Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Country Report: Spain

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Contents

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This study will first provide a brief overview of recent changes in education policy in Spain. This is an important issue for the general educational environment of Spain since the nation is a relatively new democracy. It also explores some of the underlying concepts that have marked different policies and practices and which may lead to educational disadvantage for specific groups. It should be noted that this report is compiled through the information available to the authors through national and European reports, research and education journals, education experts and local and national authorities.

1. Historical overview and impact on social and educational disadvantage

In this section, we consider how the question of educational disadvantage has been approached through diverse education policies in Spain since 1975 (marking the end of the Spanish dictatorship under General Franco). We focus on the post-Franco period as it is not only the most recent period of democratic government in Spain; it is also the longest democratic period in Spanish history. The end of the dictatorship and the establishment of a democratic system was an important factor leading to change and modernisation of the Spanish education system largely due to the fact that since 1975 the different parties that have governed Spain have endeavoured to fill perceived gaps between the Spanish education system and other democratic European countries that had developed modern education systems following the end of World War II (IOE 1997).

Inevitably, these important historical conditions which have occurred in a short span of time have resulted in continuous changes in education legislation, producing considerable instability when compared to other, more stable Western systems. For instance, only in the last three decades six organic education laws have been passed to either complement or directly reform the previously existing ones:

- Ley orgánica 5/1980, de 19 de junio, del Estatuto de los Centros Docentes (LOECE)
- Ley orgánica 8/1985, de 3 de julio, de derecho a la educación (LODE)
- Ley orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de ordenación general del sistema educativo (LOGSE)
- Ley orgánica 9/1995, de 20 de noviembre, de la participación, de la evaluación y del gobierno de los centros docentes (LOPEG)
- Ley orgánica 10/2002, de 23 de diciembre, de calidad de la educación (LOCE)
- Ley orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de educación (LOE)

All these regulatory texts derive from the Spanish Constitution, approved in 1978, which recognises the right of all citizens to education on an equal basis as well as establishing the free and compulsory character of basic education (article 27). Even though this legal text does not recognise specifically 'at risk', disadvantaged or minority groups, it appears to reflect a philosophy of inclusiveness by underlining that 'everyone' has the same right, despite the lack of specifications of certain groups.

This prolific legislative activity highlights the paradox of a general awareness of social changes and the need for adaptation to these changes, as well as the difficulties inherent in drawing up a stable, concerted ideology and legal framework regarding education. The rate of changes has generated a certain feeling of crisis for many education professionals, leading to a tendency to reject any new initiative aimed at changing the current status of education, since apparently each new intervention inhibits the possibility of maturation and consolidation of the preceding policy (Prats 2002). Moreover, reclamations that the lack of legal stability and support for coordinating and

implementing each new Spanish education policies have been exacerbated by an incremental decentralisation process that began in the 1980s and which has promoted the transfer of significant governing competences - including the area of education- from the central government to the regional administrations (Prats 2002). This process has had important consequences in the financial distribution; for instance in 2002, almost 90 percent of the education expenses were in the hands of the regional governments. It has also produced differences in the way in which money is spent.

Although the current Spanish educational system is based on a regionalised decentralisation, this model cannot be compared to other federal systems, where education is far more decentralised than in the Spanish model. The central government still maintains important and exclusive control over many areas of legislation in order to guarantee educational uniformity and homogeneity through the country. The central government shares some areas of governance with the regional governments while at the same time allowing scarce power and autonomy to local administrations (town halls) and education centres (Ferrer 2000a, 2000b, 2002).

According to a recent European study, Spain's educational system has one of the lowest levels of autonomy in the EU, along with Italy, Greece and France (Eurydice 2007). The PISA results for 2006 show that the autonomy of Spanish educational centres is below the OECD average, especially in decision-making by school principals in proposing and hiring teachers, as well as promoting or incrementing their salaries (Ferrer *et al*. 2008). This autonomy is also lower regarding student issues (discipline, assessment and, in particular, student admission). At the same time, across the board, Spanish centres show a higher level of responsibility in the budget distribution (96 percent) (PISA 2006), thus local administrations (town halls) as well as schools often claim that they lack the competences, autonomy and resources to apply initiatives needed for their specific context and populations. Furthermore, the decentralised model has led to a lack of coordination in the actions executed by different levels of government, along with frequent ineffective duplication of efforts addressing the same problems. This process also has had important effects on the linguistic policies in education, especially in those communities where Spanish coexists with co-official languages such as Catalan, Euskera or Gallego (see, for example, *Plan para la lengua y la cohesión social* 2006).

