us to know, understand and value it, and therefore enabling its appropriation for the purpose of caring, preserving and transmitting it. Such a chaining is key to the awareness and sustainable management of cultural expressions; "education is not just another glance, but rather it illuminates the rest, because it is in education where we work on the relationship between assets and people" (Fontal, 2010, p. 267).

This process of knowledge-understanding-assessment-appropriation-care-enjoyment of heritage can take place inside and outside the classroom, in formal and non-formal education, with links to institutions or independently. As Estepa et al. (2007) point out, heritage education seems to be more typical of non-formal education, and despite the presence of terms such as heritage, culture, memory, or identity in official curricula, "there is a gap between the didactic potential of heritage and its presence" (Pinto and Molina, 2015, p. 104) both in laws and in the activities taught in schools.

There is also an imbalance between the types of heritage worked on, since there are, for example, more didactic experiences related to tangible heritage than to ethnological heritage (Cuenca et al., 2011; Yáñez et al., 2023). With this being the closest heritage in time, yet it does not have the same prominence. In reality, it seems that teachers grant a lower identification to ethnological elements and a greater appreciation for natural and historical-artistic ones, with their most frequent teaching activity being a visit to a heritage site (Estepa et al., 2007; Yáñez, 2023), which is difficult to specify in the case of ICH.

Despite this shortcoming, it is worth insisting on the potential of heritage within schools and high schools, given that it allows working on much more than the acquisition of knowledge related to history, nature, festivals, or traditions; as it is capable of being treated not only as an object of study, but also as a pedagogical resource (Fontal & Ibáñez, 2017). Heritage can be the vehicle for achieving cross-curricular objectives in different subjects (Ibarra et al., 2014). It can be an interdisciplinary reference, establishing links between science, society, and the environment.

The training bias of professionals, the fragmentation of the academic curriculum, as well as the specialisation of museums and centres (Cuenca et al., 2011), all inherited from a society that has compartmentalised disciplines, does not help to make heritage an element with many possibilities for the teaching-learning process. The textbook, as a basic resource for teaching practice, presents heritage with a disciplinary and anecdotal character that does not allow for its relationship with societies (Estepa et al., 2011). Teaching staff also have a fragmentary view of heritage. Heritage managers, on the other hand, have a more holistic perception (Estepa et al., 2007), however this does not translate into a much greater number of integrated transdisciplinary, social and identitybased educational practices. Whether or not in the school framework, it is important to define the purpose of why heritage is taught, what training is needed to promote and how it is developed, overcoming the obstacles that distance it from teaching and bringing it closer to the citizens' education (Cuenca et al., 2011). In terms of the ICH, moreover, pedagogical action should be considered not only necessary but essential, as these are processes that involve relationships and experiences, which are elements inherent to education (Fontal and Martínez, 2017).

Taking into consideration the trajectory of heritage education in recent decades and the reflections raised, it is interesting to study which programmes of the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Safeguarding Register carry out activities in the field of formal and non-formal education and compare that with similar analyses that deal with the same typology of heritage, such as those developed by Fontal and Martínez in 2017 in Spain.

The register was launched in 2009 by the Intergovernmental Committee at its fourth session in Abu Dhabi. That year it selected three of the five programmes submitted, in line with the principles and objectives of the 2003 Convention. In subsequent years, new projects from different countries have been added to the list, with an average acceptance rate of 57.2% of the applications submitted (Table I).

TABLE I. Programmes proposed and approved in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices

Year	Proposals (N)	Approved (N)	Percentage (%)
2009	5	3	60
2010	-	-	-
2011	12	5	41.6
2012	12 2 2		100
2013	2	1	50
2014	4	1	25
2015	2015 -		-
2016	7	5	71.4
2017	4	2	50
2018	2	1	50
2019	3	2	66.7

Source: Compiled by the authors based on UNESCO data (n.d.).

According to UNESCO (2010), programmes, projects, or activities must meet nine criteria relating to the safeguarding concept expressed by the agency, their contribution to the viability of relevant ICH, the involvement of carriers, the capacity to being considered a model, their potential for evaluation, as well as their appropriateness to the needs of the country or countries where they are implemented.

This study does not attempt to identify the adoption of these criteria by the programmes, nor whether they can represent a model for other practices. Its main objective is to analyse the educational actions of the mentioned programmes, included in the Register of Good Practices for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, whether formal or nonformal, as well as the knowledge of the target audience, the possible existence of an educational design and an evaluation system or the actors involved, in order to determine trends and assess if what is shared can be a practical and useful tool, as intended by UNESCO.

Methodology

Sample

Twenty-two practices registered during the first ten years of the register's existence have been analysed, specifically from 2009 to 2019, and those being from eighteen different countries. The subject of the projects or activities is very diverse: crafts, music, traditional games, dance, performing arts or construction methods, among others; and they can have a very broad scope of action, with research, transmission and dissemination actions, or be focused on a specific aspect such as pedagogy or ICH management (Table II).

TABLE II. Programmes registered in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices from 2009 to 2019, accompanied by the countries that submitted the relevant application

Year	Country	Project
2009	Spain	Centre for Traditional Culture - School Museum of Pusol pedagogic project
2009	Bolivia, Chile and Peru	Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage of Aymara communities in Bolivia, Chile and Peru
2009	Indonesia	Education and training in Indonesian Batik intangible cultural heritage for elementary, junior, senior, vocational school and polytechnic students, in collaboration with the Batik Museum in Pekalongan
2011	Belgium	A programme of cultivating ludodiversity: safeguarding traditional games in Flanders
2011	Brazil	Call for projects of the National Program of Intangible Heritage (PNPI)
2011	Brazil	Fandango's Livings Museum
2011	Spain	Revitalization of the traditional craftsmanship of lime-making in Morón de la Frontera
2011	Hungary	The Táncház method: a Hungarian model for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage

TABLE II. Programmes registered in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices from 2009 to 2019, accompanied by the countries that submitted the relevant application (continued)

Year	Country	Project
2013	Spain	Methodology for inventorying intangible cultural heritage in biosphere reserves: the experience of Montseny
2013	Mexico	Xtaxkgakget Makgkaxtlawana: the Centre for Indigenous Arts and its contribution to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of the Totonac people of Veracruz
2013	China	Strategy for training coming generations of Fujian puppetry practitioners
2014	Belgium	Safeguarding the carillon culture: preservation transmission, exchange and awareness-raising
2016	Austria	Regional centres for craftsmanship, a strategy for safeguarding the cultural heritage of traditional handicraft
2016	Bulgaria	Festival of folklore in Koprivshtitsa, a system of practices for heritage presentation and transmission
2016	Croatia	Community project of safeguarding the living culture of Rovinj/Rovign, the Batana ecomuseum
2016	Hungary	Safeguarding of the folk music heritage by the Kodály concept
2016	Norway	Oselvar boat, reframing a traditional learning process of building and use to a modern context
2017	Bulgaria	The Bulgarian Chitalishte (Community Cultural Centre): practical experience in safeguarding the vitality of the intangible cultural heritage
2017	Uzbekistan	Margilan Crafts Development Centre, safeguarding of the atlas and adras making traditional technologies
2018	Sweden	Land-of-Legends programme, for promoting and revitalising the art of storytelling in the Kronoberg region
2019	Venezuela	Biocultural programme for the safeguarding of the tradition of the Blessed Palm
2019	Colombia	Safeguarding strategy of traditional crafts for peace building

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Procedure

In order to analyse these programmes, a strictly qualitative content analysis was carried out of all the nomination reports registered in the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, and a subsequent statistical-descriptive study of the results of the first analysis (López, 2002), extracting frequencies and percentages of the different elements analysed. When necessary, due to lack of information, additional programme documentation has been used, always sourced from the

aforementioned reports. The example of research already developed for the evaluation of educational programmes on ICH (Fontal and Martínez, 2017) has been followed.

In the first phase, related to content review, all the projects were studied, and an inventory sheet was drawn up detailing the practice, its main actions, promoters, and beneficiaries. Specifically, this consists of three main sections with different dimensions and categories:

- Programme identification
- Programme description
- Programme actions
 - Historical and ethnological research
 - ICH transmission
 - Formal education
 - Non-formal education
 - Divulgation and informal education
- Promotion of and access to ICH

For this study, the information in the sections on programme identification and description have been used, as well as the first two headings of the section on "Knowledge transfer". The rest of the data has been used for other academic investigations that does not have education as its sole focus. The information gathered under the above headings has been categorised for its appropriate evaluation and statistical analysis. In the first instance, these categories were established deductively, in accordance with the first phase analysis, and non-exclusively; subsequently, with the detailed content analysis, they were established inductively. The resulting categories amounted to a total of 31:

- 1. Formal education:
- Typology:
 - Educational project
 - Learning methodologies and techniques
 - Materials or educational activity
 - Apprenticeships
- Recipients:
 - Infant Education
 - Primary Education
 - Secondary Education
 - Higher Education

2. Non-formal education:

- Typology:
 - Workshops
 - Trainings or courses
 - Conferences, seminars, or congresses
 - Exchange of experiences
 - Demonstrations
 - Competitions
- Recipients:
 - Children
 - Young people
 - Teachers or cultural facilitators
 - General public
 - ICH stakeholders

3. Educational design

- Yes
- No
- 4. Assessment
 - Yes
 - No

5. Involvement in the programme:

- Institutions or companies
- Associations and NGOs
- ICH stakeholders
- Schools or high schools
- Families and communities
- Universities and researchers

Likewise, in order to specify some categories, some conditioning factors have been defined, based on theoretical references or previous analyses. In this sense, formal education has been considered as those activities carried out in schools and formal educational centres that provide an official certificate, and non-formal education as those non-curricular actions carried out outside the school environment (Cuadrado, 2008). As regards the former, the typologies of activities in this area have been categorised as follows:

■ Educational project: It is interdisciplinary being developed at different levels and/or subjects and even in different educational centres, with defined objectives and programme.

- Learning methodologies and techniques: Designed for learning a tradition, art, or technique.
- Materials or educational activity: Resources for the teaching team or individual classroom actions, such as workshops, visits, etc.
- Apprenticeships: Apprenticeships conducted with the carriers in order to learn a tradition or technique.

Finally, an activity with a defined educational design is one that includes a justification, objectives, contents, counselling, strategies, timing, and evaluation (Fontal and Martínez, 2017).

Results

Educational field

All the programmes analysed include some sort of educational activity; in some of them, as previously mentioned, it is the main function to be carried out. However, looking at the field of action, this repetition is only maintained in non-formal education, which is present in all projects. On the other hand, formal education activities are only included in 63.6% of the reports, almost all of which have a defined educational design. Only two projects operate in a school context without a clear design, i.e. without clear justification, objectives, contents.... Overall, 50% of the programmes have a delimited design.

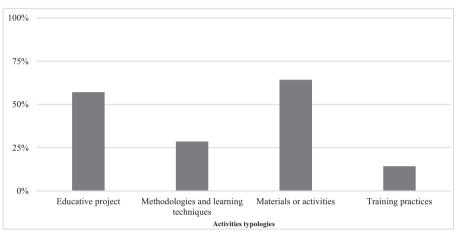
Typology of activities and levels of education in formal education

In terms of the type of actions carried out in the field of formal education, according to all the programmes included in the aforementioned 63.3%, the design and use of educational resources or sporadic classroom activities is the most frequent option (64.3%), followed by the development of educational projects with clear programming and objectives (57.1%), the definition of learning methodologies or techniques (28.6%) and finally by the execution of training practices (14.3%) (Graph I).

Remaining in the formal sphere, with the programmes included in it as the total number of data, 64.3% of the projects have an impact on

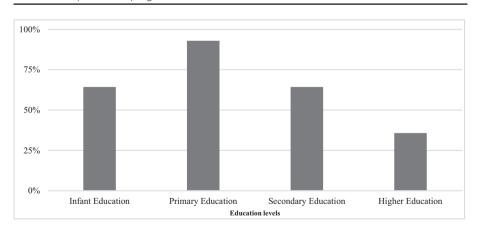
infant and secondary education, 92.9% on primary education and 35.7% on higher education (Graph II).

GRAPH I. Typology of activities in the field of formal education



Source: Compiled by the authors.

GRAPH II. Impact of the programmes at different levels of education

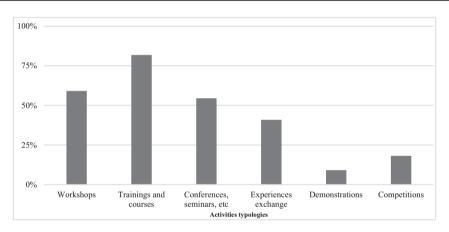


Source: Compiled by the authors.

Type of activities and target groups in non-formal education

Concerning non-formal education, which is present in all the programmes, 81.8% propose training or courses, 59.1% workshops, 54.5% conferences, seminars or congresses, 40.9% exchanges of experiences, 18.2% competitions of various natures and 9.1% demonstrations by the carriers (Graph III). These activities are aimed at the general public 68.2% of the time, 59.1% at young people, 50% at teachers or cultural facilitators, 50% at carriers and 45.5% at children (Graph IV).

GRAPH III. Type of activities in the field of non-formal education



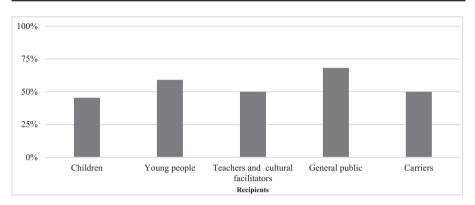
Source: Compiled by the authors.

Evaluation, groups involved and countries

Considering evaluation, i.e. the existence of tools to validate the functioning and results of the programme, only 22.7% of the reports state that they have a clear and defined system.

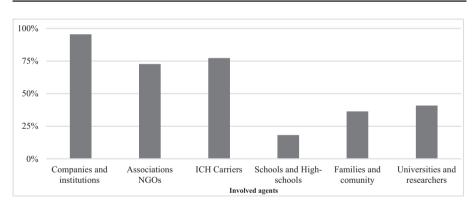
As far as involvement in the design and implementation of the projects is concerned, in practically all cases some institution or company has been involved (95.5%), in a smaller percentage carrier participate (77.3%), associations and NGOs (72.7%), universities and researchers (40.9%), families or communities (36.4%) and in fewer cases schools and high schools (18.2%) (Graph V).

GRAPH IV. Target group for non-formal activities



Source: Compiled by the authors.

GRAPH V. Actors involved in the design and implementation of the programmes



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Finally, considering the variable of country of origin, we find some repeated presences and many absences, since, as will be discussed in the following section, this is a list that is constructed by registration. Spain stands out with three approved programmes, followed by Belgium, Brazil, Hungary, and Bulgaria with two, and Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Indonesia, Mexico, China, Austria, Croatia, Norway, Uzbekistan, Sweden, Venezuela and Colombia, with one.

Discussion

The analysis of the projects included in the UNESCO register of good practices confirms what has been highlighted by other authors regarding the preponderance of non-formal education in terms of heritage education. In 2005, Estepa already expressed that the revaluation of heritage had converged in initiatives in the non-formal sphere and minor changes in the formal context. Pinto and Molina (2015), drawing on the same author, wrote something similar about curricula, stating that heritage education should no longer be seen "as something no longer inherent (if not exclusive) to non-formal education" (p.106). In this case, 100% of the reports include some kind of activity carried out in a non-school environment and 63.6% in a formal environment. This percentage difference is in line with the trend reported by Fontal and Martínez (2017).

It is essential that the heritage aspect is emphasised in educational activities and that the ethnological aspect is valued by teaching staff. The role played by the school also entails the transmission of culture. It can help to consolidate ICH in urban areas, for example, where it is often more blurred by other phenomena. In secondary school, moreover, it is highly interesting, as it is the stage of development in which many aspects of personality and identity are formed (Santacana & Llonch, 2016). One way to facilitate such formal incorporation is specific training for teachers in their higher and ongoing education, as well as a strong presence of ICH in official curricula.

In any case, it is worth highlighting the integration of education in all the programmes analysed. We note a clear interest in pedagogy in relation to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, in line with UNESCO's recommendations. With a somewhat lower percentage than the activities carried out in the formal sphere, 50% have a clear or complete educational design, thus placing them at levels close to those identified in similar studies (Fontal & Martínez, 2017). However, no project acting solely in the non-formal context with a complete educational design is identified. It would be good to rethink why and to accept that every pedagogical activity can be susceptible to a structure, justification, objectives, contents, orientation, strategies, timing, etc.

With regard to the formal sphere and the different types of actions, 40.9% of all the programmes provide teaching resources or isolated

activities and 36.4% have an educational project that brings together various actions with a clear structure. Sporadic work is seen to be the most common. In this case, it differs from the trends resulting from the analyses carried out in Spain (Fontal & Martínez, 2017), in which there is a predominance of programmes, projects and didactic designs. One possible explanation could be that the reports analysed in this study include education as an additional safeguarding action; it is not considered the main objective.

There are also projects that encompass as their backbone a learning methodology or technique, such as the Táncház method or the Kodály concept, both focused on Hungarian music and dance (Hungarian State Secretariat, 2011; Hungarian State Secretariat, 2016); and initiatives that offer training apprenticeships, as in the Colombian case of learning handicrafts (Colombian Ministry of Culture, 2019).

In line with other analyses (Fontal & Martínez, 2017), 92.9% of the recipients of what is developed in the formal context are primary school pupils. The percentage in pre-primary and secondary education coincides (64.3%), but is somewhat lower, which evidences a lack of interest or difficulty in incorporating ICH at the earliest or final levels of compulsory education. In this sense, the teaching team supports the need for initiatives, materials, and heritage training for all levels (Castro and López, 2019). As far as university level is concerned, the analysed programmes are only present in the aforementioned Hungarian learning methods, which involve all grades and ages, and in three initiatives offering activities and courses at universities or vocational training centres (Austrian Federal Chancellery, 2016; Swedish Ministry of Culture and Democracy, 2018; Colombian Ministry of Culture, 2019).

This last activity is precisely the one most frequently repeated among non-formal actions (81.8%), training and courses, followed by a similar one, workshops (59.1%), as well as seminars or congresses (54.5%) and exchanges of experiences (40.9%). Although they are not educational programmes, all of them consider it appropriate to include some kind of knowledge transfer initiative, with training courses being the most highly valued, even if they do not have a clear design, as specified above. One of the projects analysed, related to safeguarding culture of the Belgian carillon, incorporates practically all the typologies analysed, thus demonstrating the educational potential of heritage and the interest of pedagogy in culture. Heritage should be valued as more than a didactic

resource for social sciences, and institutions should consider education as a fundamental part of sustainable management of expressions.

The target groups of the activities in the non-formal context are the general public (68.2%), closely followed by young people (59.1%), teachers and cultural facilitators (50%), carriers (50%) and children (45.5%). It is interesting to note that in the programmes of the last few years, the initiatives are aimed at all or almost all typologies, a fact that demonstrates an awareness on the part of the promoters. Although the percentage of carriers is not very high, this should not be a cause for concern, as there are future tradition carriers among young people and the general public.

As mentioned in the previous section, few programmes have an evaluation system, which would allow for the assessment of results and progressing towards future projects. In one of the most recent reports, regarding the art of legend telling in Sweden, for example, the responsible association evaluates and adapts the project regularly and even hires outsiders for better assessment (Swedish Ministry of Culture and Democracy, 2018). This tool is useful not only for pedagogical purposes, but for all actions, as it studies all aspects of research, transmission, and promotion.

With regard to the agents involved in the design and implementation of good practices, there is a clear need to have one or more institutions, companies, or associations involved in the project. In all cases they have one or more examples. It is also noteworthy that 77.3% of the reports cite the carriers as being involved, whether or not they are the direct recipients, which complies with the recommendation of UNESCO and ICH scholars in that any action should be developed with the knowledge, permission, and participation of the protagonists. This relationship improves the approach and content, and ultimately the quality of the educational project (Ballesté et al., 2021; Ballesté et al., 2022).

There is still a lack of greater involvement of schools, which appear in 18.2% of the programmes, as well as families and the community (36.4%). The intervention of these agents would also improve the quality of the initiatives, not only for the processes of heritage and identity building (Fontal & Gómez-Redondo, 2016), but also at a pedagogical level, as it would allow for working with learning communities (Wenger, 2002).

Finally, looking at the country of origin of the programmes, we see that Spain has three registrations, Belgium, Brazil, Hungary, and Bulgaria have two, and thirteen other countries from different continents have one. However, this is a variable that cannot be assessed to a large extent, as the register of good safeguarding practices operates on a registration basis. The adoption of the 2003 Convention by UNESCO member states, as well as the development of national plans or laws, will undoubtedly condition the submission of nominations. In addition, some states prioritise the submission of nominations on the other two lists, especially if it is the one that involves urgent safeguarding measures and, therefore, a financial investment by the international institution.

Conclusions

Considering everything, this research has allowed for identifying didactic trends in terms of the programmes registered in the UNESCO Register of Good Practices for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the way in which they comply with the organisation's advice, as well as their similarity with the results of other initiatives.

UNESCO's guidelines for the 2003 Convention recommend promoting and integrating ICH into formal and non-formal education (UNESCO, 2010). However, in this study, it has been found that the formal is still less present in the projects. Looking towards the future, it should be seen as a necessary area and incorporated into initiatives, despite structural and educational difficulties. It is also possible to go beyond the development of isolated resources or activities and develop educational projects for different levels, not only for primary education, with a variety of actions. This would help in the chain of teaching and learning about heritage, which begins with knowledge and understanding, continues with appreciation and identification, and ends with preservation, enjoyment, and transmission (Fontal and Martínez, 2016).

Regarding the non-formal sphere, there is a guaranteed presence, with different types of activities aimed at different audiences. However, a clear pedagogical structure, i.e., a complete educational design that ensures the correct approach and development of the actions and, ultimately, a better teaching-learning process, has yet to be incorporated into these.

These results, those of both contexts, coincide with the trends identified so far, also with regard to the monitoring system of the programmes, as few of them have a systematised evaluation, and therefore do not have the tools to guarantee their improvement.

Finally, the adequate involvement of institutions, associations, and carriers in the design and development of the actions analysed should be emphasised. All that remains is to engage or include universities and researchers, as well as schools, families and communities, in order to achieve better quality and more efficient programmes. Promoting participation in heritage education would help with the ultimate goal of any programme, the recognition, respect, and appreciation of the ICH (UNESCO, 2010) and the formation of critical, respectful people with a connection to culture and idiosyncrasy.

Limitations and prospects

As mentioned in previous sections, entry in the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices is by application, thus programmes that have been unwilling or unable to initiate a process of capitalisation of their results are not taken into consideration. This limitation constrains the present study and does not allow it to analyse additional good practices of possible interest even beyond the member states of the organisation.

On the other hand, the reports presented do not allow an assessment of whether educational initiatives have adaptations for people with functional diversity or the degree of use of ICTs, two aspects that are on the rise in terms of pedagogical research (Fontal and Martínez, 2017). In short, these reports, as Royuela (2023) points out, have a reductionist structure, so it would be necessary to complete them with additional data.

In summary, this research could be extended with other similar registers from other institutions or international administrations, or the programmes already analysed could be studied in more depth using other methodologies, such as fieldwork, in order to obtain more information on educational practices.

From another perspective, the study could be repeated in the year 2029, when another ten years will have passed, thus providing a new

review of the baseline projects and understanding what patterns have been maintained over time and what significant changes have occurred.

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Identification of gender stereotypes in Compulsory Secondary Education: double analysis of animated feature films

Identificación de estereotipos de género en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria: doble análisis de largometrajes animados

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Abstract

Children's and youth animated films make up an artistic and social reality that shows, even today, sexist topics and stereotypes on a visual, linguistic and musical level. This represents an educational problem, given its relationship with the acceptance of discrimination and violence against women. To investigate the extent to which the adolescent public is capable of identifying gender stereotypical and disruptive feature, qualitative and quantitative methods were used, including the validation of a perception questionnaire, with a construct validity index of .764 and answered by a non-probabilistic sample of 84 adolescents, belonging to three natural groups enrolled in Spanish Compulsory Secondary Education. Among the 90 children's and youth animation cinematographic works that they selected for their task, the 23 that met the criteria (animated feature films released since 2009) and that were worked on by more than one team were subject to a complementary analysis through the application of the instrument

GS_5x4 validated for the analysis of gender stereotypes in audiovisual products. The results show that, among the stereotypes existing in these films, the adolescent audience was only able to identify the stereotypes present in two films, especially physical or fashion issues, followed by audiovisual issues. Likewise, it was difficult for them to identify the breaks in stereotypes in the emotional-sexual sphere. The analytical rigor and the large corpus compared to similar studies provide solidity to the results. According to the above, they are the two remaining dimensions (attitudinal/social) where there is the greatest risk that the forming society will assume gender stereotypes. Previous research relates this to social injustice, hence the importance of working on stereotypes' identification from regulated education, especially in high school classrooms given that its students are at a critical moment of forming their identity and learning about relationships between sexes.

Keywords: animated movies, teenagers, gender stereotypes, equality, educational field.

Resumen

Las películas de animación infantojuvenil conforman una realidad artística y social que muestra, aún en la actualidad, tópicos y estereotipos sexistas a nivel visual, lingüístico y musical. Esto supone un problema educativo, dada su relación con la aceptación de la discriminación y la violencia contra las mujeres. Con el objetivo de indagar hasta qué punto el público adolescente es capaz de identificar rasgos estereotípicos y rupturistas, se utilizaron métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos que incluyeron la validación de un cuestionario de percepción, con índice de validez de constructo .764 y respondido por una muestra no probabilística de 84 adolescentes, pertenecientes a tres grupos naturales escolarizados en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria en España. De entre las 90 obras cinematográficas de animación infantil y juvenil que seleccionaron para sus trabajos, las 23 que cumplían los criterios (largometrajes animados estrenados desde 2009) y que fueron trabajadas por más de un equipo fueron objeto de un análisis complementario mediante la aplicación del instrumento validado GS 5x4 para el análisis de estereotipos de género en productos audiovisuales. Los resultados muestran que, de los estereotipos existentes en dichas películas, el público adolescente solo logró identificar los estereotipos presentes en dos filmes, especialmente cuestiones físicas o de moda, seguidas de audiovisuales. Asimismo, les costó identificar las rupturas de estereotipos en el ámbito afectivo-sexual. El rigor analítico y el amplio corpus en comparación con estudios parecidos aportan solidez a los resultados. Según lo expuesto, son las dos dimensiones restantes (actitudinal/social) donde mayor riesgo existe de que la sociedad en formación asuma estereotipos de género. Dado que hay estudios que relacionan esto con actitudes de injusticia social, resulta crucial

trabajar su identificación desde la educación reglada, especialmente en las aulas de institutos, dado que su estudiantado se encuentra en un momento crítico de formación de su identidad y de aprendizaje de las relaciones entre sexos.

Palabras clave: cine de animación, adolescentes, estereotipos de género, igualdad, ámbito educativo.

Introduction

Children's animated films are part of what educate the members of our society. Since 1923, and for decades, the Disney factory has entertained children and youth with their feature films, and other production companies such as DreamWorks, Warner, and Pixar have joined them. Many generations around the globe have grown up under the influence of films like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *Beauty and the Beast*, among others. Despite the evident fantasy of these narratives, the central characters that inhabit these imaginary lands are human or humanoid, and as such, their representations bear a considerable resemblance to the expectations and stereotypes of contemporary reality (Monleón, 2021), including gender, by giving the audience a figure they could comfortably identify with (Stover, 2012).

Furthermore, some of the songs that make up their soundtracks and imagination are more familiar to some than to others. The images and representations of men and women on the big screen, both visually and through dialogue, are often a reflection of a socially constructed ideal. This has raised growing concern about the influence that hidden stereotypes can have on the lives and self-esteem of preadolescent girls (Robinson et al., 2020; Neira-Piñeiro et al., 2021). In addition to the imagery that appears in these children's animated films, in which a large number of gender stereotypes can be identified, the dialogue and song lyrics that accompany them must also be must also be considered, as they often reinforce such conventions.

The impact of gender stereotypes on student formation is a social concern, the magnitude of which has been demonstrated by many recent studies, for example regarding motivation and vocation (Martín Carrasquilla et al., 2022; Sánchez-Martín et al., 2023; Santana Vega et al., 2023).

According to many dictionaries, a stereotype is an image or idea commonly accepted by a group or society, with a certain immutable character. Specifically, gender stereotypes in specialized literature are identified with psychological, social, and cultural constructs that associate certain characteristics and attributes with masculinity, and its opposite, femininity, often adding positive and derogatory connotations respectively. Thus, agency or instrumentality is attributed to men—aggressiveness, competitiveness, action, toughness, insensitivity...—, and expressiveness and communality to women—tenderness, empathy, weakness, dependency, passivity, social sensitivity, understanding...—, often as if these qualities had a biological weight and not cultural (Ruiz-Repullo, 2016).

Therefore, stereotypes often persist in cultural and social products such as advertisements, instructions, television programs, depictions of fictional literary or film characters, etc. In a way, stereotypes help represent reality, as they serve the function of structuring and organizing it through different socializing agents. Additionally, they facilitate the identification of a character's figure or way of being. The problem is that, in doing so, they diminish complex traits that would offer us a more objective view of the characters (González-Delgado, 2019). And worse, in the case of gender, they constrain the expectations of men and women under a kind of *straitjacket*, often invisible, and always sexist.

Numerous studies have been carried out in this field, whether in the audiovisual field, in daily conversations, advertisements, or literary works, etc. These studies are included in the field of Sociolinguistics, where it is analyzed how men and women use language differently, and how stereotypes about the different linguistic uses of each gender are formed (Anugerahwati, 2020).

Despite the different gender stereotypes present in a large number of children's animated films, these remain popular among young and teenage populations. In addition, many adults consider, for example, that Disney is an honorable and respectful company towards childhood and one that can be trusted (Golden & Jacoby, 2018); in fact, the company has been established as a cultural icon and defender of the middle-class family, whose productions should be viewed. In the case of this article, the aim is to study to what extent the results of a scientific analysis coincide with the general perception of the public in a formative stage. This implies highlighting which aspects remain hidden and, therefore, susceptible to exerting a covert influence, which is difficult to combat if not made explicit.

Theoretical framework

Social changes and transformations that have taken place in recent decades have modified the existing relationships between different media outlets. In addition to these changes, audiovisual content is prevalent in cultural and artistic consumption, and even in certain social and communicative habits without artistic intention (Lorenzo-Lledó et al., 2020). Among the different social communication industries is cinema, considered as a vehicle for transmitting aesthetic and social content, and therefore, a first-rate educational tool (Bonilla et al., 2012).

Buhler et al. (2010) assert that movies are capable of adapting to fit the social patterns and trends of each era. This explains why the audience is easily able to accept a character that aligns with the trends and attitudes of the moment. As Franklin (2011) adds, movies and other forms of communication can be important for reflecting, establishing, and perpetuating norms and values.

Music has always had the ability to influence human beings through the communication of meaning and through emotional engagement (Beauchamp, 2005). The soundtrack of film productions enhances this potential for connection and expressive communication by stimulating, and even manipulating, its viewers (Kassabian, 2001). This is especially relevant in children's cinema, which has many characteristics of this musical genre, such as the fact that characters sing certain songs, where their attitudes, conceptions and concerns are evident, in addition to the fact that so many lyrics are sung in girls' games and other moments of children's free time.

In Pixar animation studios, the division of labor outside the domestic sphere has been influenced by Western gender divisions (Medialdea, 2016). Working on developing masculinity and femininity equally, Pixar has focused part of its efforts on achieving a gender representation more in line with current considerations (Cuenca-Orellana & López-Heredia, 2020).

Thus, there is growing interest in analyzing animated audiovisual content including a gender perspective, reaching even to the origins of gender. For example, there are studies that analyze, among other objectives, the historical presence in animated productions of figures such as the femme fatale (Aguilar et al., 2021); and, recently, Escalante (2020) analyzed the first appearance of Betty Boop, in a 1930 short film where she is portrayed as a humanized dog.

The fact that cartoons contain a large number of references to real life sometimes makes consumers understand the stories and actions as true (Sánchez-Labella-Martín, 2015). Hence it is important, highlighted by specialists, to identify and raise awareness in society regarding the different stereotyped situations and characters that still appear and perpetuate themselves on the big screen in the 21st century (Jaijo-Llorens, 2019; Mérida-Serrano & Heras-Peinado, 2021). Animated fantasy produces a large number of exotic villains, and conventional heroes and heroines, accompanied by cheerful themes and inspiring melodies that emulate themes and stereotypes in animated films that are part of children's culture. Female rebellion against rigid patriarchal structures is a rich fuel that drives the engine of current female children's narratives, through images, but also through the language of dialogues and songs, essential in the social impact of these and other cultural products (López-García-Torres & Saneleuterio, 2021; Robinson et al., 2020; Saneleuterio & Soler-Campo, 2022). Some heroines assume identities or attributes traditionally masculine; for example, Mérida, the protagonist of *Brave*, is impulsive and skilled as an archer, to the dismay of her mother (Schiele et al., 2020). This has been analyzed by being crossed with other variables, such as functional diversity, where, interestingly, females would have gained a certain advantage (Del Moral Pérez & López-Bouzas, 2021).

The importance of how artistic and cinematographic works represent relationships between genders is crucial, especially in the construction of the image of the youth. Authors like De la Concha (2010) indeed demonstrate the failure of laws against sexist violence because they do not address this point: although they may be fiction, although they may be art, there can be no other explanation for the persistence of abuse and violence against women than social permissiveness in the naturalization of certain behaviors and stereotypes in so many cultural products. Experts point out the need to socialize in a different way (Ruiz-Repullo, 2016). In fact, some studies that have addressed these issues have shown that identifying and fighting cultural stereotypes contributes to the eradication of sexist ideas and violent behaviors related to race, religion... and specifically gender (Arenas, 2013; Cantera & Blanch, 2010), to the extent that distorted beliefs about women are related to a certain tolerance towards macho violence (Rivas-Rivero et al., 2022). This is a priority social goal that cannot be achieved without the role of all social and cultural agents, including formal education, but also film and television, given the amount of hours that, on

average, people of formative age spend in front of the screen (Díaz et al., 2019), especially in adolescence, a crucial stage in identity development, where the most determinative educational challenges arise.

This reality highlights the need for pedagogical interventions that promote equality through coeducation, including emotional education (Ferrer, 2013), but also the need to understand the perception of adolescent society and to analyze from this perspective cultural products targeted at this audience, especially those of audiovisual basis, given their high consumption rate, as well as the impact they have on consciousness.

Objectives and methodology

This article aims to identify the gender stereotypes that are still present in current children's animated films and may unconsciously influence the audience in a formative stage; this is the General Objective (GO). Specifically—Specific Objectives (SO)—, they will be categorized into five dimensions (SO1) and analyzed how these are perceived by current society; in particular, among teenage audiences (SO2) and distinguishing between stereotypical traits (SO2.1) and groundbreaking traits (SO2.2).

This is a study that incorporates both a qualitative and a quantitative phase. On one hand, a method based on a descriptive research design has been used to analyze a previously filtered sample, where 23 relatively recent children's animated films were chosen (Analysis A); on the other hand, the perception of gender stereotypes by a young, impressionable audience, specifically 84 14-15-year-old participants organized into teams of 5-6 students, was analyzed (Analysis B), recruited through natural groups (academic grouping from 3rd course of Spanish Compulsory Secondary Education [ESO, in Spanish] where the study was conducted; consisting of three classes with 28 students each). The choice of year group takes into account that third year high school students show a greater acceptance of romantic myths than fourth year high school students (Bonilla-Algovia et al., 2021). Regarding the selection of film samples, it was done after triangulating the following data: each group of students had to select ten films in which to analyze their identified stereotypes. The only condition was that they had to be animated and released in the past ten years. For the final selection, animated films chosen by two or more groups were considered, as they were deemed the most well-known by the subjects who would later participate in the questionnaire.

The analysis of A has been conducted using the analysis template called GS 5x4 (Saneleuterio & Soler-Campo, 2022). This research instrument was selected because it is the only one that offers the reliability and validity required, having passed a three-phase validation process: design (Ph1), validation by expert judges (Ph2), and final revision (Ph3). In summary, in Ph1, the pros and cons of various previous contributions were considered to determine whether to adopt or avoid them. In Ph2, the Tristán-López (2008) model was applied to the provisional design in an interjudge process, after which the instrument was revealed to be very well constructed, with a construct validity index (IVC) of .709. Finally, in Ph3, the clarity of each item was qualitatively reviewed and the wording was finalized. The final analysis table is composed of twenty pairs of items, grouped into five dimensions: bodily, attitudinal, social, affective-sexual, and audiovisual (Saneleuterio & Soler-Campo, 2022). Therefore, the GS 5x4 items were applied to all characters, both main and supporting, in a sample of 23 films whose selection process has been explained above and whose titles are provided in the following section.

To measure perceptions and the ability to identify stereotypes among adolescents (analysis B), a second research instrument ad hoc for this research was designed, called MIEG_3ESO (in Spanish, *Música, Imagen y Estereotipos de Género. Cuestionario 3.º ESO* [Music, Image, and Gender Stereotypes. Questionnaire 3rd ESO]). For its validation, in Ph1, a provisional design was developed based on the simplification of the previous instrument, along with the necessary questions for individual identification and film selection. In Ph2, the evaluation of 35 panelists from universities around the world¹ was collected; unlike methods like Delphi, this one only requires one round, as it does not seek consensus but the identification of items that can be eliminated or improved (Tristán-López, 2008). After applying the Tristán-López (2008)

¹This is about 8 male doctors and 27 female ones associated with the following research centers, who were selected as specialists in the subject or in the study methodology: University of Calgary, Canada; Catholic University of Chile; in Spain: UNED, University Carlos III at Madrid, Complutense University of Madrid, University of Alcalá, Alicante, Barcelona, Burgos, Córdoba, Granada, Lleida, Málaga, Oviedo, Salamanca, Valladolid, Vigo and Jaume I University; from the United States: Arizona State University, Berklee College of Music, California State University, Bakersfield, Colorado State University, Tulane University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Virginia Tech and Washington State University; from Italy: Istituto Comprensivo Viviani di Napoli and University of Udine; from the United Kingdom: London College of Communication; and from France: University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne.

formulas for interjudge validation, this instrument obtained an IVC of .764 (Ph2), being acceptable from .58, according to the methodological model followed. To achieve this, one item had to be removed, along with another item that didn't make sense without it, in a process (Ph3) that included revising the clarity of the wording, thanks to the contributions of experts, resulting in an eight-question questionnaire (Table I).

TABLE I. MIEG 3ESO instrument [English version]

Music, Image, and Gender Stereotypes Questionnaire 3rd ESO								
1. Which is your 3rd ESO grou	up?							
2. Which is your student's nu	umber?							
3. I am (male/female)								
4. Check whether or not you considered the following n [List of 23 movies: those chosen groups]	novies:	Yes, we chose it for analysis. We talked about it, but in the end we didn't choose it. No.						
5. What types of gender ster you identify in each movie You can see the description of the table above ² . [List of 23 movies]	?	Physical/fashion Attitude/personality Social relevance Emotional relationships Audiovisual representation Does not contain gender stereotypes I have not seen or do not remember this movie						
6. Indicate if you consider the break the gender stereoty each category: You can see the description of the table above: if they present a breakup (for example: boy drwho plays soccer) [List of 23 movies]	rpes related to each category in the opposite, it is	Physical/fashion Attitude/personality Social relevance Emotional relationships Audiovisual representation Does not break gender stereotypes I have not seen or do not remember this movie						
7. Mark the 10 cartoon movi choose now if you did the If they are not on the list you o "Others".	task again:	[List of 23 movies]						
8. If they are not the same a by your group, indicate wh your mind:								

Source: Compiled by the authors.

² The items worked on in class were reminded. Specifically, the content that is shown later in Table II.

The questionnaire is aimed at students in 3rd ESO who had previously participated in an activity on the identification of gender stereotypes in animated films—dialogues, songs, and images—from the subject of Music. The didactic intervention was divided into two sessions. In the first one, a debate was established among students about what gender stereotypes are and in which areas of their daily life they could identify them. Subsequently, they were asked to, in groups of 5-6 students, select ten children's animated films that had been released in the last decade, with the aim of identifying visually and textually different gender stereotypes related to the five areas described above. For this reason, during the process they were provided with an adapted version of the GS_5x4 analysis tool (Table II), which was also reminded to them in the MIEG_3ESO questionnaire.

TABLE II. Didactic Adaptation of the model GS_5x4 for 3rd ESO

Stereotypes related to	Description					
1. The physique or fashion	Greater female than male concern to take care of oneself and follow fashion; association of beauty and skills with delicacy for women and with physical strength for men					
2. Attitude and personality	Active, rude, rational and simple tendency for men and passive, discreet, passionate and complex for women					
3. Social relevance	Occupation of public space and independence in decisions and economy for men, domestic space and dependence for women					
4. Emotional relationships	Tendency to use others and not commit by men; to submission and commitment by women					
5. Audiovisual representation	Association of the masculine with sober, cold or bluish environments, thick textures, energetic music; association of the feminine with decorated, warm or pink environments, fine textures, sweet melodies					

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Regarding the results obtained through the MIEG_3ESO instrument, due to its appropriateness to the objectives, only the data related to Table II are considered in this article, which correspond to questions 5 and 6 of the questionnaire (see Table I).

As mentioned, the sample obtained with MIEG_3ESO consists of a total of 84 students, all of them in 3rd of ESO of a state-funded

independent school in the city of Barcelona (Spain). The response rate to the questionnaire in relation to participation in the workshop is 100% (all students enrolled in the Music subject). Of the total sample, 42.9% are women and 57.9% are men. It is worth mentioning that ethics in research were always respected: students answered the questionnaire voluntarily; they were informed that there would be no consequence if they chose not to participate; and they were assured maximum confidentiality with the data they provided; in fact, the responses were later anonymized to preserve the identity of each minor.

In summary, if children's animated films, still in the 21st century, display sexist stereotypes visually, linguistically, and musically, this study aims to investigate to what extent teenage audiences are able to identify them. For this, a qualitative approach has been taken using an analysis sheet, where the key features of the films under investigation were included, comparing them with the knowledge and perception of a non-probabilistic sample of 14–15-year-olds, whose results were quantitatively analyzed, allowing for a comparison of the results of analysis A and B regarding the same 23 animated films. Therefore, given that this type of sample, and qualitative research in general, is used to understand a social phenomenon holistically intact, this method allows for an approach to understand current society, triangulating qualitative with quantitative data.

Results

After collecting data with the two instruments mentioned in the previous section, the results of both analyses were crossed and the results for each category were observed, summarized in Table III, where the first columns of each dimension correspond to analysis A (GS_5x4) and the second columns to analysis B (MIEG_3ESO). Regarding the A columns, a total of 16 points per dimension could be obtained (distributed between stereotypes [S] and ruptures [R]). Therefore, to establish a visual comparison, the corrective factor 0.190475 is applied in the B columns of Table III. For a more agile interpretation of the data, Table III highlights the boxes where stereotypes stand out and illuminates the most disruptive ones in green. A difference of three or more points has been considered significant, but nuances can also be seen in all

TABLE III. Global results of the analysis of 23 movies (MIEG_3ESO and GS_5x4)

Dimensions	D1		D2		D3		D4		D5	
Phases Movies	A S/R	B S/R								
Brave (2012)	7/6	2.86/6.48	7/4	2.67/8.95	6/5	4.57/5.33	3/5	3.43/4.38	7/4	2.1/4.38
Cars 2 (2011)	6/2	3.81/0.19	5/2	4.95/1.9	7/2	3.81/2.1	2/0	1.33/1.71	5/3	4.76/1.9
Cars 3 (2017)	6/8	1.9/0.19	3/5	4.38/1.9	6/5	2.29/2.29	1/2	0.76/1.71	2/4	4/1.71
Coco (2017)	3/3	2.1/1.33	6/2	1.71/3.43	3/2	3.05/1.33	0/2	2.1/2.1	4/1	2.1/1.52
Finding Dory (2016)	2/3	0.57/1.14	6/3	2.67/3.05	2/3	1.33/1.14	1/2	1.52/1.52	2/6	1.9/2.29
Frozen (2013)	6/2	8.19/1.52	6/4	5.33/6.67	2/3	3.62/5.14	4/3	4.57/1.71	6/2	6.1/2.48
Frozen 2 (2019)	8/4	5.52/0.95	6/7	3.43/4.95	4/3	2.29/3.43	1/4	2.1/2.67	6/1	4.95/2.67
Gru 3 (2017)	3/2	2.67/1.14	2/4	3.05/2.67	7/2	1.52/1.33	3/1	0.95/1.52	2/4	3.43/0.76
How to Train your Dragon (2010)	6/6	1.52/1.71	5/5	2.29/4.57	6/4	2.29/2.29	4/2	2.67/2.1	6/3	2.29/1.52
How to Train your Dragon 3 (2019)	8/6	1.52/0.95	4/9	1.52/2.86	9/5	1.9/1.14	3/6	1.14/1.52	6/4	2.1/1.33
Inside Out (2015)	3/4	3.62/1.33	4/2	4.38/4.76	5/5	1.14/2.86	4/3	2.29/3.24	3/5	4.19/2.29
Moana (2016)	3/5	2.86/3.24	5/3	3.05/5.9	5/3	3.43/3.05	1/0	2.48/2.67	2/4	3.05/2.29
Monsters University (2013)	4/0	2.67/1.33	3/1	3.62/2.29	5/0	2.1/2.86	2/2	1.9/1.14	7/1	3.43/2.29
Planes (2013)	5/2	1.52/0.57	6/2	1.33/1.9	7/3	1.33/1.52	1/2	0.38/0.76	7/1	3.05/1.14
Ralph Breaks the Internet (2018)	6/5	2.1/1.33	5/9	2.29/2.48	8/6	1.14/1.33	2/6	1.9/0.95	6/1	3.24/1.52
Shrek 4 Forever After (2010)	4/4	3.81/2.48	3/8	2.48/3.81	9/0	1.33/1.52	5/2	1.52/2.1	5/1	1.14/2.29
Sing (2016)	3/2	3.62/1.33	3/4	2.86/1.9	7/2	3.43/0.95	2/0	1.71/0.76	4/2	3.24/0.95
Tangled (2010)	2/3	8.38/0.95	7/3	6.67/4	5/4	5.33/2.29	6/1	5.9/1.33	5/2	7.05/0.95
The Princess and the Frog (2009)	2/3	5.52/0.76	8/6	4.19/1.52	4/3	2.48/2.1	3/4	2.86/0.95	8/5	4/0.57
Toy Story 3 (2010)	1/1	2.86/0.76	6/3	2.29/3.24	4/3	2.48/1.33	3/1	1.33/2.29	2/3	4.38/1.33
Toy Story 4 (2019)	5/3	2.29/1.14	6/6	1.14/3.05	6/5	1.33/2.1	6/3	1.52/1.52	7/1	2.86/1.9
Wreck-it Ralph (2012)	5/6	3.24/1.71	7/8	4/3.62	7/7	1.52/0.95	2/6	2.86/2.48	6/1	3.43/1.9
Zootopia (2016)	9/3	1.9/2.48	4/4	2.1/3.62	9/3	2.48/1.9	6/0	1.9/2.67	6/4	2.67/1.71

Source: Compiled by the authors

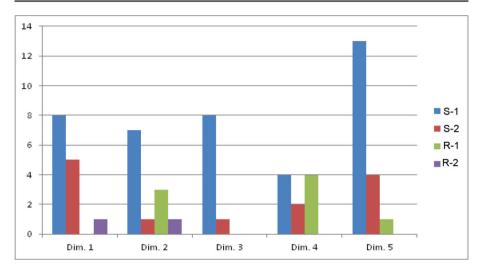
pairs of data. The most relevant aspect is the low proportion of students who identified the issues they were asked about in general. As seen, the results of phase A, obtained with the GS_5x4 instrument, show that the films that contain stereotypes in a larger number of dimensions without being neutralized by reverse characterizations are *Planes* (2013), *Cars* 2 (2011), *Tangled* (2010), *Monsters University* (2013), *Shrek 4 Forever After* (2010), *Toy Story 4* (2019) and *Zootopia* (2016). It is noteworthy that the stereotypes of five of them—*Planes, Monsters University, Shrek 4 Forever After, Toy Story 4*, and *Zootopia*—have gone quite unnoticed by teenagers.

On the one hand, the most groundbreaking films according to GS_5x4 (first columns, corresponding to phase A) are two of the most recent among those analyzed, *How to Train Your Dragon 3* (2019) and *Ralph Breaks the Internet* (2018). On the contrary, according to MIEG_3ESO (phase B), the film that stands out for contradicting stereotypes would be *Brave* (2013). In this regard, while it cannot be denied that the protagonist, Merida, contravenes in many aspects the established order and what is expected of her according to her gender, it should be considered that many secondary characters parade through the plot who are stereotypical (see the results of Table III, where in four out of five dimensions the detected stereotypes exceed the breakthroughs) something that the participating students do not seem to be aware of.

Regarding the dimensions where their ability to identify gender stereotypes is evident, they only handle it with some fluency in relation to physical appearance and fashion (D1). On the other hand, it is striking that they have hardly alluded to D2 and D3 (attitude/personality and social relevance), a comparison that is clearly seen in Graph I.

According to S-1 (stereotype analysis in phase A, obtained through GS_5x4), the dimension that most frequently captures traditional traits, or in which these significantly surpass ruptures, is the fifth (audiovisual): in the sample of perception of teenage audience, collected with the questionnaire MIEG_3ESO (stereotype analysis in phase B, S-2 in Graph I), although they perceive a lot of stereotypes regarding this category, they do not reach a third. Finally, regarding breaks, although the majority are concentrated in relation to affective relationships (D4) according to analysis A (R-1), participants in MIEG_3ESO do not seem to be aware of it (R-2).

GRAPH I. Number of items with a difference >3 between the analysis of phase A (stereotypes [S-1] and ruptures [R-1], according to GS_5x4) and the analysis of phase B (stereotypes [S-2] and ruptures [R-2], according to MIEG_3ESO).