Educational legislation has faced two other major challenges in the post-Franco democracy:
- the universalisation of free, compulsory education for all children from 6 to 16 years old;
- and, most recently, the significant growth of immigrant pupils in the classrooms.

A quick glimpse indicates that each of the educational policies has tried to cope with one or more of these social conditions in one way or the other. For example, the universalisation of basic rights to education was the major aim of the first legal texts of the democratic period (1980s LOECE and 1985s LODE) and strongly reinforced by the socialist government's 1990 reform (LOGSE), which included raising the age for compulsory education from 14 to 16 years of age (a decision taken earlier, despite not having been enforced in a consistent way). Under this legislative text, the following education levels were established:
- Early Childhood Education (0-6 years) – not compulsory
- Primary education (6-12 years) – compulsory
- Lower Secondary Education "ESO" (12-16 years) – compulsory
- The two final years of secondary education contained several options; none of which are compulsory:
  - Academic Upper Secondary Education "Bachillerato" (16-18 years) - *an academic tract preparing for University studies*
  - Vocational Upper Secondary Education "Ciclo formativo de nivel medio" (16, 17, 18 years) – a *specialised degree in professional and artistic areas (eg electrician, hairdressing, etc.)*
- Higher Education

Fifteen years after the LOGSE, the percentage of children between 6 and 16 attending school is close to 100 percent, and similar levels have been achieved for smaller children from 3 to 5 years (96.6 percent in 2004). As can be seen in the charts below, the rate of students in post-compulsory upper secondary levels, that is, young people between 17 and 18 years of age, has also gone up to 75 percent, although these numbers are still lower than the European average (MEC 2004, 2005; OECD 2008; Eurostat 2008).

Table 1. Spanish achievements regarding universal compulsory education

Percentage of children attending school at age 15 during 2005-2006	97.5
Percentage of children attending school at age 17 during 2005-2006	75.7

Source: Ferrer and Albaigés (2008)

Table 2. Current Spanish status in relation to the Lisbon 2010 objectives

	Spain		EU average		EU benchmarks and goals
	2000	2006	2000	2006	2010
Low achieving 15-year olds in reading literacy	16.3 %	25.7%	21.3%	24.1%	17.0%
Early school leavers (age 18-24)	29.1 %	29.9 %	17.6 %	15.3%	10 %
Upper secondary completion rate (age 20-24)	66.0 %	61.6 %	76.6 %	77.8 %	85 %
Participation in pre-school education, 4 year olds	99.0 %	99.3 %	82.8 %	85.7 %	90%
Adults with tertiary education level (age 25-64)	22.5 %	29.9 %	19.4 %	22.9 %	Not available
Public investment in education, % of GDP	4.28 %	4.25 %	4.68 %	5.09 %	Significant increase

Sources: OECD PISA 2006 database and Eurostat (EU-labour force survey)

The achievement of universal education for all Spanish citizens between 6 and 16 has been considered one of Spain's biggest educational successes. However, the implementation of such an ambitious policy in such a short period and the consequent need to create millions of new places for students at the different educational levels has increased pressure on administrative, structural and human resources (IOE 1997).

Despite the fact that these transformations have been associated with an increase in public spending on education, the amount spent remains much lower than most other developed countries. According to a 2008 report, OECD countries spend 6.1 percent of their collective GDP on educational institutions, while Spain spends 5 percent (OECD 2008 report and OECD's conference "Education at a glance" 2008). The total amount spent per student is also lower. A 2005 report entitled "La situación social en España" – Spain's social situation - points that the amount spent per primary student is 15 percent lower than the European average and 18.47 percent lower for secondary students (Navarro 2005). Many experts feel that this creates a gap between the "good intentions" of the legal bodies and realistic possibilities to implement measures towards quality education and equality in the centres.

The lack of sufficient funds has been exacerbated by the need to build new schools and hire more teachers to face the increasing flux of new students (Essomba unpublished). Though urgent and unquestionable, this has meant a deficit in funds spent in other areas aimed at improving the quality of the system, such as special programmes for student diversity; programmes to overcome student failure and to promote retention of students at risk of leaving their studies early; reception and integration of immigrant students; resources for school libraries and new technologies; as well as initial and continued teacher training.

Since the LODE (1985), Spain has a parallel network of centres financed by public funds: public schools and *centros privados concertados* (private schools subsidised by the government and required to follow the same legislation as the public schools) – herein called *dependent state schools* as defined by OECD, 2004. This legislation, designed to homogenise the curriculum of the

majority of schools, anticipate some funding for the schooling of students in *dependent state schools* but does not anticipate any funding for extracurricular activities. Currently the Spanish school system is made up of 67 percent public schools, 26 percent *dependent state schools* and 7 percent completely private institutions[1]. According to a MEC report (2007) the amount of students attending private centres (both *dependent state schools* and completely private institutions) during the academic year 2007/08 were:

- Primary education (6-12 years): 32.7 percent
- Secondary education (12-16 years): 33.4 percent

Significantly, this ratio is much higher than the OECD average (16 percent)[2].

Recent events (mostly due to immigration) have revived a long conflict between public and private education. Critical voices claim that private schools receiving public funds - *dependent state schools* - are not assuming their responsibility towards the main problems of the Spanish education system, which is reflected in the unequal distribution of students from groups at risk of suffering from educational disadvantage, especially those from migrant origin. Currently, 7 percent of 15 year old pupils attending secondary Spanish centres were born abroad (Catalonia and Navarre have the highest ratio with 9 percent, and Andalusia and Asturias the lowest, with 3 percent) (PISA 2006 Spanish report).

Statistics show that 82 percent of immigrant pupils attend public institutions, and only 18 percent study in *dependent state schools*, principally due to the expenses families must face when paying the extracurricular activities. The concentration of groups at risk of suffering from educational disadvantage in the public system tends to create "ghettos", especially in those schools located in the neighbourhoods where immigrant families live, and where more than two thirds of their students proceed from these families. This "ghetto" effect is reinforced by the fact that Spanish parents tend to move their children out of those schools where ethnic and indigenous minorities have become the majority school population.

This unequal social distribution of students in the dual system is considered to be one of the most blatant problems of inequity in the Spanish educational system. There have been some attempts to remediate this situation. The original proposal of the LOE (2006) contemplated the creation of special commissions to guarantee equal access of students with special needs – especially immigrants - to the entire public and *private/ dependent state schools* network. However, the law as it was finally written, after considerable debate, did not manage to reach this goal.

As mentioned earlier, the first legal norms derived from the 1978 Constitution were not very specific about the special needs of some communities and the compensatory measures aimed to guarantee their right to education. The ambiguity of what is "disadvantage" and of who is in need of compensatory measures was encapsulated in the very general label of *"educational special needs"* (*necesidades educativas especiales). "Educational special needs"* have become progressively more detailed and explicit in recent legal texts. The LOGSE (1990) calls for compensatory education to avoid inequalities deriving from social, economic, cultural, geographic, ethnic or other factors. The LOPEG (1995) establishes support and specific educational attention to persons with physical disabilities or mental health issues, or to those facing social or cultural disadvantage.

Recent transformations of the student profile in the Spanish education system has created conceptual rifts in the educational model and provoked an evolution from a model based on

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[1] These are global percentages. There are considerable variations between different regions and autonomous communities which are not contemplated here.
[2] Geographical variations range from 58 percent of the students attending private centres in the Basque Country to only 25 percent in Galicia and Andalusia (PISA 2006 Spanish report).

homogeneity and reproduction of the previously existing educational framework towards recognition of diversity and the advantages of social and cultural heterogeneity (Echeita 1994; Pereda *et al.* 1997, 2003; Siguan 1998).

The latest legal norms tend to pay more attention to interculturality, pupils with special needs and the specific circumstances and social realities of the students. Concepts such as "interculturality", "diversity", "social cohesion", "social integration", "tolerance" and "respect" have been emphasised – albeit not usually defined - in the most recently approved education law (LOE, 2006), along with the insistent message that, to be effective, equality of opportunities must be understood not only as equal access, but also as equality of outcomes. However, many experts claim that frequently this equality of outcomes in official and legal rhetoric is not clearly defined and may, in part, lead to a lack of clear agency and responsibility about how to ensure equal provision of educational opportunities.

The latest legislation states that the problem of equal access to education is not the only factor related to social inequalities. Equal outcomes, understood both as academic results and as opportunities for social progress must also be considered. For this reason, the more recent laws, such as 2006s LOE, reformulated their priorities from equality of access, towards the improvement of quality in compulsory education. The new law emphasizes two values, quality and equity and presents them as compatible goals that must necessarily coexist: equality of opportunities for everyone should be reflected in an improvement of the Spanish academic results and number of students completing their schooling; lowering of current levels of absenteeism, drop-out rates, academic failure; and an increase in the number of individuals from disadvantaged groups accessing higher education and vocational training. Unfortunately this legislation has not been entirely successful. The weakness of Spanish academic results is especially visible in the last phase of compulsory education (ESO, from 12 to 16 years), where 28 percent of the students do not obtain a final graduate certificate, and the number of drop-outs is almost 30 percent (OECD 2008 report; *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives 2010 in education and training, 2007 Indicators and Benchmarks*).