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Discussion

Compared to previous studies on gender stereotypes in audiovisual narratives, there are quite a few who are addressing the issue, as shown by some monographs elaborated and published in recent years (Saneleuterio & López-García-Torres, 2019; Vera Balanza et al., 2021). Among those specifically focused on children's animation, we can mention the study by Mérida-Serrano & Heras-Peinado (2021), whose results reveal the perpetuation of sexist behaviors, although their sample is relatively small: only eleven films, of which only four were released in the last decade. However, it is curious that two new stereotypes have been identified in this study as ruptures—gender rebellion and exceptionalism display—a fact that may just show that stereotypical traits are changing, reflecting the evolution of times.

Male and female protagonists have also been analyzed based on specific parameters, whether it be the level of dependence (López-García-Torres & Saneleuterio, 2021) or the "Cinderella Complex" (Xu et al., 2019), or the diversity of abilities; in the latter case, a recent study conducted by Del Moral Pérez & López-Bouzas (2021) showed that boys are more determined by their physical and intellectual limitations, while girls with disabilities are more likely to overcome their limitations and conflicts, something that would show a certain break from stereotypes.

However, the object of study of these investigations are the cultural products themselves; that is, they are limited to observing and categorizing them, but they do not investigate their impact on society. Nevertheless, it is possible to compare some published results with ours regarding the categorization of gender stereotypes. Sánchez-Labella-Martín et al. (2022) recently presented, applied to animation but focused on advertising spots, a very comprehensive analysis table, with 25 indicators divided into three blocks, although it was not validated by scientific means nor specifically aimed at analyzing stereotypes.

Regarding animated feature films, Porto (2010) selects eight gender stereotypes and establishes that communication and stereotypical representation respond to traditional assignment. Their content analysis demonstrates that, up to the decade prior to the present study—their analysis covers 1998-2008 and the present 2009-2019—, the stereotyped traits that construct the conventional gender typology continued to be reproduced, where masculinity is linked to violence, dominance, risk, skill, intelligence, while femininity is more associated with weakness, recklessness, kindness, passivity, and aesthetic values (Porto, 2010).

A more recent study is that by Cuenca-Orellana & López-Heredia (2020), focused on Pixar releases between 1998 and 2015. Their results indicate that, although ruptures of stereotypes are detected, 81.25% of female characters hold positions with little decision-making power, or in areas that have always been traditionally associated with women. However, Neira-Piñeiro et al. (2021), regarding ten films from various production companies released between 2010 and 2019, conclude the opposite: there is thus a growing concern for female leadership.

Animated films mostly addressed by studies of this kind are those from Disney. Míguez (2015) analyses a sample, but only addresses female roles—and identifies a decrease in stereotypes, it must be said. In this sense, the academic tendency to mainly focus on heroines has become widespread, and the verdicts circulate in both directions: a few years earlier, Henry A. Giroux, a great specialist in the stereotypical analysis of Disney, stated about their female characters that they subordinate to the male ones and define their power and desires almost exclusively in terms of the dominant male narrative (Giroux, 2010).

What has barely been investigated so far is the perception and evaluation of adolescents regarding these items, that is to what extent they are able to identify stereotypical thought patterns in audiovisual products commonly consumed at these ages. One of the few studies that has addressed this, specifically the influence of Disney Princesses, is that of Robinson et al. (2020), who found four types of interests among teenagers, which explain the sense of attraction that these characters exert on them. Although it is not directly comparable to the results of the present article—types have not been addressed here, but stereotypes have—it is noteworthy that while some identify with virtuous or beautiful/rich figures, others advocate for dreamlike or warrior traits. Perhaps this is the explanation for why many stereotypes have not been identified, according to the results of MIEG_3ESO.

Conclusions

The heterogeneous representations of gender in the films selected in this study allow children and teenagers to be influenced by a great diversity of characters, although this manifests as an unconscious process. Especially in the case of women, perhaps female representations can help preadolescent and adolescent consumers to challenge the dominant social order and to exercise their own identity; by breaking the gender boundaries, these female characters transcend both the expectations and limitations imposed by patriarchy. However, according to the analysis, and given that a large number of stereotypes are still being maintained, the opposite can also happen, since not enough critical capacity has been detected in these age groups.

It has been seen that the literature published on the subject is limited to highlighting, often with validated instruments, the stereotypes present in different cultural products and often focuses on known aspects. On the contrary, this study compares the stereotypical and disruptive traits

obtained through a scientific analysis with those perceived by teenage audiences, an approach that is crucial and innovative, since the presence of these traits is paramount especially when they are not detected. At the same time, the educational implications derived from this show that it is necessary to educate perception and interpretation: we cannot combat or change what is assumed to be normal. Only if teenage students are able to detect sexist attitudes and microaggressions can we expect them to react to combat them and build a fairer society.

Indeed, as Mérida-Serrano & Heras-Peinado (2021) state, films with a high stereotypical content are not "educational resources that promote that gender equality values that characterize any coeducational experience at the school unless both teachers and children undertake a critical analysis with a gender perspective during the film screening in the classroom" (p. 183), something that has been precisely considered in the design of this dual research, whose conclusions are presented below.

Thus, in response to the GO (General Objective) that was raised in the formulation of purposes, the gender stereotypes of 23 children's animated films released between 2009 and 2019 have been identified, both in the dialogues and lyrics of the songs as well as in the images, music, and sound interventions shown to the viewer, and therefore reinforce them visually and auditorily. According to the data obtained in analysis A, the films with the most variety of gender stereotypes are Planes, Cars 2, Tangled, Monsters University, Shrek Forever After, Toy Story 4, and Zootopia. Among them, only Cars 2 and Tangled were considered stereotypical by the teenage audience, to which Frozen must be added, a film to which more sexism is attributed than it actually has. Jaijo-Llorens (2019) also affirms, focusing on Disney, the great influence that animated films have on children and adolescents. The content, accompanied by successful music and presented through fun animations, reaches a large number of viewers, exposed to values and stereotypes that will perpetuate more inadvertently than it seems.

Regarding the Specific Objectives, gender identifications have been classified into five dimensions (SO1): physical (issues related to physical appearance or fashion), attitudinal (aspects related to attitude or personality), social (traits related to the social relevance of characters), affective-sexual (especially the representation of affective relationships), and audiovisual (that is, visual and auditory representation).

Additionally, it has been analyzed how these identifications are perceived by current society during their formative stage; specifically, among teenage audiences (SO2). Thus, starting from the analysis of a sample of 84 students in 3rd ESO (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*, Compulsory Secondary Education in Spain), it has been shown that the stereotypical traits that are most identified are those related to physical appearance/fashion, while they go unnoticed if stereotypes refer to attitude/personality or social relevance (SO2.1). Lastly, the most difficult disruptive traits for them to identify are those related to affective relationships (SO2.2), which could be related to a certain naturalization effect, that is, progress towards the establishment of new, more egalitarian models.

The limitations of this research recommend its replication with larger sample sizes and more recent films. The prospective can also be expanded by addressing the educational implications of the study, as including the perception and analysis of traditional and boundary-breaking gender traits in audiovisual media is crucial for the development of educational programs that promote gender equality. Based on the above, it can be concluded that working on the identification of gender stereotypes is essential in formal education, especially in high school classrooms, as students are at a critical moment in forming their identity and learning about gender relations.

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Students' communicative competence and self-perception as keys to academic development in multilingual contexts

La competencia comunicativa y la autopercepción del alumnado como claves para el desarrollo académico en contextos multilingües

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Abstract

In this research study, we explored the relationship between the self-perception of communicative competence and the real competence of a group of multilingual students from the Basque Autonomous Community. Participants were 193 students from primary education (N=95) and secondary education (N=98). The main language of instruction was Basque, and Basque, Spanish and English were school subjects. All the participants filled out a self-perception competence scale in Basque, Spanish and English. Specific tests were designed and validated to measure their real communicative competence in the three languages. Two focus group discussions were conducted with teachers (N=14). The self-perception in the three languages and the scores obtained in the objective tests pointed in

the same direction, but the results showed differences between groups. Both groups scored higher in self-perceptions and real competence in Spanish, but the scores differed in the order of the other two languages. Primary students scored higher in Basque while secondary students scored higher in English. The results highlight the complex interaction of some variables (context, exposure, use, age...) affecting the development of language competence in a second language.

Keywords: communicative competence, self-perception of language, multilingual education, Basque, Spanish, English.

Resumen

En este estudio exploramos la relación entre la autopercepción de la competencia comunicativa y la competencia real de un grupo de estudiantes multilingües de la Comunidad Autónoma Vasca. En el estudio participaron 193 estudiantes de Educación Primaria (N=95) y Secundaria (N=98). La principal lengua de instrucción utilizada dentro del aula era el euskera, y el castellano, el euskera y el inglés se impartían como asignaturas obligatorias. Los participantes completaron escalas de autopercepción sobre su competencia en euskera, castellano e inglés. Se diseñaron y validaron pruebas específicas para medir su competencia comunicativa real en las tres lenguas. Además, se realizaron dos grupos focales con el profesorado (n=14). La autopercepción en las tres lenguas y las puntuaciones obtenidas en las pruebas objetivas señalan en la misma dirección, pero los resultados muestran diferencias entre las dos etapas educativas. La autopercepción y la competencia real son más altas en castellano en ambos grupos, pero las puntuaciones difieren en el orden de las otras dos lenguas. El alumnado de primaria puntúa más alto en las dos mediciones en euskara mientras que el alumnado de secundaria lo hace en inglés. Los resultados ponen de manifiesto la compleja interacción entre diversos factores (entorno social, exposición, utilización, edad...) que afectan el desarrollo de la competencia lingüística en una segunda lengua.

Palabras clave: competencia comunicativa, autopercepción lingüística, educación multilingüe, euskera, castellano, inglés.

Introduction

The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) is an increasingly multilingual society, providing an interesting context for analyzing multilingualism in education. With a population of just over two million, 43.3% of

individuals over the age of two are bilingual, speaking both Basque, the minority language, and Spanish, the majority language. However, the use of Basque varies significantly and is generally lower across the provinces that make up the BAC (Eustat, 2021). In the educational system, 77.76% of Primary Education students and 72.11% of Secondary Education students study Basque as the language of instruction in the D model (Basque Government, 2022a). Since its implementation in the early 1980s, model D has been crucial in revitalizing the Basque language, enabling a significant portion of the population to acquire it. Currently, 62.4% of BAC residents have some knowledge of Basque (Eustat, 2021).

The significant growth of Basque-language instruction has substantially transformed the Basque educational system. The student body learning in Basque is now much more diverse, characterized by greater linguistic richness, varying levels of access to Basque outside of school, and differing attitudes and ideologies toward languages. Currently, most students in model D have Spanish or another language as their first language (L1) and have limited exposure to Basque outside of school. This situation affects the acquisition of the curriculum languages and other curricular areas.

This study explores the self-perception and actual language proficiency in Basque, Spanish, and English among primary and secondary school students in a city within the Basque Autonomous Community.

Multilingual Education in the Basque Autonomous Community: Challenges for the Future

Since the late 1970s, the objective of bilingual education in the BAC has been to ensure that all students master both official languages by the end of compulsory education. Significant progress has been made toward a multilingual education system since then. One major change has been in the language of instruction parents choose for their children. As shown in Figure I, the enrolment trends for Model A (Spanish) and Model D (Basque) have diverged, with Basque now being the main language of instruction in both primary and secondary education (Eustat, 2021). Currently, Model D forms the backbone of the Basque educational system.



FIGURE I. Progression of the linguistic educational model in the BAC

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Eustat (2021).

The profile of Model D students is now more heterogeneous, with most learning through their second language (Basque), posing a significant challenge for the Basque education system (School Council of Euskadi, 2019). Current educational legislation mandates that students achieve a similar level of proficiency in Basque and Spanish by the end of compulsory schooling. Specifically, the draft Basque education law (Basque Government, 2022b) requires that all students attain B2 level communicative competence in both languages, as described by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. While developing communicative competence in both official languages is necessary, it presents a demanding linguistic challenge. In a system of linguistic immersion, as is the case for most students enrolled in Model D, achieving a high level of proficiency in the vehicular language is essential to ensure adequate learning in the other curriculum subjects.

One of the primary concerns of the educational community is reading comprehension. This issue is reflected in the results of large-scale comparative assessments. Notably, external standardized evaluations such as the diagnostic evaluation by the Basque Government and the international PISA study by the OECD (School Council of the Basque Country, 2019; National Institute for Educational Evaluation, 2018)

indicate a clear downward trend in linguistic communication in Basque among students in the 4th year of Primary Education and the 2nd year of Secondary Education. The low performance of students in these assessments has been widely reported in the media, raising questions about the effectiveness of the Basque education system, particularly Model D, in educating multilingual students. Headlines such as "Model D advances, but Basque is going backward in the classrooms. What is happening?" (Guillenea, 2016) and "El Consejo Escolar de Euskadi pide una 'reflexión' sobre el modelo de euskaldunización por malos resultados" or "The Basque School Council calls for 'reflection' on the Basque language immersion model due to poor results" (Europa Press, 2020) illustrate these concerns.

While acknowledging the significance of the analyzed results, it is important to highlight that neither model A (with Spanish as the language of instruction) nor model B (with Basque and Spanish as the language of instruction) have shown improved performance in these tests. Regarding communicative competencies in Basque, both models A and B yield lower results compared to model D in diagnostic assessments. Additionally, neither model A nor B outperforms model D in Castilian (De la Rica et al., 2019).

The decline in results could be a consequence of various factors. First, it is noted that model D is becoming increasingly heterogeneous, with many students studying in their second or even third language (School Council of Euskadi, 2019). The Arrue report (Basque Government, 2020) indicates that Basque language usage among family members in the BAC stands at 29% in Primary Education and 21% in Secondary Education. Additionally, many students have limited exposure to Basque outside of school hours. Cummins (2002) introduced the concepts of BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) to elucidate the second language (L2) learning process for migrant students (Navarro & Huguet, 2006). These concepts are also pertinent in understanding the challenges native students face in learning an L2. BICS involves communication in the L2 within contextualized situations, while CALP pertains to academic language requiring substantial cognitive engagement and is used in decontextualized settings. This academic language comprises low-frequency vocabulary, complex syntax, and dense, abstract information, crucial for acquiring curricular knowledge and honed through academic activities during schooling. While native students may proficiently use

their L2 for basic daily tasks, mastering academic language is essential for curricular competency development. Furthermore, the concept of CALS (Core Academic-Language Skills) is noteworthy, encompassing language skills crucial for reading comprehension (Meneses et al., 2018). CALS are instrumental in supporting reading comprehension across all academic subjects, even in bilingual educational settings (Phillips-Galloway et al., 2020).

The use of English in Basque society and globally is on the rise in various areas such as education (Leonet and Orcasitas-Vicandi, 2024), the workplace (van der Worp et al., 2017), and even in people's leisure activities due to the increasing availability of digital platforms offering English-language audiovisual content (Ikusiker, 2023). In education, most students begin learning English at the age of four, and the language is also used as an additional medium of instruction in both primary and secondary schools (Cenoz, 2023). Furthermore, the prevalence of English in extracurricular activities has increased, with it now being the predominant language among secondary school students. This trend is also becoming more prominent in primary and secondary education (Basque Government, 2020). According to the Arrue report, a collaborative effort between the Basque Government and the Soziolinguistika Klusterra (Soziolinguistics Cluster) of the Basque Country (refer to Basque Government, 2020), 55.8% of 4th-grade Primary Education students engage in activities in Basque, while the percentage for 2ndgrade Compulsory Secondary Education students is 36.9%. Regarding activities in Spanish, 61.5% of 4th-grade Primary Education students report engaging in weekly activities in this language, with the percentage decreasing to 42.4% in the 2nd year of ESO. In contrast, English is the least utilized language for extracurricular activities in 4th-grade Primary Education (51.4%) but becomes the most used language in 2nd-year ESO (58%).

The Ikusiker report (2023) focuses on the entertainment habits of the young population, particularly the consumption of content on streaming platforms. The report reveals interesting insights into the language in which content is consumed on these platforms. Approximately two-thirds of the content on streaming platforms is consumed in Spanish (67.7%), while a quarter is viewed in English (26.5%). Only 0.7% of individuals regularly consume content in Basque. It is worth noting that the presence of Basque content on these platforms is minimal (Ikusiker, 2023).

Self-perception and actual communicative competence

Language learning is associated with various factors (Gardner, 2007; Hattie, 2012), one of which is an individual's self-perception of their language proficiency. Self-perception is subjective and often involves a discrepancy between one's actual abilities and how they perceive themselves (Deci & Flaste, 1995; Deci & Moller, 2005). It encompasses aspects of the second language (L2), such as perceived competence in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and pragmatics (Dewaele, 2008). Additionally, self-perceptions can be shaped by past learning experiences during the educational journey, including successes in the L2 or previous negative encounters (Dewaele, 2008; López-González, 2010).

Research on the acquisition of communicative competence suggests that the proficiency levels attained by L2 learners and users are determined by a complex interaction between psychological, affective, and sociobiographical factors (Dewaele, 2008). Dewaele (2008) proposes a series of variables associated with self-perceived linguistic competence, including factors such as the learning environment, the age of initial language acquisition, the typological distance between L1 and L2, the frequency of language use, gender, age, and education level of the individual.

Given this context, it becomes crucial to explore students' selfperceptions of communicative competence to understand the perspectives from which they approach their academic aspirations (López-González, 2010). Often, self-perceptions differ from actual competence. For example, Alwi and Sidhu (2013) studied the relationship between university students' self-perceived oral communicative competence and their actual competence. To assess actual competence, each student gave an oral presentation evaluated by a panel of experts. The results showed that students rated their competence higher than their actual performance. There is limited research on the self-perceived communicative competence of children and younger individuals. However, several studies have highlighted the relationship between academic performance and communicative self-perception among children (Chesebro et al., 1992; Rosenfeld et al., 1995). For instance, Chesebro et al. (1992) examined the communication attitudes of 2,793 academically at-risk students in the United States. They found that these students had higher communication apprehension and lower self-perception of communicative competence.

Platsidou and Kantaridou (2014) found that self-perception is closely related to language learning strategies and attitudes toward learning. These attitudes are shaped both within the academic and broader social contexts, influencing self-perceived proficiency. Based on a sample of 1,302 primary and secondary school students, the authors reported that attitudes towards language learning affect self-perception of second language proficiency, both directly and indirectly, through improved strategy use. Their conclusions suggest that training in learning strategies can be enhanced by interventions that modify students' attitudes toward second language learning. Additionally, Lee et al. (2003) highlight the importance of a social and cultural perspective in understanding the development of children's self-perception of competence.

Research on the self-perception of primary and secondary school students is crucial, as many adolescents view formal education as increasingly impractical and seek alternative sources of information and skills. According to Heath (2008), from a linguistic socialization perspective, deep language habits in adolescents emerge primarily through friendships and peer interactions. This is supported by the Arrue report (Basque Government, 2020) on using Basque in school environments among children and adolescents. The report found that 66.5% of primary school students and 37.3% of secondary school students use Basque with peers in the classroom. In the playground, 40.9% of primary and 21.8% of secondary students use Basque with their classmates. In contrast, the use of Basque with teachers is higher at both educational stages, both inside and outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, 78.2% of primary students and 67.9% of secondary students use Basque, while outside the classroom, usage drops to 60.3% in primary and 40.9% in secondary (Basque Government, 2020). In multilingual educational contexts, where languages with varying statuses and societal presence coexist, self-perception is a critical variable to consider when diagnosing these environments.

Objectives and research questions

This research investigated students' self-perceptions and actual competence in Basque, Spanish, and English. Both student and teacher perceptions of language proficiency and usage were considered. Based

on the previous discussion, the following research questions were formulated:

- How do Primary and Secondary students perceive their level of proficiency in Basque, Spanish, and English?
- What is the actual proficiency of Primary and Secondary students in Basque, Spanish, and English?
- How do teachers perceive the linguistic competence of Primary and Secondary students?

Method

This research study employed a mixed methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issues than either approach alone would provide. This approach also adds complexity to the research design, incorporating the benefits of each method (Hernández et al., 2006). Following Creswell (2014), an explanatory sequential model design was chosen, emphasizing the quantitative phase, which then informs the qualitative data collected in a subsequent phase.

Sample

This research included 193 participants with an average age of 12.5 years; 49.7% were female, and 49.3% were male. The participants were divided into two groups based on age and school year. The first group consisted of 95 students in the 5th grade of Primary Education (PE), and the second group consisted of 98 students in the 3rd grade of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO). All students attended a charter school in the city center and were enrolled in model D, where Basque is the main language of instruction for all subjects except Spanish and English, which are taught for about three hours per week.

Most students' parents had higher education degrees (father/mother1, 86.2%; father/mother2, 82%). Additionally, 73.7% of primary and 79.4% of secondary students participated in extracurricular activities in English. Regarding the sociolinguistic environment, 15.3% of the population in

the town where the school is located can speak Basque (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2021). Table I shows the students' language use at home, school, and with friends.

TABLE I. Use of languages by students

Location	English	Basque	Both
At home	71.4%	4.8%	16%
At school	23.6%	13.3%	61.5%
With friends	86.2%	2.6%	10.8%

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Additionally, six primary and eight secondary education teachers participated in the study. Table II shows the assigned codes for the teachers, their gender, subjects taught, and years of experience in education. Primary school teachers taught Basque and Spanish language and literature, foreign language (English), social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. Among the secondary education teachers, in addition to the subjects above, some taught French as a second foreign language, and others taught Latin.

TABLE II. Primary and Secondary Teachers' profile

Code	Gender	Subject taught	Years of experience in education
PE1	Man	Tutoring, Mathematics and Natural Sciences	19 years
PE2	Woman	Tutoring, Spanish Language and Literature, Basque Language and Literature	16 years
PE3	Woman	First Foreign Language (English)	5 years
PE4	Woman	Tutoring, Natural and Social Sciences, Spanish Language and Literature and Basque Language and Literature.	8 years
PE5	Woman	First Foreign Language (English)	15 years
PE6	Woman	First Foreign Language (English)	23 years
ESO1	Woman	Tutoring, Spanish Language and Literature	33 years

(Continued)

TABLE II. (Continued)

Code	Gender	Subject taught	Years of experience in education
ESO2	Man	First Foreign Language (English)	29 years
ESO3	Woman	Tutoring, Basque Language and Literature	5 years
ESO4	Woman	First Foreign Language (English), Second Foreign Language (French) and Latin.	27 years
ESO5	Man	Tutoring, Spanish Language and Literature	30 years
ESO6	Woman	First Foreign Language (English)	34 years
ESO7	Woman	Tutoring, Basque Language and Literature	25 years
ESO8	Woman	Mathematics and ESO coordinator	21 years

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Instruments

Data were collected using quantitative and qualitative techniques. The details of each instrument are described below.

Background questionnaire: All students completed a questionnaire to collect sociodemographic and linguistic information, including gender, age, languages used in different contexts, and exposure to different languages. Additionally, the questionnaire included a self-assessment scale of communicative competence in Basque, Spanish, and English. Students were asked to self-assess four language competencies (oral expression, written expression, oral comprehension, and reading comprehension) on a scale of 1 to 10. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (with the SPSS statistical package), yielding a score of 0.87. The questionnaire was written in Basque, the primary language of instruction at the school.

Reading comprehension tests. The reading comprehension tests were designed based on models from PIRLS and PISA tests. A total of six tests were created, three for each educational stage (primary and secondary), aimed at assessing reading comprehension in Basque, Spanish, and English. Each test comprised two written texts accompanied by nine questions pertaining to their content. In the Primary Education tests,

the multiple-choice questions offered four possible answers. However, following the structure of PISA assessments, the questions included a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended formats for the Secondary Education tests. These questions were designed to evaluate literal, inferential, global, and critical comprehension of the text. Two researchers employed rubrics to ensure the validity and reliability of the correction process. They fostered reflective consensus through independent data coding, continual coding comparison, and resolving discrepancies through discussion. The internal consistency of all six tests was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (with the SPSS statistical package), yielding acceptable scores. Further details can be found in Table III.

TABLE III. Alpha Coefficients of the reading comprehension tests

Language	Course	Cronbach's Alpha
Basque	Primary Education	.78
English	Primary Education	.78
English	Primary Education	.81
Basque	Secondary Education	.74
English	Secondary Education	.78
English	Secondary Education	.84

Focus groups. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative insights were gathered to supplement the information with teachers' perspectives on students' language proficiency and the factors influencing its development. Two focus groups were conducted—one with primary school teachers and another with secondary school teachers who taught the participating students.

A script comprising ten questions was prepared to guide the discussions. The topics covered included oral expression, written expression, oral comprehension, and reading comprehension in Basque, Spanish, and English, as well as teachers' perceptions of students' language use. Both focus groups were conducted in Basque and lasted approximately an hour and a half each.

Procedure

Before collecting data, students and teachers signed informed consent forms, and families were informed following the project's ethical protocol (UPV/EHU code M10/2020/212). Quantitative data addressing the first and second research questions were analyzed using SPSS version 27. This involved conducting parametric T-tests for independent samples, with Cohen's d used to determine effect sizes for significant differences. The third research question was addressed using qualitative data obtained from focus groups with teachers. These sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using NVIVO version 12 for coding and analysis.

Results

The following section will present the results corresponding to each research question.