2. Conceptions of social/educational disadvantage and their impact on different social groups

Since the 1978 Spanish Constitution (marking the end of General Franco's dictatorship), one of the major concerns of Spanish legislation regarding education has to do with equality of opportunities. However as stated earlier, there is no specification of special needs for disadvantaged groups. At the same time, the awareness (and reference to) social/educational disadvantage for different populations has grown in both official and public discourses in recent years (Lorite 2004), although there is little consensus about what constitutes a disadvantaged group. As a result, some special needs groups have gained public visibility and specific attention, while others have remained somewhat invisible. Most official and public texts that deal with disadvantage (eg legal norms, administrative texts, media news, academic production) tend to relate it to 'visible' differences (Actis 1997; Pereda *et al.* 1997) – eg physical or ethnic characteristics- thus putting some groups, such as immigrants or the physically or mentally disabled, in the public eye while 'erasing' other groups whose conditions do not derive from evident, physical features (eg lower socio-economic classes or indigenous, historic linguistic minorities). Moreover, difference is often conceptualised as equal to *deficit*, according to this "different/deficient" scale (Pereda *et al*. 1997).

Minority Ethnic groups

Different/deficient appears as a major element for defining ethnicity and therefore minority ethnic groups – principally children from immigrant origin- are more visible in official and public discourses and the target of special compensatory policies. Arguably, as a reaction to the recent

growth of immigrant population, explicit references to immigrant origin pupils have begun to appear in Spanish legal texts dealing with education. Significantly, these references have appeared in the last six years (LOCE 2002 and LOE 2006), where they are defined as "late arrivals into the Spanish education system". Although both reforms promote special measures to avoid inequality, the first one frames an assimilative model while the latter policy (LOE 2006) aims for integration and "normalisation" (the term applied to acquisition of regional languages such as Catalan), and allows the schools and local administration to decide which students need special support and to specify which measures to apply.

However, specialised diagnosis is not always the case, as sometimes compensatory measures are automatically applied to immigrant pupils, without considering their particular conditions and real needs; frequently, diagnosis is based on the different/deficient ideology. For example, Latin-American students are sent to compensatory linguistic classes because of their use of variants of Spanish which are different from the Castilian dialect and thus stigmatised as deficient. Across the board, "new-comers" (students recently enrolling in the Spanish education system and from different nationalities), are assigned to special classrooms (transitional classrooms called "aulas de acogida" and more recently "espais de benvinguda" have been initiated in Catalonia), where they are taught the school's vehicular language and given compensatory education until they are diagnosed as being "ready" for integration into the mainstream classrooms.

Disability

According to the Blind Persons National Organisation (ONCE), 3.5 million people in Spain suffer some kind of physical and/or mental disability. This group receives a substantial amount of visibility and attention in official and public discourses, both in terms of explicit references and in specific compensatory measures. For many decades, education compensatory policies aimed at disabilities meant separate education in special centres. Although these centres still work with severely handicapped children, this segregating model has evolved in recent norms and policies towards "integrative education" of these students into mainstream schools, supported by resources like tutors, social workers, rehabilitation workers, and specially adapted materials. This inclusive model also considers the collaboration between administrations, centres and external, non-profit agencies that may help in the education of these pupils. These external actors supervise the correct integration in the centres, ensuring that the integration is appropriate to the students' needs.

Socio-economic disadvantage

Public and official discourses of educational disadvantage as they develop in legal norms, the media or in academic circles are often less explicit when referring to economically disadvantaged citizens. For instance, poverty tends to be related to other, more visible groups (Romas, certain immigrant groups), thus linking it to the previous characterisation of "others". This "invisibility" of the socio-economic factor is reflected in the lack of specific policies, measures and research dealing with this subject (when compared to the previous categories).

Universalisation of compulsory education has had an important and positive role in the access of economically disadvantaged groups to education, but it has not had an overall effect on their social mobility - education seems to reflect, more than transform, their disadvantaged position in society. Students from working classes have higher drop-out rates and less presence in post-compulsory levels. Not only is their access to higher education lower, but when they do complete vocational studies, these tend to be in less prestigious degrees.