Self-perception of primary and secondary school students

The first research question explores the self-perceptions of primary and secondary school students regarding their proficiency levels in Basque, Spanish, and English. A T-test for independent samples was conducted to ascertain whether there were disparities in self-perceptions between both groups across the three languages. Results revealed that primary school students reported a higher proficiency in Spanish, followed by Basque and English. Similarly, secondary students indicated a greater command of Spanish, followed by English and Basque. Table IV shows the means and Standard Deviation (SD) values. Notably, high SDs suggest a lack of consensus among opinions. Further analysis via t-test for independent samples revealed significant differences between the primary and secondary groups for two of the three languages: Basque (t (189) = 4.79, p = .00, d=.69) and Spanish (t (189) = 3.01, p= .00, d=.43).

TABLE IV. Self-perceived linguistic proficiency in Basque, Spanish, and English

	Basque		English		English	
	М	SD	M	SD	М	SD
Primary (max.=40)	32.01	4.48	36.91	2.38	30.13	5.97
Secondary (max.=40)	28.20	6.30	35.27	4.78	29.50	5.87

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Actual language proficiency of primary and secondary school students

The second research question examines the actual proficiency of primary and secondary students in Basque, Spanish, and English. An independent samples T-test was conducted to determine if there were differences in proficiency levels between the two groups across the three languages. The results indicate that primary students scored highest in Spanish, followed by Basque and English. In contrast, secondary students scored highest in Spanish, followed by English, and then Basque. The means and standard deviations (SDs) are presented in Table V. The T-test analysis for independent samples revealed that the differences between the primary and secondary groups were significant for one of the three languages: English (t(172) = -4.52, p = .00, d = -.68). There were no significant differences for Basque (t(172) = -1.83, p = .06) and Spanish (t(172) = -1.54, p = .12).

TABLE V. Reading comprehension proficiency in Basque, Spanish, and English

	Basque		English		English	
	М	SD	М	SD	М	SD
Primary (max.=9)	5.34	2.15	5.97	2.25	4.62	2.39
Secondary (max.=9)	4.80	1.73	6.48	1.80	6.19	2.19

Source: Compiled by the authors.

As seen in Figure II, primary school students perceive their proficiency levels to be higher than the scores they obtained in the tests for all three languages. Additionally, it can be observed that both students' self-perceptions and their actual proficiency follow the same trend across the three languages: Spanish ranks highest, Basque second, and English third.

Autopercepciones

Competencia real

Basque English English

FIGURE II. Self-perception and actual proficiency of primary school students in three languages

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The self-perception and actual proficiency of secondary school students in the three languages follow the same trend. Spanish received the highest scores in self-perception and actual proficiency, followed by English and Basque. As shown in Figure III, students perceive their proficiency levels in all three languages to be higher than their actual test scores.

languages

9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
O
Autopercepción
Competencia real

Basque English English

FIGURE III. Self-perception and actual competence of secondary school students in the three languages

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Teachers' perception of students' linguistic competence

The third research question explores the perceptions of primary and secondary teachers regarding student language proficiency and use. Both language and content teachers participated in the focus groups. The qualitative analysis of these discussions provides valuable insights to complement the previous findings.

Overall, teachers express concern about their students' communicative competence in Basque but are less worried about their competence in Spanish and English. They attribute the limitations in Basque proficiency to low exposure, either because the students' first language at home is Spanish or due to the minimal presence of Basque in their social environment.

Excerpt 1:

PE1: In Basque, which is the language I use, the reality of our center is that in most homes, Basque is not used; they are Spanish speakers, which has an influence.

Excerpt 2:

PE2: The strength of the mother tongue [first language], if you have learned in Spanish, and if you live in Spanish, then when you have to study natural sciences [in Basque] in class, for example, that limits you.

The teachers generally perceive that the students have good comprehension skills. However, they think that the problem lies mainly in oral expression.

Excerpt 3:

PE2: In addition, when they talk to each other, it is clear that they lack fluency.

Excerpt 4:

EP3: But if I say correctly "erori" [caer] the student understands what I say; it is at that moment that he/she lacks fluency.

Excerpt 5:

EP4: I think they have better comprehension than fluency in speaking.

When discussing receptive skills, teachers highlight difficulties related to academic language skills and emphasize the importance of addressing these across all curricular areas. They note that proficiency in academic language directly impacts content comprehension. Some examples are provided below.

Excerpt 6:

ESO4: When they are at school and talking about school matters, they cannot speak or write like they do with their friends. They are asked for another level, another vocabulary. They are asked to do it differently, and we work on that.

Excerpt 7:

Researcher: Do you also do this in other languages, such as

Basque and English? **ESO7:** In Basque, yes. **ESO2:** In English as well.

In the focus group with secondary education teachers, language was emphasized as an essential tool for learning. They noted that language difficulties impact all areas of study. For instance, social and natural sciences teachers pointed out that limited linguistic competence in Basque is one of the main obstacles to learning the curricular content and acquiring the academic language of their subjects.

Excerpt 8:

ESO3: In academic texts that include sentences with certain syntactic complexity, many comprehension problems arise.

Mathematics teachers also encounter this problem, although less intensely, since numerical language requires less linguistic knowledge. Nonetheless, primary education teachers highlight that one of the greatest challenges students face is solving mathematical problems, which is closely linked to their linguistic competence and academic language skills.

In general, teachers believe that the specific language of each curricular area should be addressed within each subject rather than relying solely on language teachers. This sentiment is reflected in the examples provided below:

Excerpt 9:

ESO7: It is fine to work on it in language class, but if you ask me about the hierarchy in math class, the teacher has to explain the terminology and all the language that is being worked on.

Excerpt 10:

ESO1: In my opinion in all subjects and areas, but the specific vocabulary is the competence of each subject.

Regarding the understanding of English, teachers generally believe that the students at the center have a good command of the language. However, this perception is more prevalent among secondary education teachers than primary education teachers. In the primary group, teachers noted that the activities are usually very guided, with content that is concrete and closely related to the students' lived experiences. They suggested that if more specific and complex topics were introduced, students might experience comprehension difficulties.

Excerpt 11:

EP3: If they have to write a paper in English, it is very, very targeted. They must add a specific answer; otherwise, they cannot answer; their knowledge is limited.

Conclusions

This study investigates the relationship between the self-perceptions of primary and secondary school students and their actual communicative competence in Basque, Spanish, and English in a BAC school. The findings revealed that students' reading comprehension test scores and self-perceived linguistic competence are closely aligned. In primary education, the highest scores in self-perception and actual proficiency were in Spanish, followed by Basque and English. These results are logical, given the students' exposure to each language. Despite being taught only three hours a week, Spanish is the dominant language in the micro- and macro-social environment where the school is located (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2021) and is the L1 of most students. English is also taught for three hours a week, while Basque is the medium of instruction and is taught as a subject. In Secondary Education, the results diverge from the expected pattern based on language exposure. While Spanish remains the language with the highest scores, students performed better in English than in Basque in both self-perception and actual proficiency. This could be due to the low exposure to Basque in the social environment, contrasted with significant exposure to English outside of school and its high status in the students' environment, which could explain the results observed for the secondary group in both measures.

From a sociolinguistic perspective on language use in the school environment, we can say that the school provides students with more favorable conditions for the development of Basque than the social context does. However, consistent with the findings of the Arrue report (Basque Government, 2020), the data indicate that the school's ability to develop communicative competence in Basque is limited. The family and social environment offer few opportunities to use the language, which is associated with the low development of students' communicative competence in Basque at the secondary school stage. Teachers' opinions on linguistic competence in Basque align with these assessments, attributing the issue to low exposure to the language outside school. These results are also consistent with recent ISEI-IVEI diagnostic evaluations and PISA reports (School Council of the Basque Country, 2019; National Institute for Educational Assessment, 2018), which show a decline in reading comprehension scores in Basque in recent years.

The linguistic socialization approach (Heath, 2008) provides insight into the results regarding linguistic competence and self-perceptions among secondary school students. According to this theory, as students undergo socialization, the influence of their social environment becomes more pronounced, guided by prevailing social norms. In the specific context of the school, the social environment is considerably less supportive of Basque than the school environment, potentially affecting both the actual language proficiency and self-perception of secondary school students. Conversely, the educational center's supportive environment toward Basque may have positively influenced the results and self-perception of primary school students regarding this language. This could be attributed to the reduced influence of the social environment at this educational stage. The Arrue report (Basque Government, 2020) also underscores the impact of the social environment on the linguistic behavior of school adolescents in the BAC. According to the report, the educational center positively influences the use of minority language among primary school students. Furthermore, Dewaele (2008) suggests that the context of language acquisition significantly influences self-perception of language proficiency, with age also playing a crucial role. Similarly, the results align with Lee et al. (2003), emphasizing the importance of the social perspective in understanding children's self-perception of proficiency.

Diagnostic evaluations conducted by the Basque Government (Basque Government, 2020; School Council of Euskadi, 2019) suggest that the significant growth of the D model (Basque vehicular language) in recent years may contribute to the negative trend in academic development

in Basque, which could also be reflected in the findings of the present study. Similar to the sample in this study, most students in the BAC are instructed in Basque as their primary language, while Spanish is their first language (L1). Originally designed for the children of Basque-speaking families, Model D has evolved into a language immersion program catering to a diverse student population. Experts in the field note that academic language proficiency is crucial in developing linguistic and academic competencies among students in language immersion programs (Cummins, 2002; Meneses et al., 2018; Phillips-Galloway et al., 2020). Teachers participating in the study observe that students encounter difficulties in understanding academic texts with certain morphosyntactic complexities. They emphasize the importance of addressing academic and subject-specific language within each curricular area.

Regarding the competence and self-perception of English, the results observed among Secondary Education students may be linked to the high value and status of English in Basque society (Basque Government, 2020; Leonet and Orcasitas-Vicandi, 2024). Additionally, exposure to English outside the school environment is substantial, owing to extracurricular activities and leisure habits such as consuming information and culture via the Internet or *streaming* platforms (Ikusiker, 2023). In this context, it is worth considering the socioeconomic variable (de la Rica et al., 2019), as exposure to English outside the educational setting often involves activities with an associated economic cost. The school where the data were collected was subsidized and situated in a metropolitan area populated by upper-middle-class families, most of whom have access to English resources outside of school.

Experts suggest that self-perceptions can significantly impact learning and may be influenced by previous experiences in language acquisition processes (Dewaele, 2008; López-González, 2010). Most students in the study have acquired curricular competencies in their second language (L2), Basque. Consequently, they have developed specific academic language skills in Basque and have tackled more complex academic tasks throughout their academic experience in this language. In contrast, according to teaching staff, learning English is often associated with subjects where learning occurs through experiential and more directed approaches. These differences in the learning process could have influenced the self-perceived linguistic competence of secondary

students, particularly as they experience heightened exposure to academic curricular content in Basque at this stage.

The present study was conducted in a single charter school (semiprivate) located in a metropolitan area. Therefore, the results may not be generalized to the broader context of the BAC. Extending the study to other public schools could yield valuable insights into the influence of socioeconomic factors on students' self-perceptions and actual academic competence. Additionally, comparing these results with schools in sociolinguistic contexts where the Basque language has a greater presence could provide further understanding. Considering the significance of comprehension in developing other academic skills, future research could explore these aspects as variables. It would also be beneficial to investigate whether the increase in English-related activities and their social prestige affects the use of the language within and outside the school environment. An increase in English activities does not necessarily need to detract from using Basque; thus, exploring conditions for complementarity could be valuable for future studies.

Research on self-perceived communicative competence among children and young people is limited despite experts confirming its influence on second language learning. This study contributes new insights by examining the actual and self-perceived linguistic competence in Basque, Spanish, and English among multilingual students in primary and secondary education. The complex sociolinguistic environment of the study allowed for the identification of various variables related to actual communicative competence and self-perceived competence, including age and exposure to the minority language in the family and social environment. This study highlights the importance of considering psychological and sociobiographical factors in educational policies and pedagogical practices aimed at fostering the multilingual development of all students. It advocates for didactic activities that positively impact students' communicative self-perception.

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Unveiling educational practice in Primo de Rivera's Spain through the First Education Inspectorate (1923-1930)

Desvelando la práctica educativa en la España de Primo de Rivera a través de la Inspección de Primera Enseñanza (1923-1930)

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Abstract

The dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) was a period of authoritarianism, which in the field of education was expressed in the desire to put an end to illiteracy, improve schools and control the inspection of primary education ideologically and professionally. In order to carry out these measures, the Directorate wanted to take a radiography of the education system in Spain and, by Royal Order of August 29, 1924, instructed the Inspectorate to draw up a series of reports on the situation of schools throughout the country. In order to contribute to the historical-pedagogical study of this period from the perspective of pedagogical practice, we use the analysis of these inspection reports, a new, previously unpublished source. To this end, the historical-pedagogical method is applied, using the technique of content analysis in three fundamental areas of early education: literacy and truancy, the ideological control of the regime and the professional identity of the educational inspectorate. The conclusions allow us to recognize that the inspection reports constitute a historical source with an important potential for the study of educational practice. In them we

can see the high illiteracy rates and the lack of school attendance —due to child labor and the lack of social consideration for education on the part of families—, the punitive nature of the dictatorship towards those professionals who did not defend the unity of Spain and the Spanish language, and the professional redefinition of the Inspectorate of Education, which for the first time had a superior, military figure supervising its own activity, and which was to find in the orientation and guidance of teachers a new perspective for their professional performance.

Keywords: history of education, contemporary history, educational inspection, primary education, absenteeism, identity, nationalism, Spain, Miguel Primo de Rivera.

Resumen

La dictadura de Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) representó un periodo de autoritarismo que, en el plano educativo, se tradujo en el deseo por acabar con el analfabetismo, la mejora de las escuelas, y el control ideológico y profesional de la inspección de Primera Enseñanza. Pero, para poder llevar a cabo tales medidas, el Directorio se propuso realizar una radiografía del estado de la enseñanza en España, y para ello, mediante la Real Orden de 29 de agosto de 1924, ordenó a la inspección confeccionar una serie de memorias que dieran cuenta de la situación de las escuelas de todo el país. Con el objetivo de contribuir al estudio históricoeducativo de este periodo desde la perspectiva de la práctica educativa, se emplea el análisis de estas memorias de inspección, una fuente inédita hasta la fecha. Para ello, se parte del método histórico-educativo, empleando la técnica del análisis de contenido en tres ejes fundamentales de la educación primorriverista: la alfabetización y el absentismo escolar, el control ideológico del régimen y la identidad profesional de la inspección educativa. Las conclusiones nos permiten advertir que las memorias de inspección constituyen una fuente histórica con un importante potencial para el estudio de la práctica educativa. En ellas, se pueden entrever los altos índices de analfabetismo y la falta de asistencia escolar derivadas del trabajo infantil y la escasa consideración social hacia la educación por parte de las familias—, el carácter sancionador de la dictadura con aquellos profesionales que no defendieran la unidad de España y la lengua castellana, y la redefinición profesional de la inspección educativa, que por primera vez contó con una figura superior, militarizada, encargada de la supervisión de su propia actividad, y que encontraría en la orientación y guía del profesorado una nueva perspectiva para su desempeño profesional.

Palabras clave: historia de la educación, historia contemporánea, inspección educativa, primera enseñanza, absentismo, identidad, nacionalismo, informe, España, Miguel Primo de Rivera.

Introduction

An emerging trend in the historiography of education attempts to reconstruct the history of education using new documentary foci and sources that allow us to compare educational discourses and scientific culture with school practices or empirical culture in order to offer an overall history, as the historians of the French school of Annales explained (Le Goff, 1997). In the present paper, the focus of pedagogical practice will be examined through the analysis of inspection reports. This is a gap in recent historical work on school inspections, where a range of topics of a regulatory and regional nature have predominated, as well as research focusing on specific historical themes. And as Montero (2021) has recently pointed out, this is a topic that should be explored in more depth due to its crucial role in the future of education.

In the international context, school inspection has established itself as a field of research in the history of education (Rousmaniere, 2019), with recent examples alluding to this professional body, some of them from the perspective of pedagogical practice in other delimitations (Evertsson, 2022; Grigg, 2020; Lapot, 2022). In Spain, José Luis Castán (2021) has carried out a state of the question on this field of study in which the interest in this topic is presented from a bibliometric point of view, taking into account scientific publications and academic papers. A production that has barely produced a hundred studies in the last decade and with a concentrated authorship. A brief overview of recent works without overlooking historical references such as López (1987), Jiménez (1998), Maillo (1989), Ramírez (1993) and Mayorga (2000)— allows us to categorize these works as generalist (Castillo, Mata and Palacios, 2019; Fajardo, 2019; López, 2015; Montero, 2021; Ramírez, 2017; and Vázquez, 2017); those that focus on specific historical contexts, such as the origins of this professional body (Camacho, 2015), nineteenth-century Spain (Camacho, 2016), the first half of the twentieth century (Flecha, 2018) or its evolution since the democratic transition (Esteban, 2010). Finally, we should point out those studies focused on the genesis, legal regime and developed roles by the educational inspection (Galicia, 2016; Hernández, 2019; Rodríguez, 2019).

It follows that educational inspection has traditionally been analyzed through documentary sources of a normative nature. It is therefore necessary to explore this reality through primary sources that deal with the perspective of educational practice, a line of study opened by Depaepe and Simon (1995) and Braster et al., Grosvenor and Pozo (2011), and which has been incorporated in Spain in studies such as those by Barceló et al., Comas and Sureda (2016), Comas and Sureda (2021) or Pozo and Rabazas (2013), among others.

The aim of this article is to analyze the inspection reports, which represent an as yet unexamined source for the perspective of school practice, from the point of view of one of the key figures, the primary school inspector, in the context of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. This period of the dictatorship was turbulent and strict ideological control over school inspections was exercised through the appointment of government delegates —professional members of the armed forces who also carried out political inspections (Camacho, 2019). To carry out this supervision, shortly after the beginning of the dictatorship, Primo de Rivera commissioned the school inspectorate to produce a report outlining the situation of schools in each territory or judicial district (Royal Order of August 29, 1924). The purpose of this report was to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation of the education system and thus evaluate possible solutions. Among many other objectives, the Military Directorate led a crusade against illiteracy and the poor state of the schools. To this end, as explained below, the dictator initiated an unprecedented process of building and modernizing educational centers that surpassed even the efforts of the Franco dictatorship, as noted by Hispanist Carolyn Boyd (2000). These processes were deeply politicized and characterized by authoritarian measures and ideological control, inspired by the recent Italian fascism of Mussolini.

The research presented here is based on the study of these inspection reports with the aim of analyzing pedagogical practice in relation to three of the basic principles of the primordialist regime: Literacy and truancy, ideological control and the redefinition of the professional identity of the school inspectorate. To achieve this, the study relies on the historical-pedagogical method (Ruiz, 1997), using 114 examples from the different regions of Spain written after the aforementioned Royal Order. These reports are located in the Archivo General de la Administración [General Archive of the Administration] (Madrid, Spain) and have been grouped geographically and by categorical units such as those analyzed here. Other primary sources were also used, such as educational inspection manuals, legal texts, statistical yearbooks and personal records of Spanish inspectors.

Based on this approach, we propose the following questions: To what extent do inspection reports reflect the problems of school absenteeism and what proposals are made to address them? To what extent do these reports reflect the political ideals of the military directorate? What kind of tensions are reflected in the reports between the government representatives and the Inspectorate of Primary Education? We will find out some of the answers as we analyze these sources. As Antonio Viñao (1999) noted in relation to the reports of teachers and inspectors, many of these documents provide very relevant information about school practices. Thus, we can compare the pedagogical practices that the inspectors found during their visits with the pedagogical discourses from this period that related to the theoretical-regulatory proposals on educational inspection. Part of the value of these reports lies in the fact that they were directed by the government to attempt to describe the educational situation in the various inspection areas. We believe that their aim was twofold: on the one hand, to inspect teaching and, on the other, to record the state of Spanish elementary school.

Educational inspection during the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera

Miguel Primo de Rivera came to power when Spain was in a serious crisis, characterized by nationalist tensions in Catalonia and the Basque Country, the recent defeat in the Battle of Annual, the rise of the fascists in Italy and a system of power alternation that had become worn out and contaminated by political corruption. These factors were added to the "catastrophe of 1898", when the loss of the last Spanish colonies triggered a debate on the redefinition of Spain's identity that continued into the 1920s.

Ideologically, this was an anti-liberal period, reminiscent in some ways of Regenerationism, albeit always from an authoritarian perspective. An ideological basis developed in all aspects of Spanish political life, including education. Against this backdrop, an ambitious plan developed to improve and build infrastructure, increase the number of children in school and improve literacy. Between 1924 and 1929, around two thousand schools were built. Similarly, between 60 and 65% of women were literate in 1930, ten percentage points more than a decade earlier

(Boyd, 2000; Puelles, 2010). However, the short duration of this dictatorial period left policies such as these unfinished and, paradoxically, had to be tackled during the republican period (Rodríguez et al., 2020).

However, the authoritarian nature of the government led to strict ideological control of the curriculum —with a reinterpretation of the past in terms of imperialism, the fight against nationalist movements in the Spanish regions and an exclusionary concept of the homeland, with rituals such as the Fiesta de la Raza (Festival of the Race), school relays and military exercises (Pozo, 2000)— as well as over academic freedom and the selection procedures for leadership positions and the selection exams for primary school teaching posts. Ultimately, a series of ideals were implemented that focused on the family, property, religion and the nation in education, especially in the case of primary school teaching and inspection (Puelles, 2010).

The role of the inspector thus became one of monitoring teaching activities. However, this was not the only change that was to affect this professional body. The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera introduced government delegates, a total of 490 army officers dismissed from service, who represented the dictatorial regime and acted as overseers of local life, including education (López, 1987). They were appointed directly by the government and one of their main tasks was to "promote "patriotic and national values in the schools and in the community" (Boyd, 2000, p. 155), although they also had the task of visiting schools, had jurisdiction over local primary school committees and inspected the condition of school buildings, housing and deficiencies of teaching staff, as well as reviewing reports produced by the school inspectorate (Flecha, 2018).

In this way, and through a Royal Order of August 29, 1924, the need for cooperation between the school inspectorate and the delegates was established. The government delegates were thus closely linked to the school inspectorates and carried out a political inspection that preceded the pedagogical one (Camacho, 2019). However, this royal order was not limited to forming the shape of these delegates. In this provision, the Military Directorate established a task that would later determine the measures taken by Primo de Rivera in the field of education. Specifically, he ordered the preparation of a report on the state of education in the municipalities, districts or jurisdictions of each inspector, to be accompanied by these delegates. These reports were finally submitted between October 1924 and the beginning of 1925. They were signed

individually or jointly by the school inspectors and always required the approval of the government delegates in the respective areas. Their length and content varied, although most of them took a critical stance towards the reality of education under their supervision. They contain observations on noteworthy matters and elements that could be improved in each area or center.

Spain's schools seen from the inspection of 1924. Towards an initial appraisal of primary education

Why do children not attend school? The contrast between theoretical discourses and educational practice

With regard to poor school attendance, a direct correspondence was found between the theoretical discourses developed in the Escuela de Estudios Superiores del Magisterio, such as the manual Técnica de Inspección educativa [Technique of School Inspection], edited by Francisco Carrillo¹, and the practice described in the inspection reports during the time of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. The manual cites several factors that lead to poor school attendance: the financial hardship of families, the ignorance and lack of interest of families, the shortage of schools and teachers, unattractive teaching methods and the lack of a national organization in the field of primary education (Carrillo, 1915).

One of the causes of school dropout was child labor, which was caused by the economic hardship of families. Poverty in some rural areas led parents to send their children to work. Child labor was one of the problems that the school inspectorate had to deal with during this period to ensure compliance with the compulsory schooling established in the regulations. An inspector from Cantabria, Daniel Luis Ortiz, noted in the reports of his inspection visits that some of the pupils interviewed were not enrolled in school:

¹ This guide, written by Professor Francisco Carrillo Guerrero, was one of the main texts about Primary Education Inspectorate during the first third of the 20th Century. Francisca Montilla Tirado, one of the most remarkable inspectors in Madrid during the second third of that century, wrote a review proving that there were no other guides until 1941 (Montilla, 1953).

In some towns and villages there are parents or guardians who hire their children for five or ten pesetas a month or a hundred pesetas a year with board, even if they are only nine, ten or twelve years old, to work in other towns and villages as servants and as small shepherds for sheep and other livestock. They are also employed for agricultural and domestic work and have to look after their younger siblings (Ortiz, 1924, p. 6).

The reports also reflect some gender differences in girls' absence from school and work. A female inspector from Cádiz, Teresa Izquierdo, confirmed that girls' lack of school attendance was in most cases due to "staying at home to work as maids and look after younger siblings" (Izquierdo, 1924, p. 7). Another demand made by some female inspectors was to establish more kindergartens to enable working women to reconcile family and work, as in the case of Josefa Herrera (1924), who advocated the reconciliation of work and family.

Among the measures proposed in the text to alleviate the economic hardship of families was the creation of facilities linked to schools: Canteens, sewing classes, mutual aid and support associations and the provision of materials, etc. An inspector from Pontevedra, Juan Novás, makes this clear in his report: "Canteens, sewing classes, vacation camps; financial support for poor families who cannot do without their children under the age of 15 to get by in everyday life, etc." (Novás, 1924, p. 10). Another gender-specific difference that becomes clear in the reports is the organization of sewing courses in girls' schools (Álvarez, 1924).

Ignorance and lack of interest in families was another of the causes identified. By and large, parents did not know how their children could benefit from school because they did not see the benefits and any reason was a good excuse to miss school. One possible solution that was suggested was the imposition of sanctions or fines by the local authorities on parents or caregivers. In this sense, a direct correspondence between the education received and the inspection reports is evident (Yubero, 1924).

Absence, the lack of schools and teachers to cater for the entire school-age population, is also cited as a factor in school absenteeism. There is a direct correspondence between the content of the text of the regulation —the theoretical curriculum— and the practice of inspection —the inspection reports. Most of the reports from rural areas describe the poor condition of schools: "but it should never be as low as a hovel

or a miserable, dark and insanitary shed, a dungeon for children, driving them away from school so that they prefer freedom" (Ortiz, 1924, p. 5). In this context, it was proposed to compensate for these shortcomings by establishing schools in the most remote places (Sánchez, 1924) and by setting up school groups in large population centers (Aznar, 1924).

In addition, the fourth cause cited is unattractive, rudimentary, outdated and impractical teaching methods and procedures. This was a requirement of the Escuela de Estudios Superiores del Magisterio and we believe it was passed on to the schools by the inspectors, given the comments in many of the reports. The inspector for Ciudad Real Gaspar Sánchez put it as follows: "The schools operate with inappropriate programs, with procedures that are not usually renewed and have an indefinite direction, with an element of intellectualism and a lack of practical application, which we understand as one of the causes that maintain the observed distance between the possibilities of the students and the social realities" (Sánchez, 1924, pp. 1-2). In addition to this situation, the school lacked suitable premises, modern teaching materials and resources.

The last measure to combat absenteeism was the lack of a serious national organization in the field of primary education. The theory set out in the regulatory manual is that there should be no legal regulation of compulsory education in terms of the start of the school year or the school calendar. Nevertheless, certain discrepancies between theory and practice are evident in the reports. Some reports called for greater autonomy for communities in relation to the school calendar to allow for some flexibility in adapting the calendar to the climate and terrain, as well as to the socio-economic activities of families. One of the collective reports from this province of Galicia mentions the need to adapt legislation to the specificities of each region (Díaz et al., 1924).

Ideological control of teaching. Spain and Spanish as bulwarks

Patriotic education is one of the objectives of civic education emphasized in the regulatory manual for education inspectors. In this category, there is also a certain overlap between the traditional values that were taught in theory and the educational policy of the Directorate, which aimed to develop national sentiment and had already been present since teacher training in the previous decade (Carrillo, 1915). To this end, this body

had to ensure "the political neutrality of the school" (Carrillo, 1915, p. 56) so that the school was not used as a propaganda tool.

Ideological control was exercised by the inspectors and the representatives of the Ministry, who developed a civic and patriotic sense through the school work. The chief inspector of Tarragona, Salvador Grau, attached a circular to his inspection report, which he sent to the teachers in his district and with which he tried to demonstrate his willingness and agreement with the directorate, because "the school educates the child to become an adult and, as such, this child belongs to a people, which has its laws, its language, its institutions, its religion and its history, elements whose synthesis constitutes the way of being of this people, its characteristics, its personality", and he concludes by stating that "in them lies the root, the tradition of citizenship, of patriotism" (Grau, 1924, p. 1). This was a widespread point of view: the rejection of regional identities or teaching in a language other than Spanish in favor of the national language was a fundamental principle of the regime and was particularly evident in the teaching of regions such as Catalonia and the Basque Country.

The case of Catalan reflects the dictatorship's reaction to the widespread use of Catalan in schools (López, 1994). In the province of Girona, the Inspectorate notes this situation and the challenge it poses for teachers:

But we encounter the special case of a region where the child constantly speaks a language other than the national language. The province of Gerona is purely Catalan; the language in which the child has been formed is Catalan: his mother tongue. Hence there is a difficulty for our teachers and for the general state of teaching in the schools. We cannot accept half measures when resolving the problem of language. Teaching in schools must be wholly in the national language. (Muné *et al.*, 1924, pp. 1-2)

Nevertheless, the schools of Girona present a remarkable situation: Catalan was used by both teachers and pupils. The inspectors saw this as a lack of patriotism and the need to make the teachers in the area more Spanish. An idea that the inspector from Lleida Antonio Michavila summarized in the aim that "the teaching of Spanish becomes the main concern of teachers" (Michavila, 1924, p. 4), and which his colleagues in Girona saw as a prerequisite for working as teachers, claiming that "the teachers who work in Catalonia must be more teachers than those in the rest of Spain" (Muné et al., 1924, pp. 2-3), as pupils outside school disregard Spanish in favor of Catalan.

Concern about the performance of primary school teachers and their loyalty to Spain even affected the selection procedures for posts. In Barcelona, the inspector Ibarz noted that the national school offered the most guarantees, which "is not surprising since the teachers enter via selection exams and adhere to the strictest orthodoxy in terms of politics, morals and religion" in their declarations", to then state that "perhaps in some cases a certain degree of half-heartedness can be observed in some official teachers, but they never lapse into nationalist excesses or other types. The fear of sanctions was an extremely effective brake" (Ibarz, 1924, p. 3).

The greatest expression of the control exercised by the military dictatorship, however, can be seen in the closure of educational centers that did not follow the basic principles of the Directorate. Ibarz himself described the closure of schools in his memoirs in relation to teachers' behavior, a measure he considered "sufficient to ensure that factionalism and passions did not arise" and he went on to note that "we have nothing to say about the impunity with which certain propaganda was disseminated in some private schools", concluding that "the political always prevails": "the political always triumphs over the purest patriotism" (Ibarz, 1924, pp. 3-4).

Noteworthy is the introduction of experiments aimed at building ties between regions that, like Catalonia, had recently experienced nationalist movements. In the summer of 1924, a group from Barcelona and a group from Madrid took part in an exchange that Ibarz interpreted as a project to build ties between Catalonia and Castile:

In a pleasant and very patriotic way, this report must relate what happened to a Catalan school group that spent the summer in Madrid and El Escorial and a Castilian group that spent the summer in Barcelona. Both were given the most attention and everyone competed to entertain the children [...] In this way, children from different regions get to know each other better and it will help to eliminate prejudices, which are always unpleasant. We should educate children to love Spain and try to ensure that they receive a healthy education in order to become good and useful citizens. Schools can be effective in calming minds and removing the shadows and fears that passionate and partisan people have spread. (Ibarz, 1924, p. 7)

It is different in the Basque Country, where there is a separation between the language spoken by the teachers and the language spoken by the pupils. The inspection of Vergara and Azpeitia in the province of Guipúzcoa, led by José Luis Jaume, reported on this situation: "[Teachers] are faced with the well-known difficulty that those who do not know Basque, who are in the majority, have to make a gigantic effort to be able to communicate with the children who are used to the Basque language. Nevertheless, good results are achieved" (Jaume, 1924, p. 1).

Similarly, there were also notable pedagogical practices that posed a challenge to the national identity desired by Primo de Rivera. In the Tolosa district, inspectors registered two diametrically opposed realities that defined what it meant to be a good or bad teacher. The first example was a teacher from Legorreta whose limited motivation and family commitment was noted and whose behavior was questioned. The Inspectorate intervened to ensure that "he made the children learn patriotic songs and hung the portrait of His Majesty the King in a place of honor in his school" (N. A., 1924, p. 7). Ultimately, in Primo de Rivera's Spain, teachers' ideological affiliations were more important than their pedagogical skills.

It is worth mentioning the case of the provinces of Valencia, where the inspectors also found linguistic coexistence, albeit to a lesser extent. The teaching of Valencian fell under what Juan Patiño, an inspector from Valencia, described as "disruptive teachings" that were "against the unity of the fatherland, the institutions and the language" (Patiño, 1924, p. 11). In the province of Alicante, the inspector Gregorio Rodríguez notes that it is difficult for teachers to confront this situation, since " the "Valencian vocabulary that the child speaks at home, in the street, in all parts, abusively prevails, so that the educator in these places is forced to translate this lexicon into Spanish", a situation that "the delegation and the Inspectorate [...] have given instructions to put an end to so that teachers always express themselves in Spanish in their schools" (Rodríguez, 1924a, p. 7). In this case, Rodríguez even notes a proposal for legal sanctions for the families of students who do not use Spanish (Rodríguez, 1924b).

Redefining educational inspection: the appearance of governmental delegates

After the political change that occurred with the beginning of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the professional identity of inspectors took a step backwards compared to the pedagogical progress that had been made in the first decades of the 20th century, with more interest in the control function than in teaching. A dissonance between the pedagogical culture of the time and the educational policy of the context is obvious.

Looking at the attributions in the theoretical and normative discourses on educational inspection before the dictatorship, it was supposed to have a threefold function: "to convey to the elementary schools the state action and pedagogical guidance of the Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts; it must also report on the state of the educational system and propose suitable reforms for its regulation" (R.D. November 18, 1907, p. 723). In addition, the competence to lead the teaching profession was institutionally recognized, to organize conferences or pedagogical talks and to provide exemplary teaching, leading to a pedagogical model and away from an interventionist function that had prevailed in the 19th century and was taken up again with Primo de Rivera.

A tension between the professional identity of the inspectors and the ministerial representatives is evident throughout the analysis. There was a conflict of function and inspectors felt undermined when these representatives issued different reports on the evaluation of the school situation and the ideological control of education. An example of this suppression can be found in areas such as La Coruña, where the delegates even proposed the abolition of the school inspectorate due to the high illiteracy rate in the region: "This delegation believes that the inspectorate should be abolished and a procedure sought that would ensure not only the teaching but also the attendance of the pupils in a definitive and safe manner" (Castrobens, 1924, p. 1). In the province of Cuenca, the individual reports of the political subalterns focus more on the lack of patriotic and religious ideology in the schools, arguing that "patriotic and religious ideas should be engraved in the hearts of the children instead of being explained to them" (Sáez, 1924, p. 15). We should also note that some governmental delegates supplanted the inspectors' role, as shown by the fact that they promoted these competencies themselves, organising pedagogical training courses like the one put on in the judicial district of Tineo intended for all of the teachers of that area.

One of the causes of the inspectors' lack of professional identity is the lack of competences and responsibilities. Many experts declared the Inspectorate to be a completely useless body (Novás, 1924; Martínez, 1925). The lack of powers to reward or punish teachers was something that a large majority of this sector wanted to change, as their reports had no practical consequences. An inspector from Albacete, Ángel Martínez, went even further and proposed issuing a decree that would give inspectors more powers in awarding distinctions, economic rewards and reprimands. He even argued for the expulsion of unreliable teachers and suggested that the Inspectorate should take over the management of practical schools (Martínez, 1925). Similarly, an inspector from Cantabria, Daniel Ortiz, made proposals for the training of primary school teachers and called for more powers for inspectors to reprimand, punish or retire teachers who failed to produce results (Ortiz, 1924).

In other instances, it is observed that the professional identity of the inspection sought to distance itself from this supervisory role, aiming in its reports to highlight a more professional function by proposing potential organizational solutions to the issues faced by teachers. One of the major concerns mentioned in the reports was the ongoing professional development of teachers through the organization of training courses by the inspection during school vacations in provincial capitals, financed by the State, covering both teachers' accommodation and materials (Gabaldón, 1924). In this regard, the inspector of Ciudad Real, Mauricio Morales, promoted pedagogical discussions with teachers on practical lessons in methodology "of a familiar and friendly nature to guide and motivate them to undertake professional work that meets the high objectives of the school and the various demands of Spanish educational activity" (Morales, 1924, p. 14). At the same time, the inspector of Albacete, Salvador Artiga, advocated for this pedagogical role of the inspection:

He understands that an inspector must be something of an evangelist, with lofty vision and serene persistence, and that on the journey from school to school it is important to exemplify this new pedagogy — which embraces sensitivity— that wants teachers to be treated with dignity, both for their competence and for their efforts. Inspection is a difficult task that cannot be fully realized given the limited powers of inspectors and the sometimes systematic resistance that the environment of ignorance, the poverty of communities and — why not say it—neglect by many primary school teachers who are not fully dedicated to their exalted position. (Artiga, 1924, pp. 3-4)

In contrast to the vast majority of reports, a small number of inspectors expressed some affinity with the delegates, although we do not know to what extent they were conditioned by the political situation, since

the reports were produced in an atmosphere of control that required their approval. This can be seen in the case of the inspector from Cádiz Filomeno Blázquez, who went so far as to argue that inspectors needed to be supervised by an authority if they were to perform their duties well: "I have said it a thousand times and I will repeat it now: as long as the inspectors have no one to supervise us, the nation's schools will become more and more decadent" (Blázquez, 1924).

Conclusions

The inspection reports drawn up at the beginning of Primo de Rivera's period in power have helped to paint a fundamentally practical picture of education in Spain in the 1920s. The different situations described by the educational inspectors — and in some cases by the government delegates — make it possible to observe certain experiences and behaviors which, due to their repetition and generalizability, offer a perspective on teaching during this period.

The desire to improve the literacy of the Spanish population was one of the fundamental principles of the dictatorship's education policy and required an end to the high rates of absenteeism in schools. This fact underlines the challenges that teachers faced in fulfilling their task, as they had to contend with families and their lack of appreciation for education. In this way, significant differences could be identified between the different regions of Spain and their agricultural traditions, which made the school calendar an odyssey for teachers. Low school attendance was a direct consequence of child labor, a situation that was amply demonstrated by the inspectors in their reports, which proposed financial penalties for families.

Thank you to this primary source, it was also possible to establish that the ideological control introduced by the Military Directorate in 1925 was already visible in the early years of the dictatorship. The Primary School Inspectorate had the task of detailing situations or professional behavior that could undermine the concept of national unity established by the regime, especially in the case of Catalonia and the Basque Country. The use of languages such as Catalan, Basque and Valencian was seen as undermining the social order of the state. To alleviate this situation, in addition to punishing renegade professionals, initiatives were launched that attempted to create links between regions or promote regional culture, even if this meant using pedagogically less qualified teachers.

This ideological control took shape with the appointment of government delegates and other measures. Their appearance entailed, on the one hand, a rejection of hierarchy and the subordination of inspection to this military figure, which led to strong tensions in some areas, and, on the other hand, a redefinition of professional competencies based on the orientation and guidance of teachers, to the detriment of sanctioning or punitive measures.

The schools portrayed from the Spain of this period thus reflect the many differences between the rural and urban environments, between the peculiarities of each region, which, despite the authoritarian yoke of the directorate, had cracks that were evident in pedagogical practice. Cracks that made it possible to take a look at how parts of the state were unwilling to give up their identity. Teachers and inspectors who were selflessly dedicated to their profession, despite practicing it in difficult circumstances, with a high level of international training that allowed them to bring the most innovative methods to the most isolated schools and to question these methods. All these differences and contrasts are in themselves new lines of study that we want to continue using the same sources.

We cannot conclude without pointing out some of the limitations we have encountered in this study. Inspection reports, like other similar sources that have been used recently, have proved to be an underutilized tool that, despite its subjective nature, offers great potential for the analysis of educational practice. On the one hand, they draw a profile of concrete and specific educational situations, albeit over time, as the visits took place regularly. On the other hand, they were written in an atmosphere of political control, which meant that they had to be approved by government representatives. Nonetheless, subjectivity as such is an element common to numerous primary and truly human sources in the study of educational history, and we therefore believe that these accounts are a suitable subject for historical study.

In short, the study of the empirical culture of the school from the inspection of primary education reveals numerous themes that have yet to be investigated at this stage. The sources analyzed reveal new lines of research concerning women's education, rural schools, adult education and the situation of educational buildings and spaces. These lines of research can help to shed light on the history of education in this dictatorial period from a source that has not yet been researched.

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Effects of grade repetition according to student socioeconomic profile

Efectos de la repetición escolar según el perfil socioeconómico del estudiante

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Abstract

The profile of repeating students is frequently addressed in the literature. However, the existing knowledge about the effects of grade repetition remains very limited. It is generally assumed that the effects of grade repetition are homogeneous for different students, without considering that the individual characteristics of the student and their socioeconomic and cultural environment may condition them. In this article, we challenge the homogeneity of the effects of grade repetition through a study of the effects of grade repetition on students in Spanish secondary education. Specifically, using data provided by PISA in its 2018 edition, we employ Propensity Score Matching to estimate the effects of grade repetition for students according to their gender, socioeconomic and cultural level, type of school ownership, and origin. The results indicate that the impact is generally negative and significant, but it affects women, immigrants, students from more vulnerable socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, and those from public schools to a greater extent. These results highlight the heterogeneous nature of the effects of grade repetition and point to the need to delve into the reasons that lead to this heterogeneity. These results highlight the need to consider these factors when making decisions on how and to what extent to implement grade repetition.

Keywords: grade repetition, equal education, educational policy, socioeconomic status, sex fairness, academic achievement.

Resumen

El perfil de los estudiantes repetidores es abordado en la literatura. Sin embargo, el conocimiento existente sobre los efectos de la repetición escolar sigue siendo muy limitado. En general, se asume que los efectos de la repetición escolar son homogéneos para el conjunto de los estudiantes, sin tener en cuenta como influyen sus características individuales y su entorno socioeconómico y cultural. En este artículo cuestionamos la homogeneidad de los efectos de la repetición escolar a través de un estudio de los efectos de la repetición escolar en los estudiantes de la educación secundaria en España. Concretamente, a partir de los datos proporcionados por la edición PISA 2018, empleamos el Propensity Score Matching para estimar los efectos del agrupamiento escolar para los estudiantes según su sexo, el nivel socioeconómico y cultural, la titularidad del centro y su procedencia geográfica. Los resultados indican que el impacto de la repetición es, en general, negativo y significativo, pero este incide en mayor medida en las mujeres, los inmigrantes, los estudiantes de entornos socioeconómicos y culturales más vulnerables y en las escuelas públicas. Estos resultados resaltan el carácter heterogéneo de los efectos de la repetición escolar y señalan la necesidad de profundizar en las razones que conducen a esta heterogeneidad. Además, se subraya la necesidad de tenerlos en cuenta a la hora de tomar las decisiones sobre cómo y en qué medida aplicar la repetición escolar.

Palabras clave: repetición de curso, igualdad educativa, política educativa, estatus socioeconómico, diferencia de sexo, logro académico.

Introduction

The option of repeating a course is presented as a second opportunity for students to reach the required level of skills and knowledge of their respective grade. Although this practice has been the topic of numerous studies, it has been observed that it has adverse and detrimental effects for students who must repeat. This could limit the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). Most existing research has focused on assessing the likelihood and circumstances

of repetition and identifying the groups most affected by the practice (Valbuena et al., 2021; Goos et al., 2021). However, there are scarce studies that specifically investigate the academic harm that this practice can cause to students.

The aim of this paper is to study the effects of grade repetition on academic performance according to the social, economic, and cultural student profile to determine if the effects of this policy on students are heterogeneous. Specifically, in this paper the effects of grade repetition are estimated, firstly, for the entire student group (disregarding their characteristics) and, after, according to their social, economic, and cultural status, their sex, the school ownership and their origin.

In contrast to conventional research that mainly investigates the factors leading to grade repetition, this paper delves into the outcomes of retention by examining its varied impacts on students. This approach offers essential insights into the complex results of grade retention policies, highlighting the complex relationship between educational interventions and student economic and demographic profile. In this way, the study emphasizes the critical need for educational policies that are not only accountable to the causes of grade repetition but also sensitive of its heterogeneous effects on different student groups.

The database used is PISA, compiled by the OECD every three years, where the efficiency and equity of the educational systems of participating countries are evaluated. Then, the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) method is employed to assess the effect of school repetition on achievement level. PSM is used to ensure that the groups are comparable and that differences in outcomes can be attributed to the relevant variable, which is the retention grade.

The structure of this paper consists of six sections, including this introduction. The second section addresses the literature review, which includes the effects of repetition on performance, the profile of students more tending to repeat, what implications it has on other school outcomes, and the relevance of school repetition in Spain. The third section presents the PISA database, the variables for the analysis, and the PSM methodology. In the fourth section, the results of the incidence of school repetition are shown to analyse how it harms students based on their profile. The fifth section provides a discussion of the results and their possible causes. Finally, the main conclusions and recommendations of this research are detailed.

Theory and Bibliographic Review: Causes and Effects of Grade Repetition

Grade Repetition and its Effect on Performance

According to the OECD (2020), grade repetition involves requiring students to remain in the same grade for an additional year, instead of moving on to the next grade along with their peers of the same age. This practice is generally applied to students who underperform academically. Similarly, Jackson (1975) defines course repetition as the decision to retain students with unsatisfactory academic performance in the same grade level for at least one more year, rather than promoting them to a higher level.

The main objective of grade repetition is to provide students with a 'second chance' to acquire and develop the necessary knowledge and competences for their grade level. The purpose of this educational practice is to improve learning and the acquisition of student competencies and, therefore, its evaluation has been a relevant focus in the literature. The study of grade repetition effectiveness has generated considerable attention in the academic literature. Many studies, through systematic reviews and metaanalyses, have analysed the impact of this educational policy. Among the most noteworthy is the revision of Goos et al., (2021) who, after rigorously analysing 84 studies, deduced that the overall effect of course retention is essentially neutral. This finding suggests that, on average, the development of students who repeat a course is comparable to that of those who do not, although with notable variations. Approximately 35% of the observed effects were significantly negative, 41% showed no significant impact, and 24% were significantly positive. In contrast, Jimerson (2001) presents a meta-analysis with a different view, revealing that grade retention does not improve either academic performance or socioemotional well-being. It has also been observed that students who repeat generally perform worse than their peers who progress without repeating. Furthermore, Valbuena et al. (2021) conclude that the predominant literature on grade repetition points mainly to adverse effects, which raises the question of the effectiveness of this policy as an educational policy.

Other studies have closely examined the relationship between grade repetition and achievement levels. It has been observed that students who repeat grades perform significantly worse compared to those who do not (Choi et al., 2018; Urbano & Álvarez, 2019; Cabus & Ariës, 2016; Fernández-Alonso et al., 2022; Márquez, 2016; Silberglitt et al., 2006), even losing the equivalent of one year of performance (Manacorda, 2012). On the other hand, studies such as those of Reschly & Christenson (2013) find null effects, while Greene & Winters (2007) find positive results in the performance of students who were retained. Cockx et al. (2019) make a difference that in the short term the effect of repetition is neutral but has adverse effects on educational outcomes in the long term.

Risks of Grade Repetition

Identifying factors and risks is a key aspect of grade repetition, some of which are beyond the school environment, according to the literature. The OECD (2014) highlights the importance of family context in grade repetition. Given two similar academic performance, students from vulnerable backgrounds are 1.5 times more likely to repeat a grade than those from more privileged backgrounds across the OECD. In Spain, the focus of our analysis, this probability is almost four times higher. Various studies, such as those by Cabrera (2019), Cordero et al. (2014), García-Pérez et al. (2014), Benito (2007), Choi et al. (2018), López-Rupérez et al. (2021), Özek (2015) and Tingle et al. (2012) emphasize factors like economic vulnerability, immigrant status, lack of kindergarten education, family structure, absence of books at home, being male, and technology usage as significant determinants of grade repetition. Rizo-Areas & Hernández-García (2019) and Carabaña (2009; 2013) also point out younger relative age compared to peers, while Méndez & Cerezo (2018) add the school ownership of the educational institution as a factor in the likelihood of repeating a grade.

Socio-economic status plays an important role in the lives of children and their families, influencing access to educational resources, advanced and higher education (Hunt & Seiver, 2017). Family support need not necessarily manifest itself as direct help but can also come in the form of supplemental tutoring and external reinforcement outside of school. Indeed, the study by Cabus & Arïes (2016) finds that greater parental involvement (more help and attention at home for studying and homework) correlates with lower academic performance.

Other studies offer alternative perspectives on the risks of grade repetition, such as Arroyo et al. (2019). In their analysis, the probability of repeating a grade is associated with variables related to learning processes and the curriculum rather than to the student's background. The authors identify educational aspirations and having studied science in the previous year as key predictors of grade repetition, considering them pedagogically focused factors. However, educational aspirations cannot be considered just as a pedagogical factor, as highlighted Blanco-Varela et al. (2020). These aspirations are conditioned by the educational and socio-economic background of students, including parental education level, credit constraints, and information on the rate of educational return.

Implications of Grade Repetition: Beyond Performance

The implementation of the grade repetition policy has effects that extend beyond academic performance. The main consequences analysed in the literature include the impact on self-concept, school dropout rates, social cohesion, and costs for public finances.

First, there is research that has identified adverse effects of grade repetition on self-concept, motivation, and effort (Van Canegem et al, 2021; Urbano & Álvarez, 2019; Fernández-Alonso et al., 2022; Valbuena et al., 2021). These aspects have an impact on the educational and social development of students, as well as on their interpersonal relationships (Goos et al., 2021). Anxious, inattentive, and disruptive behaviors may also occur, according to Pagani et al. (2001). Shepard & Smith (1990) indicate that repetition is often perceived as punishment, leading to feelings of sadness and shame. Secondly, numerous studies have found a significant effect of grade repetition on school dropout rates (Ferreira, 2020; Ou & Reynolds, 2010; Cabrera, 2019; OECD, 2020; Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Batista-Espinosa, 2022) and lower rates of participation in post-secondary education (Manacorda, 2012).

Thirdly, the literature has emphasized the effects on social cohesion. On the one hand, a percentage of repeating students can disproportionately affect students from certain racial, and socio-economic backgrounds (Reschly & Christenson, 2013). On the other hand, when formulating public policies, implementation can have different impacts on the target group given the relevance of the demographic profile (Driessen & Merry,

2014; Redding & Carlo, 2023). This phenomenon suggests that retention can increase inequalities and not help students progress (Clark & Gibbs, 2023). Another negative effect on social cohesion is suggested by Van Canegem et al. (2022), whose results showed that retention in primary education was significantly associated with less respect for people from other cultures; and Pagani et al. (2001) suggest a higher tendency to engage in antisocial behavior.

The fourth relevant implication is that grade retention represents a costly measure, adding the expense of an extra year for every grade repeated (Fernández-Alonso et al., 2022; Pagani et al., 2001; Reschly & Christenson, 2013). Related to this, it is noteworthy that school repetition, as a predictor of dropout, can be associated with worse employment prospects, lower salaries, and more difficulties in finding a job (Eide & Showalter, 2001; Benito, 2007).

Spanish "Culture of Grade Repetition"

This study focuses on the analysis of the Spanish case, notable for its high rate of grade repetition within the OECD. Spain was ranked 5th in 2018 for having the highest rate of repeat students, surpassing 25% (Figure I). These rates of grade repetition significantly exceed the OECD average, posing a major challenge to the Spanish education system. The prevalent high repetition rate is often justified by a socially accepted belief in its benefits, as well as by a culture that supports this educational practice (Eurydice, 2011).

In Spain the decision to repeat a grade depends on the teachers and, secondly, on the family. Initially, this decision is predominantly influenced by factors internal to the school. This approach deliberately omits direct external socio-economic influences, ensuring equitable treatment without discrimination based on class, gender, or other social determinants. However, from an academic perspective, the decision to repeat a grade may also depend on socio-economic and cultural variables, since the performance of a student is strongly influenced by their socio-economic background (García-Pérez et al., 2014). In addition, social factors are directly affected and lead to disparities between different socioeconomic groups when family intervention is involved in the decision to repeat a grade.

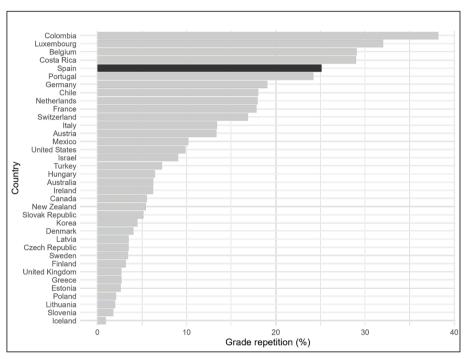


FIGURE I. Grade repetition rate in the OECD in 2018

Source: authors based on OECD (2019).

Numerous studies have focused on analysing the Spanish context, studying the factors determining grade repetition or identifying the most affected groups (See, among others, Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2022; Arroyo et al., 2019; Urbano & Álvarez, 2019; Cabrera, 2019; Fernández-Alonso et al., 2022; López-Rupérez et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2018). However, these studies have not paid attention to the cost of grade repetition in terms of performance according to the socio-economic and individual characteristics of the students. This gap in the literature is of interest since it allows for a greater analysis of whether repetition affects certain groups more and what consequences it has on educational inequality.

Method

Sample: The PISA 2018 Database for Spanish schools and its students

Grade repetition has been shown to have adverse consequences, negatively impacting retained students. Furthermore, research has primarily focused on analysing the likelihood of grade repetition and identifying vulnerable groups. However, there is limited evidence examining how this practice adversely affects students. This research goes beyond just identifying determinants and affected groups (incidence of negative effects) and delves into the intensity costs of the negative effects in academic performance according to student characteristics.

For this analysis, data from the Spanish schools and its students from PISA report database is utilized. The PISA report focuses on assessing the essential knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in participating countries.

Variables

PISA collects one variable about the grade repetition of students (REPEAT). Being possible to know whether the students repeated some grade throughout their academic career. This dummy variable takes the value 1 if the student has repeated and 0 otherwise. Furthermore, PISA also gathers information about students features and their background, schools and assesses the competencies acquired by students. Based on the literature previously analysed, the following variables were selected: socio-economic status, gender, ownership of the school and origin (see Section 2). Table I shows the incidence of repetition within each of the groups analysed.

To assess the impact of grade repetition the academic performance of repeating students must be compared with the academic performance of not repeating students. Nevertheless, given that these groups may show disparities in other factors that can influence academic performance, it becomes imperative to employ a methodology that can mitigate these disparities. Considering all factors that influence the student academic

TABLE I. Presence of grade repetition by social group in Spain

		Repeating students (%)	Non-repeating students (%)
Global		25.15	74.85
	Low	25.41	74.59
Socio-economic status	Middle	24.89	75.11
	High	25.15	74.85
C	Female	20.99	79.01
Sex	Male	29.35	70.65
Ournambia	Public	30.46	69.54
Ownership	Private	15.5	84.5
Onigin	Native	22.19	77.81
Origin	Immigrant	46.87	53.13

Note: Students with missing values in any of the relevant variables (including REPEAT) have been excluded from the sample. Source: the authors.

performance and/or that may influence the likelihood of grade repetition are considered relevant¹ (Table II).

Propensity Score Matching to Estimate the Grade Repetition Effects

To estimate the extent to which grade repetition affects students' educational performance, it is necessary to control for the other characteristics that may condition it. For this purpose, PSM is used to estimate the effects of grade repetition (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983). This methodology is used by several Economics of Education articles to analyse if different educational policies improve the academic performance and educational equity (Blanco-Varela et al, 2024; Ou & Reynolds, 2010; Valbuena et al, 2021). PSM allows to obtain balanced treatment (grade repetition) and control (not grade repetition) groups to compare their results as the policy impacts. Specifically, in the present research different combinations of Nearest Neighbor Matching (NNM) and exact matching² are applied, which

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 $^{^{1.}}$ For this reason, students with missing values in any of the variables collected in Table 2 were removed from the sample.

² The variables subject to exact matching vary depending on the analysed feature. Thus, for the overall analysis, exact matching is applied to the variables REGION, SEX, INMIG1, INMIG2, and NATIVE. However, for the analysis by gender and origin, these variables (i.e., SEX and INMIG1, INMIG2, and NATIVE, respectively) are excluded from the list.

TABLE II. Variables used for conducting the matching

Dimension	Variable	Code	Description	Values
	Age	AGE	Student age	15,08 - 16,33
	Sex	SEX	Student sex	Female
		PREPRIMARY		ISCED 01
1	Age at which formal	CHILDHOOD	Stage at which the students start his or her studies	ISCED 02
Individual characteristics		PRIMARY		ISCED 1
		IMMIG1		First-generation immigrant
	Nationality/origin	IMMIG2	Student origin	Second-generation immigrant
		NATIVE		Native
		EDUFATHER1		ISCED 1 & 2
	;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;	EDUFATHER2	and the state of t	ISCED 3 & 4
	ratiler studies	EDUFATHER3	Level of education attailled by the student father	ISCED 5
		EDUFATHER4		ISCED 6, 7, 8 & 9
		EDUMOTHER1		ISCED 1 & 2
	Z	EDUMOTHER2	and the second s	ISCED 3 & 4
Socio-economic context	riother studies	EDUMOTHER3	Level of education attained by the student mother	ISCED 5
		EDUMOTHER4		ISCED 6, 7, 8 & 9
	Social, economic, and cultural status	ESCS	Social, economic and cultural status index (ESCS) from the student	-3,195 - 3.611
	Own desk	OWNDESK	Own desk in home	Own desk
	Own bedroom	OWNBEDROOM	Own bedroom in home	Own bedroom
	Own space	OWNSPACE	Own quiet study space in home	Own study space

(continued)

TABLE II. Variables used for conducting the matching (continued)

Dimension	Variable	Code	Description	Values
	Computer	PC	Disposable computer at home to study	Computer
	Internet access	INTERNET	Internet access at home	Internet
		BOOKS1		< 10 books
Individual access to learning		BOOKS2		11-25 books
resources	- C	BOOKS3		26-100 books
	books at nome	BOOKS4	Number of books in the student nome	101-200 books
		BOOKS5		201-500 books
		BOOKS6		> 500 books
	Discipline	DISCLIMA	Disciplinary climate in test language lessons in the school	-4.747
	Ability grouping	ABGROUPING	School uses Ability grouping	Ability grouping
	Region	REGION	City or autonomous community to which the school belongs	Spanish NUTS 2
		CHARTER		Charter
	School ownership	PUBLIC	School ownership	Public
School characteristics		PRIVATE		Private
		MSIZE1		< 3,000 inhabitants
		MSIZE2		3,001-15,000 inhabitants
	Municipality size	MSIZE3	Number of inhabitants of the municipality in which the school is located	15,001-100,000 inhabitants
		MSIZE4		100,000-1M inhabitants
		MSIZE5		> 1M inhabitants

Dimension	Variable	Code	Description	Values
		CLSIZE1		< 15 students
		CLSIZE2		16-20 students
		CLSIZE3		21-25 students
		CLSIZE4		36-30 students
	Class size	CLSIZE5	Average school class size	31-35 students
		CLSIZE6		36-40 students
		CLSIZE7		41-45 students
		CLSIZE8		46-50 students
		CLSIZE9		> 50 students
	Students by teacher ratio	STRATIO	Students by teacher ratio	1-51,579
		SCHRESOURCES1		A lot
		SCHRESOURCES2	2 dd 2 d	To some extent
	SCHOOL LESCUI CES	SCHRESOURCES3	Scriool madequate of pool-quanty educational material	Very little
		SCHRESOURCES4		Not at all
		SCHSTAFF1		A lot
	Slace Additional A	SCHSTAFF2	كالمهدي مراهدا	To some extent
	Assisting stain iack	SCHSTAFF3	Lack of assisting staff	Very little
		SCHSTAFF4		Not at all
	Computers by student ratio	PCRATIO	Computers by student ratio	0-25
	Global performance	GLOBALPERF	Average of plausible values in Global Competency	218.7 - 801.6
of the second of	Science performance	SCIENCEPERF	Average of plausible values in Science	193.7 - 767.9
Acadellic pellorilarice	Reading performance	READINGPERF	Average of plausible values in Reading	176.4 - 740.6
	Mathematics performance	MATHPERF	Average of plausible values in Mathematics	185.4 - 733.0

Source: the authors.

allows for more accurate matches. The combination of both methodologies enables the selection of those variables where exact matching of individuals is most important (Stuart et al, 2011).

To obtain the best possible balancing to eliminate endogeneity problems, different ratios (1, 3, 5 and 10), distance "glm", replacement and discard are used. Standardized bias and pseudo-R2, and graphical analysis are used to study and to test the balance, being selected the matching with the best balance. Specifically, five matching processes are elaborated (general, by status, by sex, by school ownership and by origin). For each case, the option that best balances the treatment and control groups was selected (Table III).

The general matching allows to study the effect of grade repetition for the entire student cohort ignoring whether it has different academic effects based on the student's profile. The matching by status allows to analyse if the grade repetition has heterogeneous effects according to the student "socio-economic profile". Specifically, in this research the students are divided in three levels of socio-economic status (Low, Middle and High) according to the student ESCS. With the low-class composed of students with lower ESCS, the middle-class composed by the central 33% and the high-class composed by the top 33%. The matching by sex allows to analyse the grade repetition with a gender perspective to determinate it its impact differs between female and male students. The matching by school ownership allows to study whether the school context also influences the impact of the policy. Given that private institutions tend to have a more homogeneous student body with elevated socio-economic status than public institutions. Finally, the matching by origin allows to analyse whether the grade repetition impact differs between native and immigrant students.

Maintaining a strong balance between the treatment and control groups facilitates the assessment of the impact of grade repetition by directly calculating the difference between these two groups. In this way, the weighted means for the four performance variables (overall, mathematics, science and reading) is calculated, as well as the percentage difference between the two groups as the effect of the policy. In addition, a t-test is performed to check the statistical significance of these differences.

TABLE III. Matching balance measures

			Standardized-bias	ized-bias	Pseuc	Pseudo-R2	Treatment students	students	Control students	tudents
		Matching option	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Global		NNM 1:1	15.97%	1.96%	0.1709	0900'0	5,127	5,108	18,666	3,512
	Low	NNM 1:3	15.37%	2.46%	0.1727	0.0131	1,683	1,675	6,169	2,508
Socio-economic status	Middle	NNM 1:3	15,58%	1.95%	0.1594	280.0	1,685	1,672	6,166	1,685
	High	NNM 1:5	15.09%	2.53%	0.174	0.0167	1,759	1,748	6,331	3,426
763	Female	NNM 1:3	16.12%	2.06%	0.1622	0.0078	2,260	2,253	10,124	3,623
Xuc	Male	NNM 1:5	15.69%	1.79%	0.172	0.0059	2,867	2,850	8,542	5,023
	Public	NNM 1:3	11,24%	1.99%	0.1584	0.0075	3,975	3,950	11,211	5,474
Ownersnip	Private	NNM 1:3	17.52%	2.77%	0.1515	0.0134	1,152	1,140	7,455	2,032
	Native	NNM 1:3	15.84%	1.69%	0.1578	0.0041	4,133	4,127	17,299	6,517
	Immigrant	NNM 1:3	10.34%	2.93%	0.1151	0.0151	994	985	1,367	994

Source: the authors.

Results

Grade repetition as an educational policy does not appear to enhance academic performance, as indicated by the literature reviewed in the second section. Specifically, the effects according to the socio-economic status, the sex, the origin, and the school ownership are analysed on performance in the three competences and on the overall performance. In this section the obtained results are presented starting with the overall analysis and then proceeding to the different groups.

Grade Repetition and Academic Performance: Global Effects

Grade repetition exhibits negative effects on academic performance both globally and across the three knowledge areas: science, reading and mathematics. This is shown in the Figure II presented below and the detailed results are documented in Table A.1 of the Appendix.

Specifically, the results indicate a 15.23% reduction in overall academic performance, associated with grade repetition. The results

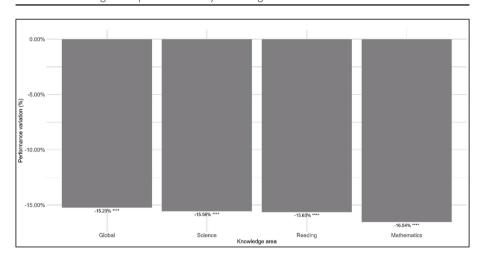


FIGURE II. Global grade repetition effect by knowledge area

Note: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 and ****p<0.001. Source: the authors.

also indicate a negative effect, exceeding the Global magnitude, in the different knowledge areas. The greatest decline occurs in Mathematics (-16.54%), followed by Reading (-15.63%), and, finally, Science (-15.56%). All these effects are statistically significant for the four levels of significance outlined in the table as previous studies have pointed out, missing part of the equivalent of an academic year (Manacorda, 2012; Choi et al., 2018). However, it is to be expected that these effects are not homogeneous across students with different characteristics. This aspect is analysed below and provides further evidence to the literature and the gap on 'how school repetition harms' based on the student's profile. With this, we indicate that educational policies may have a differentiated academic effect depending on personal and family characteristics, with consequences for their educational opportunities.

Grade Repetition and Family Socio-economic and Cultural Status

Academic performance, as demonstrated by the literature reviewed in the section 2, is influenced, among other factors, by the familiar background (Özek, 2015). Generally, a socio-economic and cultural environment that supports learning and the student development, along with abundant and high-quality resources, has a positive effect. The Figure III presents the results obtained on this aspect andthe detailed results are documented in Table A.1 of the Appendix.

The results obtained show a negative effect —consistent with the global effect (Figure II)—for all three groups of students analysed: high, middle, and low class. These effects are of a similar magnitude (around a 15% decline). However, the effects are not homogeneous across the three groups. Specifically, the low class experiences a greater average decline in their academic performance, followed by the middle class. The differential between the decline in the lower class and the high class exceeds 1% for both overall performance and performance in the three knowledge areas analysed. This indicates a decidedly regressive effect of grade repetition that exacerbates pre-existing socio-economic inequalities.

Regarding the decline in academic performance by knowledge areas, it is noteworthy that there is a clear pattern for all three levels of socioeconomic status. Specifically, the greatest decline occurs in mathematics,

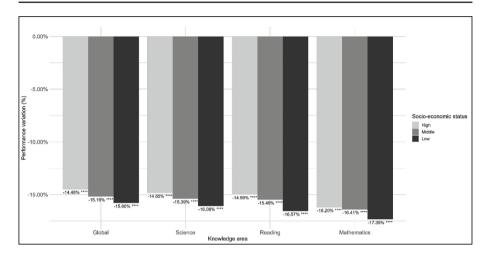


FIGURE III. Grade repetition effect by socio-economic and cultural status and knowledge area

Note: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 and ****p<0.001. Source: the authors.

followed by reading and then science. While the difference between the latter two is clearly smaller than with the first.

Grade Repetition and School Ownership

A second aspect of great relevance when addressing the effects of grade repetition is whether it varies depending on the school ownership attended by the student. Following this is the fact that private schools often serve as a tool for school segregation (Garcia, 2008; Carabaña, 2023; Bonal & Bellei, 2018). They tend to select students with more advantaged socio-economic profiles, resulting in less heterogeneity among their student body compared to public schools (Murillo et al., 2018; Fernández-Llera & Muñiz-Pérez, 2012). Figure IV presents the results by school ownership (public-private) and knowledge area and the detailed results are documented in Table A.1 of the Appendix.

Generally, the results indicate that grade repetition has a more significant negative impact on academic performance in public schools than in private ones. There is an exception in the case of science, where

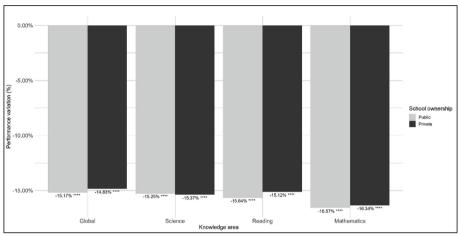


FIGURE IV. Grade repetition effect by school ownership and knowledge area

Note: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 and ****p<0.001. Source: the authors.

the decline is slightly higher for private schools, which translates to global performance. Regarding the distribution by knowledge areas, the results exhibit a similar pattern to the previous cases, with the greatest decline in mathematics compared to reading and science. It also states that the incidence of grade repetition is higher in public schools; this contributes to a greater detriment in performance. This phenomenon must be complemented with the previously indicated data (see Table 1): the incidence of grade repetition is higher in public schools, where it is more detrimental to academic performance.

Grade Repetition and Gender

Another relevant aspect to analyse is whether the effects of grade repetition differ by gender. This is important as the literature, in general, indicates different behaviours between male and female students in school. Figure V presents the results by gender (female-male) and knowledge area and the detailed results are documented in Table A.1 of the Appendix.

The results indicate that females are more adversely affected by grade repetition, as the percentage decline in their performance is greater than

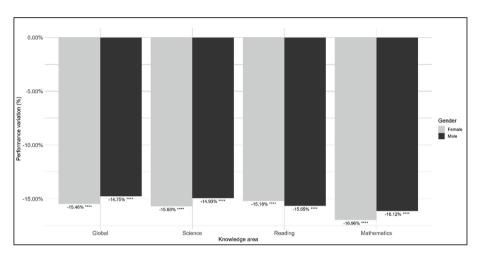


FIGURE V. Grade repetition effect by sex and knowledge area

Note: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 and ****p<0.001. Source: the authors

that of males. Only in the case of reading do males fare worse, which is logical given that the average performance of females in this area tends to be higher than that of males. In this case, it should be noted that, although boys suffer a higher proportion of school repetition, girls experience a greater decline in their educational performance.

Grade Repetition and Origin

The last aspect to address is whether grade repetition affects native and immigrant students uniformly. This becomes highly relevant given the general negative handicap of coming from another country and the higher incidence of grade repetition among non-native students (Table I) (Murillo et al., 2017; Tingle et al., 2012). Figure VI presents the results by origin (native-immigrant) and knowledge area andthe detailed results are documented in Table A.1 of the Appendix.

The results show that native students, i.e., those born in the country and children of natives, are more adversely affected by grade repetition. However, the effects are clearly negative for both groups. It is worth

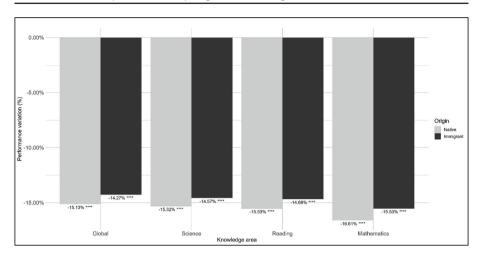


FIGURE VI. Grade repetition effect by origin and knowledge area

Note: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 and ****p<0.001. Source: the authors.

noting that the pre-existing difference in performance between the two groups may contribute to this greater decline.

Discussion about Grade Repetition: Uncovering the Role of Student Identity

As Jimerson (2001) emphasizes, despite the negative evidence, grade repetition policies persist, often due to political pressure and misguided belief in their efficacy. The purpose of this discussion is to clarify the complexities underlying the different effects of grade repetition across demographic groups, with particular attention to socio-economic status, school type, gender, and origin. The different results observed raise several critical questions of this policy that have not been addressed in the literature on how it harms repetition as a function of student characteristics.

The lower academic achievement of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds is reinforced by the lack of additional support available to their more privileged peers. To achieve effective educational equity, families with difficulties should receive after-school reinforcement programs (López-Rupérez et al., 2021; Shepard & Smith, 1990), or summer schooling or strengthening teachers' human capital (Valbuena et al., 2021).

The decision and impact of repeating a course is influenced by the student's environment. The student's educational opportunities and potential are moderated by the expectations of the school (teachers and principals) and parents. Socio-economic status often serves as a protective buffer, reducing the severity of academic decline associated with grade repetition. Blanco-Varela (2022) highlights this by noting the inverse relationship between the likelihood of repeating a grade and the socio-economic status of the student body. Moreover, Moreno (2022) and Runte-Geidel (2014) point out lower performers in tutoring and private lessons to address academic difficulties. This suggests that students from less affluent backgrounds are at greater risk of repeating a grade.

At the same time, the type of school ownership deeply influences this equation. Private schools, characterized by lower repetition rates, typically offer students more comprehensive monitoring and support systems (Cuartero, 2023). The elevated expectations from parents and the advantages of a privileged learning context within these institutions further diminish the likelihood of grade repetition. This contrast is notable when compared to public schools, which, despite serving a broad range of academic needs and socio-economic backgrounds, often face resource limitations.

Other results of interest from a sociological point of view lie in the prejudice that school repetition implies for female students, making school repetition a "more punitive" measure. Analysing the reasons for this exceeds the scope of the present work, which presents an exploratory study on the degree of negative impact of school repetition on performance. However, this could be explained by modulating self-concept and social pressure, and by women being more susceptible to contextual circumstances (Eagly, 1983; Costa & Tabernero, 2012).

There's a higher tendency to make foreign students repeat a year (as shown in Table 1). This could be because the current educational system may not effectively meet the needs of immigrant students, leading to longer periods in the educational system. This results in more heterogeneous, less linear school trajectories, as highlighted by Rodríguez-Izquierdo (2022).

The persistence of grade repetition policy, despite its documented shortcomings, underscores the critical need for policy reassessment. Educational equity requires targeted support, such as after-school programs and improved teacher training, to close the gaps in academic support. The decision to repeat grades is not just an academic issue but is deeply rooted in sociocultural contexts and affects students differently depending on their backgrounds. Understanding these complex dynamics is crucial to developing more effective and equitable educational strategies.

Conclusions

Grade repetition serves as an educational indicator, one that approximates the quality and evaluation of educational systems. Thus, repetition reflects deficiencies in the educational system, and high repetition rates usually indicate problems in the quality of teaching, the relevance of the curriculum or the efficiency of the pedagogical methodologies employed. It also has an impact on public resources, as it involves the repeated enrolment of students in a grade. It has psychosocial implications for students, as it affects their self-concept and attitude towards school.

The aim of this article is to examine the impact of grade repetition on academic performance in relation to students' socio-economic, cultural, and gender profiles in Spain, that it is a country with a deep-rooted culture of grade repetition. The purpose is to determine if the effects of this educational policy vary among different student groups.

The study reveals that grade repetition leads to a significant reduction in academic performance in the areas analysed. This negative effect is consistent with previous research indicating the loss of almost one academic year due to grade repetition. The impact is not uniform across socio-economic groups; students from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience a more pronounced decline. In addition, the study finds that school ownership (public vs. private), particularly interesting in Spain, and student demographics (gender; and native vs. immigrant status) also influence the magnitude of academic regression due to grade repetition, with females and native students being the most adversely affected. This highlights the regressive nature of grade repetition, which reinforces existing socio-economic disparities and suggests that it has a "punitive" weight that disproportionately affects certain groups. This runs counter to the desirable goals of an education system and even to the achievement of the fourth SDG.

The study goes beyond identifying the most affected groups (males, immigrants, socio-economically vulnerable) to examine how the incidence of grade repetition varies in intensity across groups. This reveals systemic challenges in the education system and highlights how these policies can perpetuate inequalities. Focusing on the intensity of performance decline as a function of group characteristics allows for a better understanding of the broader implications of grade repetition in education.

The differential performance gap that grade repetition presents, especially for females, could have detrimental effects on their self-concept and their social and personal development, even though they are less likely to repeat grades than males. In addition, this practice is a greater handicap for immigrant students, who are more affected by both the incidence (percentage of students repeating a grade) and the intensity of performance gap. Thus, as the literature has shown, it generates problems of social cohesion and integration of students of different origins (Clark & Gibbs, 2023; Reschly & Christenson, 2013).

Despite the well-documented shortcomings of grade repetition policies, their persistence highlights a critical need for reassessment. These policies are not solely academic issues; they are deeply embedded within sociocultural contexts, impacting students differently based on their backgrounds. Educational equity demands targeted support measures, such as after-school programs and enhanced teacher training, to bridge the existing academic support gaps, again aligned with the fourth SDG. In addition, understanding the complex dynamics of these policies is critical to developing more effective and equitable education strategies. The study encourages a re-evaluation of these policies by considering their broader effects, including potential consequences such as dropout rates and negative self-concept. Given the diversity of student populations and the influence of socio-political and economic factors, future research should investigate more inclusive and context-sensitive alternatives to grade repetition, aiming to optimize the development of human potential across varied educational environments.

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Appendix

TABLE A.1. Detailed results about grade repetition effect on academic performance

		Knowledge	Means		Standard deviation	ıtion	31	, i
		area	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Dinerence	l-test
		Global	449.63	530.42	69.56	74.60	-15.23%	-50.8***
		Science	424.12	502.26	64.87	69.26	-15.56%	-52.8***
Global		Reading	415.00	491.90	71.20	75.23	-15.63%	-47.6***
		Mathematics	419.37	502.48	61.85	64.61	-16.54%	-59.7***
		Global	448.62	532.79	69.29	75.57	-15.80%	-37.74***
	:	Science	423.75	504.96	64.22	68.24	-16.08%	-38.53***
	LOW	Reading	413.74	495.89	70.45	75.59	-16.57%	-35.38***
		Mathematics	418.69	506.57	60.72	62.86	-17.35%	-44.14***
		Global	449.71	530.26	71.56	74.69	-15.19%	-33.65***
		Science	423.86	500.94	65.79	69.62	-15.39%	-35.54***
socio-economic status	l'IIddie	Reading	415.59	491.75	72.25	74.25	-15.49%	-32.14***
		Mathematics	419.31	501.59	62.85	64.70	-16.40%	-40.84***
		Global	450.18	526.39	68.12	74.67	-14.48%	-35.60***
	 	Science	424.35	498.33	64.92	69.51	-14.85%	-37.34***
	ugi L	Reading	415.15	488.34	71.57	76.49	-14.99%	-34.10***
		Mathematics	419.52	500.64	62.37	62.37	-16.20%	-43.37***
		Global	453.49	536.43	71.16	77.26	-15.46%	-44.90***
		Science	415.52	492.81	66.27	71.92	-15.68%	-45.40***
פפובס	בפוופות	Reading	422.26	497.85	72.85	77.26	-15.18%	-40.53***
		Mathematics	407.96	491.30	62.86	65.60	-15.96%	-52.16****

TABLE A.1. Detailed results about grade repetition effect on academic performance (Continued)

		Knowledge	Means		Standard deviation	ion	8	ŀ
		area	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	- DITTE FENCE	I-test
		Global	446.54	523.83	67.27	71.98	-14.75%	-42.29***
	2	Science	430.90	506.53	62.04	66.07	-14.93%	-40.41***
	l'lale	Reading	409.27	485.22	68.55	71.92	-15.65%	-40.70***
		Mathematics	428.38	510.71	58.60	61.38	-16.12%	-52.10***
		Global	447.26	527.23	68.03	74.65	-15.17%	-53.39***
	11.0	Science	422.49	498.50	62.81	68.53	-15.25%	-54.19***
	Signa	Reading	413.18	489.80	26:69	75.99	-15.64%	-50.39***
-		Mathematics	417.18	500.04	61.28	63.45	-16.57%	-63.19***
Ownersnip		Global	457.55	537.24	28.69	74.62	-14.83%	-30.43***
	9	Science	429.41	507.41	65.37	69.95	-15.37	-32.51***
	riivate	Reading	420.76	495.72	71.57	74.71	-15.12%	-27.90***
		Mathematics	426.73	510.06	61.86	64.30	-16.34%	-36.27***
		Global	449.69	529.87	88.38	73.21	-15.13%	-56.20***
	:: -:- 	Science	425.17	502.09	63.72	67.81	-15.32%	-57.86***
	Idative	Reading	415.51	491.91	71.49	72.98	-15.53%	-57.75***
:		Mathematics	421.26	505.16	96:09	63.77	-16.61%	-67.19***
		Global	448.70	523.39	69.91	69.36	-14.27%	-23.00***
	1	Science	419.12	490.63	65.14	74.50	-14.57%	-23.94***
	IIIIII BI AIIL	Reading	412.34	483.30	71.28	75.15	-14.68%	-21.45***
		Mathematics	410.81	486.35	62.01	63.95	-15.53%	-26.87***

Source: the authors.

The rural school in Spain in the 21st century: a systematic review following the PRISMA protocol

La escuela rural en España en el siglo XXI: una revisión sistemática según el protocolo PRISMA

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Abstract

This article presents a systematic review of scientific literature and book chapters addressing the situation of rural schools in Spain during the 21st century. It focuses on analyzing their current status, the challenges they face, and proposed strategies to improve rural education in the country. The method employed is based on the PRISMA protocol, with specific inclusion criteria for the rigorous selection of relevant studies and detailed data analysis. After reviewing a total of 863 publications, 20 were selected for an in-depth examination of rural education in Spain, highlighting the main challenges, identified opportunities, and relevant educational policies. Among the conclusions, the crucial role of rural schools as spaces for pedagogical innovation and community dynamization is emphasized, with significant socio-educational potential. The need to provide specific training for teachers working in rural settings is underscored, as well as the importance of establishing an updated legislative framework that strengthens their identity and resources. Priority is also given to addressing the digital divide and promoting technological integration in rural schools to ensure quality education in these contexts.

Keywords: rural school, rural education, systematic review, educational policy, Spain.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta una revisión sistemática de la literatura científica y capítulos de libros que abordan la situación de la escuela rural en España durante el siglo XXI. Se enfoca en analizar su situación actual, los desafíos que enfrenta y las estrategias propuestas para mejorar la educación rural en el país. El método utilizado se fundamenta en el protocolo PRISMA, en criterios de inclusión específicos para la selección rigurosa de estudios relevantes y en un análisis detallado de datos. Tras revisar un total de 863 publicaciones, se seleccionaron 20 para examinar en profundidad la educación rural en España, destacando los principales desafíos, las oportunidades identificadas y las políticas educativas relevantes. Entre las conclusiones, resalta el papel crucial que desempeña la escuela rural como espacio de innovación pedagógica y dinamización comunitaria, con un gran potencial socioeducativo. Se insiste en la necesidad de proporcionar una formación específica para el profesorado que trabaja en entornos rurales y en la importancia de establecer un marco legislativo actualizado que fortalezca su identidad y recursos. Se destaca también la importancia de abordar de manera prioritaria la brecha digital y promover la integración tecnológica en las escuelas rurales para garantizar una educación de calidad en estos contextos.

Palabras clave: escuela rural, educación rural, revisión sistemática, política educativa, España.

Introduction

Education in rural Spain has faced continuous challenges since the nineteenth century due to educational policies that overlook the needs of rural schools and exacerbate their lack of recognition and support. There is a need to overcome economic, sociocultural and geographical obstacles which defy more urban centric perceptions (Corchón Álvarez et al., 2014). This systematic review aims to present a complete picture of the rural school in the twenty first century through explanations of the characteristic, challenges to and opportunities for this type of school (González et al., 2021).

Educational practice in rural schools is different to that in urban schools (Abós y Boix, 2017; Castro, 2018; Chaparro y Santos, 2018; García

Prieto et al., 2 021) with advantages such as the use of the environment as an educational resource and personalized attention to each pupil. (Álvarez y Vejo, 2017; Selusi y Sanahuja, 2020). Personalized attention and peer learning is key in rural schools (Ruiz y Ruiz-Gallardo, 2017). Yet, combining educational levels in one classroom requires efficient management of both time and resources (Uttech, 2003). Teachers design activities adapted to different age groups (Uttech, 2003) and foster interaction appropriate for each stage of development (Ruiz y Ruiz-Gallardo, 2017). Although there are fewer students than in urban schools, rural teachers often travel between different towns and villages, establishing a special connection with the rural environment to develop enriching educational experiences. (Hernández, 2000) that highlight the unique pedagogical importance of the rural school.

Rural schools are key agents in the fight against depopulation in rural Spain (Barba-Sánchez et al., 2021), not only for educational purposes in their regions but also to settle families in these areas, preserve regional identities and contribute to social cohesion. They are of special community and social value, carry out regulatory functioning and help reduce inequality. (Berlanga, 2003). For a relevant analysis of the situation of rural schools in twenty-first century Spain, we should delve into what they mean both pedagogically and at communitarian and social levels considering the legal framework built around them. From the Moyano Education Law in 1857 until the General Education Law of 1970, the model of the unitary classroom was installed up and down the country. This led to the concentration of schools in certain rural areas and the disappearance of those with less students (Santamaría, 2012). The organization for groups of rural schools (Colegios Rurales Agrupados (CRA) began in 1986 with the Spanish law (Real Decreto 2731/1986) to improve education management in rural areas. Spanish education laws like "LOGSE", "LOE" and "LOMCE" refer to rural schools in several articles of law and the last few decades have seen an increase in references to quality of rural education (Santamaría, 2014). The most recent education law "LOMLOE" highlights the importance of rural schools and the need to train teachers and provide them with adequate resources.

Research on rural schools in Spain is scarce although researchers like Santamaría-Cárdaba y Sampedro (2020) have looked at characteristics and considered challenges. Carrete-Marín y Domingo-Peñafiel (2021) have studied technical resources in rural schools. Ferrando-Félix et al.

(2019) explored the importance of physical education in rural schools and earlier research, like that of Feu (2004) y Álvarez-Álvarez et al. (2020) point out historical and contextual limitations in education in rural Spain. González et al. (2021) helped to analyze the role of the teacher and their relationships with the rural community.

To research this topic, we carried out a systematic review at three levels of analysis based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1986), micro, meso and macrosystemic to describe the current situation and then analyze public policies in relation to rural schools in Spain. Our main objective is to carry out a systematic review of the research to date and assess the realities of the Spanish rural school in the twenty first century in two ways. First, by analyzing the academic research that targets the main challenges to education in a rural setting in the twenty first century and secondly, by analyzing research on policies, initiatives and proposals to improve education in the rural setting.

Method

Systematic Review Design

To carry out this systematic review, the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis) for systematic revision and metanalysis was used (Sánchez-Serrano et al., 2022; Page et al., 2021). Methodology was qualitative to systematically identifyand structure content taken from scientific publications.

Inclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were established to guarantee updated literature relevance, appropriate in the context of rural education in Spain in the 21st century.

- a. Sources: Peer-reviewed scientific articles published in indexed scientific journals and academic book chapters, ensuring reliable information that stands up to rigorous assessment.
- b. Methodological design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods studies allowing for broad and deep understanding of

- rural education in Spain. Grey literature, systematic reviews and scientific articles that did not provide a detailed explanation of their research methodology were excluded.
- c. Date of Publication: Only those articles published after 2000 reflecting the current situation of rural education in the twenty first century, recent policies and new developments were included.
- d. Languages: Studies published in either Spanish or English for easier comprehension and analysis.
- e. Related terms: Studies must contain terms related to the semantic field of "the rural school", guaranteeing total relevance for our study field in form and substance. Studies carried out in a rural schooling environment yet lacking information on the characteristics and particularities of rural schools were excluded since they focused on the theme of rural schooling as opposed to the specific context of rural schools.
- f. Spotlight on Spain: Studies should be centered on the characteristics and situation of rural education in a Spanish region to meet study objectives.

Search Strategies

This exhaustive search was carried out in academic data bases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Dialnet, Redalyc and Google Scholar, using a search strategy adapted to cover a wide range of relevant sources. The search equation used with Boolean operators was as follows: ("escuela rural" OR "instituciones educativas rurales" OR "enseñanza en zonas rurales" OR "rural education" OR "educación rural") AND ("Spain" OR "España") AND ("desafíos" OR "oportunidades" OR "challenges" OR "oportunities" OR "estrategias" OR "políticas" OR "strategies" OR "polícies" OR "mejorar" OR "improving").

Stages of the Systematic Review

The following review stages were developed using the same protocol: 1) Definition of the research problem, 2) Design of a protocol for the systematic review, 3) Shortlisting and selection of studies, 4) Information extraction, 5) Analysis and assessment. In the first phase, *the field of study was defined* focusing on the questions and objectives posed beforehand. The process involved the review of the relevant literature and an assessment of antecedents and contexts to establish a solid theoretical framework. This defining process established the base for the development of our methodology and posterior development of our study.

In the second phase dealing with *the protocol design of the systematic review*, we described the steps to take while searching for relevant literature, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the consulted databases, search equations and search strategies.

In the third phase, *shortlisting and selection of studies*, we proceeded to search for studies following the already established protocol. Articles with the same title were discarded or shortlisted based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This process was carried out independently by both researchers to minimize bias and error. A review of the concordance and difference between both reviewers´ selected literature was later carried out to establish a final sample.

In the fourth phase, *information extraction*, a data extraction sheet was drawn up to register data, methodically and systematically collected from the included studies. The areas included on the sheet were, study title, authors, publication date, research methods and key findings.

In the fifth phase, *analysis and assessment of the information*, a detailed analysis of all registered data taken from studies included in the research was carried out. Tendencies, patterns and key findings were identified using Atlas.ti, version 23, as working software to organize and analyze the information. During this phase, a critical assessment of analyzed data and constant review of the categorization and recategorization process were carried out. Finally, all this information was set down in the scientific article.

Results

We compiled 863 publications from diverse data bases during the initial phase of research. Duplicates were eliminated leaving a total of 648 publications This selection was carried out in two stages, first a shortlist based on titles and abstracts and the second, after an analysis of the complete text. We found 97 studies that met our research criteriawhich we analyzed in detail. 20 studies out of those 97 were selected for the

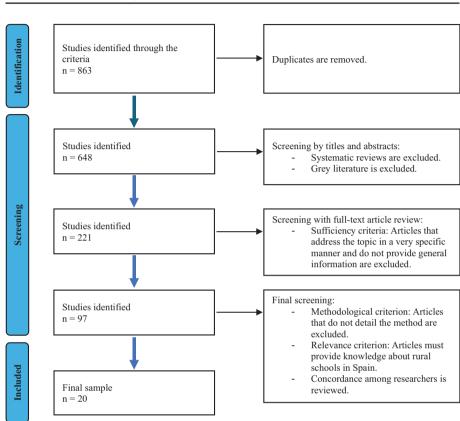


FIGURE I. PRISMA flow diagram for article selection

Source: Own elaboration.

systematic review. Figure I shows results for the basis of the systematic review comprising relevant quality studies specifically targeting the situation of rural education In Spain in the 21st century and the challenges, opportunities, strategies and policies involved.

General characteristics of selected studies

The final sample included 20 articles published between 2014 and 2022 (see Table I). 18 studies were written in Spanish and 2 in English, most of which

TABLE I. Characteristics of the studies analyzed

	Publication Date	Title	Objective	Methods and sample
~	2014/Spanish	Integration of Information and Communication Technologies: An Evaluative Study on rural schools in Andalucia (Spain)	To analyze the role of the teacher in Andalucia and identify initial teacher training to work with ICT in the classroom	Quantitative Descriptive Teachers
2	2015/Spanish	Integration and Teacher Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in rural schools in Granada: A Descriptive Study	To know ICT resources available to teachers in rural schools in the province of Granada and how teachers use these resources (frequency, type) outside the classroom	Quantitative Exploratory Descriptive Teachers
т	2015/Spanish	Investigative Action: Professional Development for Physical Education Teachers in Rural Schools	To analyze the impact of a working group for investigative action on the professional development of physical education teachers in rural schools	Qualitative Multicase study Teachers
4	2017/Spanish	Analysis of Teacher Satisfaction in Rural Schools in the Province of Granada (Spain): Personal and Professional Relationships with the Education Community	To assess the satisfaction level of teachers in rural schools in Granada province, their social and professional relationships with the education community of their schools	Quantitative Teachers
2	2017/Spanish	How are Spanish Schools in the Rural Environment Situated in terms of Innovation? An Exploratory Study through Interviews	To answer the question about the situation of schools in the rural environment in terms of innovation	Qualitative Exploratory Teachers Directorate
9	2017/Spanish	Expectations and Beliefs of Students in Rural Education in terms of their academic and professional future	To discover the expectations and beliefs of students in rural education in terms of their academic and professional future	Quantitative Ex post facto Explicative Correlational Students
7	2017/English	The Spanish Rural School from the New Rural Paradigm. Evolution and Challenges for the Future	To reflect and gain deeper insights on the context of rural schools	Qualitative case studies Teachers Parents Directorate
8	2017/Spanish	Teacher Satisfaction with School Organization in Rural Schools in Granada Province (Spain)	To know the organization of rural schools that pleases or displeases the teachers involved	Quantitative Descriptive Teachers
6	2017/Spanish	The Use of Textbooks in Rural Education in Spain	To understand the current role of textbooks and other school materials in rural schools	Quantitative Descriptive Teachers

10	2018/Spain	The Global Competence of the Rural School in PISA 2018	To highlight the potential of PISA tests as a tool to understand educational conditions and results in rural areas	Quantitative analysis of PISA report data
1	2018/Spanish	Reflections on the Rural School: A Successful Education Model	To analyze current rural schools in Catalonia	Mixed method design Teachers Parents Students
12	2020/Spanish	School Closures in Vulnerable Contexts from an Advisor Perspective: Impact on Rural Areas	To understand how school advisors in rural areas perceive the impact of Covid-19 on teaching-learning processes	Qualitative School Advisors
13	2020/Spanish	The Value of Place in Relations of Inclusion and Exclusion in a Grouped Rural School: An Ethnographic Study	To identify the experiences of inclusion or exclusion among the members of a grouped rural school	Qualitative Ethnographic Teachers Students Families
41	2020/Spanish	Environment, Educational Centres and Community Rural Schools in the North (Cantabria) and South of Spain (Huelva)	To identify the similarities and differences in rural schools in the north and south of Spain	Mixed method Teachers Directors
15	2020 /Spanish	The Rural School and External Evaluation in Spain: PISA as an Example	To present data on the rural factor in Spain and in the OECD obtained from PISA publications	Quantitative analysis of PISA report data
16	2021/Spanish	The Rural School: A Sought-after Teaching Post?	To analyze the willingness of student teachers and qualified working primary school teachers from the Cantabria Region to take up teaching posts in the rural schools of their region	Mixed method Teachers Students
17	2021/Spanish	Are Teaching Dynamics of Rural Schools in the North of Spain Different to those in the South of Spain? Tendencies, Contrasts and Similarities	To know the current situation of the diverse types and singularities in rural educational centres in both the north and south of Spain	Mixed method Teachers
18	2022/English	School in and Linked to Rural Territory: Teaching Practices in Connection with the Context from an Ethnographic Study	To identify those educational practices taking place in context	Qualitative Ethnographic Teachers Students Families
19	2022/Spanish	STEM/STEAM Interest in Secondary Education Students in Rural and Urban Areas in Spain	To identify compulsory secondary education students'inclinations towards specific areas of future knowledge regardless of academic performance	Quantitative Students
20	2022/Spanish	Teacher Satisfaction with State-run Rural Schools in Granada Province in terms of their Professional Development	To know the satisfaction levels of teachers from state-run rural schools in Granada province in terms of self-fulfillment and professional growth	Qualitative Descriptive Teachers

Source: Own elaboration.

aimed to describe, know or analyze the diverse variables linked with the rural school such as, the current situation, teacher training and satisfaction, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), the use of textbooks, PISA results, students´ interests, inclusion exclusion processes and innovation. Only one of the article objectives was linked to investigative action. Most of the 20 studies employed quantitative methods (10), followed by qualitative methods (6) and finally, mixed methods (4). The most common data sources came from the teachers themselves because from their position as teachers, they have access to data relevant to the study perspectives. Students, directors, advisors and parents were sources least consulted in the studies analyzed. Although the important role of the rural schools in each region was identified, no members of the rural community were interviewed in the articles. Finally, the main conclusions present relevant data on rural schools and will be analyzed in detail during code analysis.

Results by category and code

Through an in-depth analysis of the articles using both open and axial categorization considering the central category, reality of the rural school, we generated codes for the 4 initial categories: 1) current situation of Spanish rural schools, 2) challenges to rural schools, 3) opportunities for rural schools and 4) policies, initiatives and proposals for improvement. We then calculated the frequency of citations for each of the codes (see Table II). The total number of citations came to 624 and those with the greatest number of citations were as follows: lack of training and short teaching stays (68), the current rural school (64) and the visible school (61).

The Current Situation of the Spanish Rural School

In *twenty first century rurality*, concern about the possible extinction of the rural school due to depopulation caused by migratory flow towards cities persists (Tamargo et al., 2022). However, some authors like Álvarez-Álvarez et al. (2020), Morales-Romo (2017) y Santamaria (2020), describe a new, heterogeneous rurality. There has been a change from agrarian economies to economies based on tourism, leisure and second homes, causing temporary forms of settling (Álvarez-Álvarez, 2020; Álvarez-

TABLE II. Frequency of citations by code

CATEGORIES	CODES	NUMBER OF CITATIONS
1. Current Situation of the	1.1. Rurality in the twenty-first century	29
Spanish Rural School	1.2. Rural schools today	64
	1.3. Validity of rural schools	24
2. Challenges	2.1. Lack of resources	36
	2.2. Lack of training and short-stay teachers	68
	2.3. Lack of students	17
	2.4. Curriculum and teaching programme adjustment	25
	2.5. Isolation and geographical dispersion	24
	2.6. Dualisms: global/local, traditional /innovation, rural/urban	45
	2.7. The invisible school	29
3. Opportunities	3.1. Openess to innovation	34
	3.2. Technologies	17
	3.3. Statements from international organisms	13
4. Policies, Initiatives and	4.1. Administration policies and initiatives	39
Proposals	4.2. Community, family and school	59
	4.3. The visible school	61
	4.4. Improvement Proposals	40

Source: Own elaboration.

Álvarez et al., 2021; García et al., 2017; Morales-Romo, 2017). Rural areas are seeing the influence of new technologies, visibility of women, changes in communication and transportation systems and a certain hybridization process of the rural and the urban (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021; Morales-Romo, 2017).

Rural schools today are presented in diverse ways, which makes categorization difficult (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2020; García Prieto et al., 2017; Lorenzo et al., 2017; Monge et al., 2020). Some authors prefer to refer to them as "schools in rural environments" (Bustos, 2007; Martínez y Bustos, 2011; García, 2015, cited in Álvarez-Álvarez y Gómez-Cobo, 2021). Diverse forms of organization like Grouped Rural Schools (CRA), State-run Rural Schools (CPR), Early Learning and Primary Schools (CEIP), Rural Schools for Educational

Innovation (CRIES) and multigrade classrooms that vary depending on the context, have all been identified (Álvarez-Álvarez, 2017; García Prieto et al., 2021; Matías Solanilla y Vigo Arrazola, 2020; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022; Pedraza-González y López Pastor, 2015; Raso et al., 2015; Raso et al., 2017). Among these characteristics, cultural diversity due to repopulation processes is currently highlighted (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; García et al., 2017; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022). The use of textbooks and information technologies is increasing (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Raso et al., 2015), as is investment in more modern infrastructure (Raso et al., 2014; Tahull y Montero, 2018).

The validity of the rural school is evident with its flexibility and adaptability, making it essential for students and communities alike (Manzano y Tomé, 2016 cited in Lorenzo et al., 2017). It contributes notably to keeping rural territories active (Morales-Romo, 2017). Families are placing ever increasing value on the rural school, thus avoiding migration to urban areas in search of a higher quality education (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017).

Challenges

The lack of resources describes the lack of educational material or material adapted to a rural environment. Difficulties in accessing the internet in certain rural areas and deficiencies in infrastructure and installations are also mentioned (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2020; Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021; García et al., 2021, Pedraza-González et al., 2015; Monge et al., 2020; Raso et al., 2015; Raso, et al., 2022).

The lack of specific training and the problem of short stay teachers are key challenges to rural schools (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Morales-Romo, 2017; Raso et al., 2014). Teachers coming to this environment often know very little about the rural world, suitable teaching methods or information technologies (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021). They are recommended to acquire competences in the fields of Sociology and Psychology (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021). Even those teachers who do have experience in a rural environment often lack adequate ICT training (Raso et al., 2014). This lack of experience is common to both teachers and directors, who have usually worked in urban environments beforehand (González et al., 2021; Monge et al., 2020; Pedraza-González

y López Pastor, 2015; Raso et al., 2015). Job dissatisfaction and this lack of experience and training turn rural schools into centres for short term teaching posts with a constant coming and going of staff (Raso et al., 2015).

The lack of students is another worry since the existence of schools depends on the number of students. Such reduced numbers, multigrade classrooms and unitary classrooms bring challenges for designing, working with and evaluating several grades at the same time. Yet, it is important to mention that working with a reduced number of students fosters innovation and allows for attention to diversity (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Pedraza-González y López Pastor, 2015; Matías Solanilla y Vigo Arrazola, 2020, Morales-Romo, 2017; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022). The scarcity of students has caused administrations to consider how much they invest and thereby increase student ratios by grouping schools together (Morales-Romo, 2017).

How the curriculum, content and teaching programmes are adequately adjusted is another key challenge. Firstly, because the content is not related to the context (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; García et al., 2021; Pedraza-González y López Pastor, 2015) and secondly, all the necessary teaching programmes are developed by one teacher, which complicates their workload.

Isolation and geographical dispersion pose the challenge of the distances between certain areas Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2020; Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021; Lorenzo, et al., 2017; Morales-Romo, 2017; Monge et al., 2020). This makes student socialization processes with other children from other towns and villages impossible. It is also an impediment for access to culture and different recreational activities, (Monge et al., 2020; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022; Raso et al., 2015) generating professional isolation (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Pedraza-González y López Pastor, 2015). This isolation leads to exhaustion in the itinerant teachers since they must travel between schools (Morales-Romo, 2017).

The rural school is confronted with *dualisms* that define their identity and future. They must opt between keeping their traditional rural identity or adopting more urban characteristics (Monge et al., 2020). The grouping strategy is another cause for dilemma since it may cause the invisibilization or even the disappearance of certain particularities in the different contexts (Santamaria, 2020). Educational reflections are centred on preserving local identity as opposed to adapting to any other context

(García et al., 2017; Lorenzo et al., 2017; Raso et al., 2014; Tamargo et al., 2022). Students face the uncertainty of working in the rural environment or migrating, given the limitations for economic activity (Lorenzo et al., 2017). The technological divide is another challenge since access to the internet is limited which impedes the use of computers (Raso et al., 2014). Educational quality is also measured in the same parameters as for urban schools, reinforcing a more metrocentric vision, which limits rural development (García et al., 2017; Lorenzo et al., 2017; *Morales-Romo, 2017; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022*).

The rural school has been invisibilized by urban schools as shown in PISA (2015) reports or in legislation where it is barely mentioned (Morales-Romo, 2017; Pedraza-González et al., 2015; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022; Santamaria, 2020). The rural school "is plunged into the shade" (Pedraza-González y López Pastor, 2015, p.5). This invisibilization becomes more tangible when the administration gives greater support to urban schools through investment and public policy (Morales-Romo, 2017). They even seem to be forgotten by academia since there is very little research on the topic (Monge et al., 2020) and, in some cases, they seem to be disadvantaged because of where they are situated in the Spanish territory (Moreno-Pinillos, 2022).

Opportunities

The rural school 's openness to innovation with teachers intent on creating collaborative actions to facilitate learning (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; García et al., 2021; Morales-Romo, 2017; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022; Pedraza-González y López Pastor, 2015; Raso et al., 2014; Raso et al., 2015) must be highlighted. This innovation goes from teacher training to the use of technologies to overcome isolation or promote relationships in the environment Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; García et al., 2021). The idea that these innovations may first arise in the rural school is also considered since teachers take advantage of the small numbers of students to propose less conventional ideas (García et al., 2021). Along the same lines, the arrival of new *technologies* provides a valuable opportunity to access and create didactic resources, bring communities from other territories together and discover other realities (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Raso et al., 2015).

Finally, it is important to point out the declarations made by *international organisms* on the importance of the rural school. For example, UNESCO, the EU territorial Agenda 2020 or The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) have pointed out the importance of maintaining the rural contexts as "guardians of the territory" (Santamaria, 2018, p.6). Over the last 20 years, Spanish rural areas have received funding from the European programmes (LEADER2 y PRODER3) (Morales-Romo, 2017).

Policies, Iniciatives and Proposals

Regional administrations have implemented improvement proposals to improve aspects of rural schools. For example, Las Directrices Generales de la Estrategia Nacional frente al Reto Demográfico (General Guidelines of the National Strategy for Demographic Challenge) have suggested contemplating the demographic impact in all their laws (CGRD, 2019, p. 42, cited in Santamaría, 2018). El Instituto Nacional de Tecnologías Educativas y Formación del Profesorado (National Institute for Educational Technologies and Teacher Training) offers teacher training programmes and the Centres for Educational Innovation ((CRIes) provide experiences such as cinema, bilingualism and robotics (Álvarez-Álvarez v Vejo-Sainz, 2017: Pedraza-González v López Pastor, 2015). Initiatives to integrate ICT into rural schools such as El Plan Andaluz de Introducción a las Nuevas Tecnologías de la Imagen y la Comunicación (PAINTIC) (Andalucia Plan for the Introduction of New Image and Communication Technologies) have been promoted along with the programmes REDAULA v AUL@BUS, and the creation of different ICT centres (Raso et al., 2015, p.3).

Itinerant teachers may also obtain benefits such as reduction of teaching or complementary hours and some councils provide economic incentives to teachers living in these rural areas (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021). A solid policy from the Education and Technical Training Ministry is necessary to provide the required specialist training for these teachers.

The school-family-community relationship is still crucial (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017), with strong commitment from the families (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021; Morales-Romo, 2017) and emphasis on direct contact and collaboration in difficult situations (García et al., 2017; Matías Solanilla y Vigo Arrazola, 2020; Monge et al., 2020; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022;

Raso Sánchez et al., 2017). Teachers have proposed measures like including parent representation in coexistence commissions (Matías Solanilla y Vigo Arrazola, 2020; Moreno-Pinillos, 2022; Tahull y Montero, 2018). The community also plays a significant role by integrating local culture into the school through collaborative projects (Morales-Romo, 2017) and collaborations with different entities (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017; Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2020; Pedraza-González y López Pastor, 2015; Santamaria, 2020). Collaborative work is also fostered among teachers with groups for professional updating and the creation of networks of rural schools at state level (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017). To integrate local culture into the curriculum, initiatives like "Comunidades de Aprendizaje" (Learning Communities) and "Trabajo por Proyectos" (Working Projects) (Moreno-Pinillos, 2022; Morales-Romo, 2017) are highlighted.

Improvement Proposals emphasize the need to investigate in collaboration with educational institutions and to convert the rural schools into "centres for research" (Moreno-Pinillos, 2022). The importance of policies and economic resources (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021; Raso Sánchez y Santana Aranda, 2022) has been underlined as well as the creation of networks between different regions to promote collaboration among education centres (Moreno-Pinillos, 2022). The importance of maintaining rural identity as part of the curriculum and develop didactic material to that end is highlighted (García et al., 2021; Santamaria, 2018), as is training of teachers in rural themes and technology (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021). Reflections are made on the necessity to reinforce processes of project exchange between rural and urban schools (Santamaría, 2018) while calling for greater participation in subsidized projects (Álvarez-Álvarez y Vejo-Sainz, 2017).

Finally, we highlight *the rural school as a visible model* in different areas. These schools can be examples of curricular adaptation, methodological innovation and management of student diversity, as well as collaboration with the community, families and other professionals (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2021; García et al., 2021; Santamaría, 2018; Tahull y Montero, 2018). Interactions among students of different age groups, teacher initiatives and collaborative work leads to closer relationships, strengthens autonomy and fosters solidarity, which contributes to higher education levels and effective curricular adjustments (Tahull y Montero, 2018). These achievements can be observed in areas which urban schools are still exploring how to approach.

Conclusions

Considerations on the potential of urban schools are promoted by voices in educational centres, institutions and universities (Boix, 2004). Although they undergo the same economic and symbolic marginality as the rural environment itself, the rural school stands out as a space for pedagogical innovation (Beach y Vigo-Arrazola, 2018) and as a dynamic force behind rural communities (Santamaría-Cárdaba y Sampedro, 2020).

Despite some isolated cases of specialist teacher training in rural education (Villalustre y Del Moral, 2011), it is essential to include subjects dealing with the rural context to the teacher training curriculum. Training rural teachers is crucial (Santamaría-Cárdaba y Sampedro, 2020), yet university training on education in rural schools is perceived as scarce and insufficient (Ruiz y Ruiz-Gallardo, 2017).

In the study by Monge et al. (2022), where 2224 study guides from the university degrees of Early Teaching and Primary Teaching in Spain were analyzed, it was revealed that university teacher training did not guarantee the necessary competences for working in rural schools. This indicates the sparse attention given to this context in teacher training programmes (Moreno, 2020). The rural school is notably absent in the list of educational competences that a teacher should achieve during teacher training since few related subjects are taught. (Anzano et al., 2022). Training in rural education is essential and urgently needs to be included in teacher training programmes as seen in some pioneering universities.

In the context of the rural school diverse conceptions based on "hypothesis" and "false beliefs", lacking rigorous analysis through reflexive and critical training, can be observed (Abós, 2011). These beliefs may even affect the pupils, reporting lower interest levels and academic expectations in young people in rural areas than in urban areas (Tamargo et al., 2022). A current general framework on the legislation and rural educational models should be established, ensuring a socio-territorial voice backed by training models, post assignation and incentives suitable for rural teaching staff (Lorenzo et al., 2021).

The issue of the rural school transcends the lack of specific training for teaching staff. It must also deal with new inexperienced short-term teachers who have no sense of belonging. This threatens the identity of these institutions (Heredero et al., 2014). The lack of resources, means,

material, infrastructure, short-staffed schools and the lack of legislation makes teaching in these schools a tough challenge.

Not only is adequate training important but a sense of commitment and belonging is also key since settling teachers in rural schools in Spain is crucial for maintaining close relationships and collaboration among educators and local communities (Rothenburger, 2015).

The scarcity of literature available on rural education in the Spanish educational context becomes very evident when compared to research in areas like ICT, basic competences or coexistence in educational centres (Bustos Jiménez, 2011).

The rural school in Spain faces challenges due to the constant changes in educational legislation influenced by the different political parties down through the years of democracy in the country. The intervention of some political parties and trade unions in support of rural education (Feu, 2004) as well as the need for political stability and an allencompassing "Pacto de Estado" (State Pact) (Boix y Domingo-Peñafiel, 2015) is essential.

The rural school has great potential, especially as an organization that can optimize limited resources and allow for more coordinated working environments (González et al., 2021). Currently, lifestyles and customs in the rural school are undergoing gradual urbanization (Bustos Jiménez, 2009).

The digital divide worries the directorate (Del Moral et al., 2023). It is necessary to push forward with the transformation of classrooms by integrating technology (Fardoun et al., 2014), and new learning environments that provide resources to enhance educational achievement in rural settings (Carrete-Marín y Domingo-Peñafiel, 2023). We must develop new ways to facilitate multigrade learning and promote digital competence with the unique characteristics of the rural school in mind. We recommend setting up teacher support networks to foster effective resource exchange and continuous training in new technologies to push educational innovation forward (Carrete-Marín y Domingo-Peñafiel, 2021). This can already be seen with the advent of Artificial Intelligence, which may be either a valuable teacher tool or a source of conflict due to lack of adequate training, dependence on connectivity to the internet, the need to adapt it to rural characteristics and human intervention (Montiel-Ruiz y López, 2023).

Limitations

This research focuses on rural schools in Spain after 2000. There are limitations to the study in relation to the sample of analyzed articles. We have observed, in quite a few cases, that emphasis is placed more on the study theme than on the rural context itself. For example, several studies concentrate on didactic aspects but omit relevant data on school life in rural environments. We have also found studies describing very specific local contexts, which makes it difficult to extrapolate the results to a national level. For this reason, we excluded those studies with results that could not be generalized, maintaining those contributing to the study of the rural school as a whole.

Prospective

We have looked at different proposals that we will now summarize. It is essential to work on comprehensive support policies for the rural school, not only to repopulate "España vaciada" (Abandoned Spain) but also to promote identity and give visibility to these institutions. Teacher training programmes based on successful experiences of rurality in a proper rural context, as opposed to a more urban context, must be prioritized.

It is necessary to continue with this line of effective research involving systematic review on didactics and strategies which can bring current innovations in the field to light. However, it is also essential to transcend descriptive or correlational studies and start to design research using methods like the systemization of experiences and participatory action research. The former generates knowledge through practice, which would allow rural schools to show how they, themselves, understand the rural school and to share useful strategies with urban institutions. The latter allows for transformation and change in response to the needs of the context. Both research methods guarantee the effective transfer of knowledge along with the practical applications of said knowledge inside the study field.

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Book Reviews

Vergara, J.J. (2021). Un aula, un proyecto. El ABP y la nueva educación a partir de 2020. Madrid: Narcea. pp.165. ISBN: 978-84-277-2829-5

Juan José Vergara is a teacher and educator specialized in the management and guidance of educational centers and holds postgraduate studies in sociocultural animation and adult education. He is specialized in active methodologies: project-based learning (PBL), service learning, social entrepreneurship, active techniques for authentic and formative assessment, and models for project programming and learning situations. He also covers the use of appropriate tools for proactive approaches, technology, creativity, motivation, and collaborative structures. He is a speaker at teacher training courses and conferences on educational innovation, school improvement, and the application of project methods in various countries (Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Puerto Rico). He collaborates in training programs with national and international universities, professional associations in the field of education, and a network of public and private training centers.

A Classroom, A Project. PBL and the New Education 2020* is a text that describes the moments that shaped PBL projects and offers different tools to achieve this goal. This article presents, develops, and synthesizes every minute of the work that Juan José Vergara has done in PBL training with hundreds of teachers from different countries and educational levels. This book is written during a critical moment of the COVID-19 pandemic, which represents a turning point in teaching for all educators.

The PBL approach (project-based learning) is understood as a way of working in which students must design, apply, and evaluate plans to solve real or simulated tasks close to professional domains (Larmer and Mergendoller, 2010). Project-based learning (PBL) is a proactive approach used by innovative teachers at all educational levels when they want to improve the teaching and learning process. What distinguishes PBL from other methodologies is that it turns students into protagonists of their own teaching process, learning by doing. This means that teachers must plan each activity, determine the objectives to be achieved, and prepare the materials to be used.

The text is divided into three parts to form a coherent global text. Miguel Ángel Zabalza, professor of Pedagogy and School Organization at the University of Santiago de Compostela, writes the preface.

Part I: Scenarios: (i) Classrooms full of projects that transform classrooms; (ii) What PBL is not: PBL is not a methodology, nor an interdisciplinary activity, nor a passing trend..., nor a recipe to break with school reality; (iii) An "educational manifesto" to build learning programs; (iv) I don't like fireworks: let's design some strategies to keep us engaged with learning; Characteristics that become engines of change in schools; (v) We learn through stories.

Part II: Adventure. Every minute of the PBL journey; (i) Minute 1: the idea that led us to the project; (ii) Minute 2: PBL must be useful for my course; (iii) Minute 3: develop skills, not accumulate content; (iv) Minute 4: Is it okay in my center?; (v) Minute 5: I'm organized!; (vi) Minute 6: The adventure of learning leads to a surprising journey; (vii) Minute 7: Empower students; (viii) Minute 8: Start from the group's knowledge; (ix) Minute 10: No mentor; (x) Minute 11: Implement the project with others; (xi) Minute 12: Final action; (xii) Minute 13: Commitment to reality; (xiii) Minute 15: Narrating the structure of learning.

Part III: A Companion for Educational Adventures. (i) Companions in the adventure of learning; (ii) Longevity of projects; (iii) It's better to be together than alone; (iv) Project-based learning and new education in a world in crisis: (a) The environment we live in is a mix, communication and technology are exclusive factors, the goals of education remain the same, and education in a world in crisis.

We believe this is an appropriate and recommended book for teachers who want to embark on the design, development, and evaluation of this active learning approach at any level.

Esperanza Bausela Herreras

Blanchard Giménez, M. & Muzás Rubio, M. D. (2020). Working on Developmental Learning Projects in Early Childhood Education. Narcea. ISBN: 9788427727779

Early Childhood Education is recognised as a crucial stage in the integral development of individuals. Moreover, its importance has undergone a remarkable evolution over time, especially in recent decades. This is why it is now widely recognised as a fundamental period in which the foundations for learning are laid and essential aspects of early childhood cognitive, emotional, social and motor development are shaped.

In a society marked by technological evolution and changing social demands, teaching and learning have undergone a remarkable metamorphosis, requiring innovative and effective pedagogical approaches. Recognising the importance of Early Childhood Education and early childhood, this book proposes a transformative approach centred on Learning Projects. This methodology not only promotes the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also fosters the curiosity, creativity and autonomy of students, making them active protagonists of their own process.

Learning Projects (LP) are based on students' intrinsic desire to discover the world around them. In this paradigm, children become the main actors in their learning process, while educators take on the roles of mediators, facilitators and guides. The essence of the LP lies in their ability to foster curricular globalisation, integrating diverse areas of knowledge around a shared axis of interest.

The structure of the book is composed of two main parts. First, it explores the theoretical and practical foundations of LP, from their conceptualisation to their implementation in the classroom. Key aspects such as the importance of listening to and understanding students' motivations, strategies for self-regulation of learning and the need for innovation in early childhood education are addressed. In this way, this section of the book explains in detail how to integrate curricular content and key competences into the project itself, which is a challenge for most teachers today. Therefore, the methodology used for the development of a project is addressed, considering its structural axis and the corresponding diagram of contents.

The book not only presents Learning Projects as an educational alternative, but also addresses a series of urgent questions that often arise in this environment: Can Learning Projects be developed in Early

Childhood Education? How can an educational process be established based on the interests and motivations of the students? Why is it important to innovate in Early Childhood Education?

This is followed by concrete examples of projects developed by teaching teams, accompanied by a reflective analysis of the experience, implementation and evaluation of these projects. As explained in the text itself, in order to carry out a truly reflective practice, it is essential to adopt a constant analytical character throughout the project (Perrenoud, 2017). Moreover, it is even more enriching when this reflection is carried out as a team, incorporating diverse educational perspectives in a collaborative action-research process.

The book stands out for its rigorous approach and its ability to articulate theory and practice, offering educators a detailed guide to design, implement and evaluate LP focused on Early Childhood Education. In addition, it underlines the need for a continuous process of training and pedagogical innovation and, therefore, proposes tools for training in this active methodology.

In this sense, the project-based learning approach is presented as a powerful tool to nurture critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration, preparing students at this stage to be active and competent citizens in a society in constant transformation.

In summary, Working on Learning Projects in Early Childhood Education is an essential resource for education professionals seeking to enhance the holistic development of their students, promoting meaningful, collaborative and contextualised learning in the world around them. Its in-depth content and practical approach make it a valuable tool for transforming educational practice and responding to the challenges of the 21st century.

Paula Martínez Enríquez

Rodríguez, J., Area, M., & San Martín, Á. (2024). Infancia y transformación digital de la educación. Miradas Diversas. Dykinson. 292 pp. ISBN: 9788411704359

The book "Childhood and the Digital Transformation of Education: Diverse Perspectives" examines certain approaches and relevant questions in order to present a series of reflections and suggestions that facilitate the formulation of an appropriate understanding regarding the meaning and importance of digital educational resources in educational work. The purpose of the book is to analyze these concerns and offer reflections and proposals that help to understand the sense and significance of digital technologies in educational practice.

The importance of this book is emphasized for researchers, preservice teachers, and families wishing to delve deeper into the topic, as well as for those seeking practical examples of how to effectively utilize digital educational resources in classrooms.

The work follows a discourse and structure typical of a research paper and is organized into two main sections: "Food for Thought," which provides reflections on early childhood education in the digital age, and "Hands-on Practice," which presents examples of valuable practices related to the appropriate use of resources in the early childhood education stage.

In the first part of the book, "Food for Thought: Early Childhood Education in the Maze of the Digital Society," a profound and reflective look is provided on the relationship between digital technologies, childhood, and early childhood education. The significant increase in the presence of these technologies in both the school and home environments is highlighted, as well as the adoption of educational policies to regulate their use. Furthermore, the growth in the sale of digital resources and educational discourses addressing upbringing in a consumerist culture is noted.

The book highlights the lack of understanding regarding the importance of digital competence in early childhood education, both among families and educators. Despite children being immersed in the digital age, the responsibility falls on adults to mitigate the risks. For this reason, within the educational realm, there is an emphasis on the need for more reflective and critical training for teachers, as well as the implementation of educational projects that explicitly consider the use

of technologies. Likewise, various opinions regarding the use of digital technologies in childhood are mentioned, ranging from advocating for their inclusion in early childhood education classrooms to rejecting their use before the primary education stage.

The second part of the book, "Hands-on Practice: Experiences of Digital Education in Childhood," is particularly interesting as it proposes, across ten chapters, strategies aimed at the optimal utilization of resources in early childhood education. All of these strategies constitute a fundamental pillar in the development of educational environments that strive for effectiveness and richness in student formation. They are strategies that make it possible to optimize the use of tangible and intangible resources, such as didactic materials, pedagogical tools, and educational technologies, with the purpose of fostering meaningful learning.

Among the proposals, it is worth mentioning the incorporation of educational robotics from a programming perspective for learning, which represents a liberating approach in education, going beyond mere traditional literacy. This approach enables students to understand and actively participate in the digital world in a critical and responsible manner.

Furthermore, it provides concrete examples of how to apply other innovative approaches in educational practice. These include the use of online training courses aimed at both teachers and families, the employment of video games for educational purposes, and the analysis of television series with pedagogical content. These practical examples illustrate how the mentioned resources can be effectively integrated into the educational environment to enhance the learning and development of early childhood education.

Therefore, reading the book "Childhood and the Digital Transformation of Education: Diverse Perspectives" is an essential requirement for individuals committed to the integration and efficient application of technologies in the educational sphere. Given the increasing relevance of digital tools in the teaching and learning process, this book not only constitutes recommended reading but also an indispensable resource for those aspiring to understand the complexities, implications, and potential benefits of this digital transformation in the educational context.

Isabel Cerezo Cortijo

García García, M., Carpintero Molina, E., Biencinto López, Ch., Arteaga Martínez, B. (2024). *Pedagogía diferencial adaptativa*. Síntesis. 142 pp. ISBN: 978-84-1357-327-4

The expression 'adaptive education' was coined by Glaser in 1977, bringing together the terms individual diversity and educational diversity. Víctor García Hoz, in 1960, formulated 'differential pedagogy' to systematise educational approaches related to diverse ways of teaching, taking into account relevant group differences and individual differences.

This book, published by the renowned publishing house Síntesis, consists of five chapters written by four authors who are specialists in the field, who are part of the adaptive pedagogy research group at the Complutense University, and is the result of work carried out over the last decades.

The book provides an innovative vision on how to approach education from an inclusive and personalised perspective. It highlights the importance of understanding that each student is unique and that teaching strategies should reflect this diversity. The first chapter discusses the historical evolution from differential pedagogy to adaptive pedagogy and the different approaches that have been used to address diversity in the classroom, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It includes sections entitled 'guidelines for reflection' that engage the reader through reading.

The second chapter sets out the key concepts and theories underpinning adaptive pedagogy to improve quality from a differentiated perspective, focusing on the individuality of learners. It concludes by describing the adaptive principles relevant to 21st century educational institutions. In addition to the 'guidelines for reflection', it adds the sections 'situation' and 'completeness', which raise case studies and questions, respectively, of interest to the reader.

The third chapter is devoted to the study of individual differences and educational methods in research.

It covers the most appropriate research design for adaptive education, the ATI model, the design known as aptitude-treatment interaction, its origin and evolution to the present day, the phases involved in ATI research and practical guidelines for the design of adaptive research. In short, it offers methods and techniques for personalising teaching according to the needs, interests and abilities of each student, as well

as teaching tools and resources for implementing effective adaptive pedagogy.

The fourth chapter discusses ways of diagnostic and ongoing assessment to identify individual student characteristics and adjustments in lesson planning and delivery to respond to the assessments made. Examples and case studies facilitate the understanding and application of the strategies proposed.

The fifth chapter presents case studies and real examples of implementation of adaptive strategies in different educational contexts. Testimonies and results obtained by applying differential pedagogy in various educational institutions, with a section dedicated to highlighting the importance of mediation in the classroom.

The book provides concrete and applicable tools for the educational community to design and implement a teaching-learning process that considers individual differences.

This includes assessment techniques, curriculum planning and teaching methods. It invites the educational community to reflect on their current pedagogical practices and to consider changes that can lead to more effective teaching.

'Adaptive Differential Pedagogy' is an essential work for the entire educational community and all those interested in improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Its focus on adapting and personalising the educational process offers practical and theoretical solutions to the challenges of individual differences in the classroom.

Patricia Diez Ortego

Revista de Educación is a scientific publication of the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional. Founded in 1940, with the title 'Revista de Educación' since 1952, it has been an exceptional witness of the evolution of Education in the last decades, as well as a regarded channel for the diffusion of the advances in Research and Innovation in the field of Education from a national and international perspective. Revista de Educación is Subdirección General de Atención al Ciudadano, published by the Documentación y Publicaciones, and is at present attached to the Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa de la Dirección General de Evaluación y Cooperación Territorial.



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