Indigenous minorities

Defining which groups belong to this category presents some difficulties in the Spanish panorama due to the heterogeneity of its diverse communities. It can include some groups, like the Roma and the Berber (especially present in Spain's African territories of Ceuta and Melilla), and it is clearly related to a wider, trans-national group settling into Spain. But it could also be applied to historic communities, like the Basques, Galicians or Catalans, whose existence is prior to the Spanish nation-state and have a defined geographical and political marker: recognition as "nations" within a nation. Indeed, the differentiated identity of these communities is an un-resolved issue and periodically appears in public discourse and debate. Currently, the common denomination in Spain is not "indigenous" but "ethnic" minorities (especially the Roma), or, in more political and polemic terms "historic nationalities", especially for the Catalans and Basques.

Just as the public discourse and consideration of these communities vary, so does the official and normative attention that they receive towards their education rights. Through decentralisation, "historic nationalities" have been given the opportunity to get involved in decision relating to education policies, as well as to the official recognition of their languages, and are therefore not in a minority situation within their territories. However, those groups that do not enjoy this status, such as the Roma, do not receive special attention in the form of specific norms or compensatory policies. Until the 1980s, Roma children attended special, separate schools (called *"escuelas puente"*) where their culture and values were transmitted but there was no integration with non-Roma students resulting in a "ghetto" situation.

From 1983 on, most of these schools disappeared and Roma students were incorporated into "mainstream" schools, where – Roma analysts claim - "normality", "diversity" and "deficiency" are defined from an ethnocentric perspective, and minorities are forced to adapt themselves to the uses and traditions of the majority culture. Roma students are frequently stigmatised as deficient pupils coming from a marginal culture (there is an underlying concept of "transmitted" deficiencies leading to academic failure) and sent to compensatory classes (see Abajo Alcalde 1997, 1998; Abajo Alcalde and Carrasco 2004; Anta Féliz 1994; Associación de Enseñantes con Gitanos 1991, 1996; Fernández Enguita 1999).

Linguistic minorities

The analysis of Spain's linguistic minorities is quite problematic, especially due to the linguistic diversity which can be found in Spain and the heterogeneous official and social status that these languages enjoy within the diverse regions. We have to consider, first, that the country is organised as a "nation of nations" (this term is currently at the centre of a long political debate), composed by autonomous regions, many of them with their own language. There are a total of five co-official languages (which are legally recognised along with Spanish), three popularly recognised languages which are not legally recognised (but have regional support) and five existent minority language groups with a minimum of 3000 speakers (Mercator Media 2007).

The significant growth of immigrant population in the last decades, mostly coming from Africa - especially the Magreb (20 percent), South and Central America (50 percent) and Europe - mostly eastern countries (25 percent), makes this panorama even more complex (MEC 2004, 2005). Some public schools, especially those with a high concentration of immigrant population, count up to 30 mother languages among their students (MEC 2004, 2005). To further add to this complexity, the question of whether the different languages are conceptualised as minority languages vary considerably according to the geographical location where the analysis is set. For example, Catalan may be considered a minority language in the rest of Spain, while in Catalonia it is the main language used in schools (at least at primary school level) and the students who are not familiar

with it will be at a disadvantage.

The incorporation of the mother language in the instruction of minority language pupils – important for cultural and identity meaning, and for its role in the acquisition of a new language - is another delicate issue where, according to many centres, good intentions often clash with limited resources to finance teacher training or specialised language teachers. Similarly, the Spanish government has specific bilateral agreements with other countries, such as the "ELCO" with Morocco, designed to promote the teaching of the Arabic language and Moroccan culture (Pleiades 2007). But the effectiveness of the programme is conditioned by the funds that are provided by the partner country, often of a limited size since these governments prefer to support education within their own country first. Thus, these programmes are mostly supported by volunteers (Losada Campo 1990, 1992; Moreras 1996).

Gender and sexuality

All public schools in Spain and many private centres are co-educational, although there are also a number of single-sex schools, at primary, secondary and higher education levels. These are private institutions and are usually -but not always- run by religious orders. In the Spanish education legislation, there is no specific measure that promotes gender equality; mostly, expressions such as "male and female students…" can be found in legal texts when referring to the education community. However, there are no specific policies aimed at ensuring the rights of groups discriminated on the basis of gender or on the basis of sexual orientation.

However, on a more general basis, some measures have been used to promote gender equality. Although they are not specific educational policies, these measures do have implications for equality of men and women in the Spanish society in relation to education. An example is the IV Plan for Equality of Opportunities between Women and Men 2003-2006 (Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades entre Mujeres y Hombres, 2003–2006). The Ministry of Work and Social Affairs and the Women's Institute are responsible for this plan which is based on two fundamental principles: promoting the defence of and guaranteeing the principles of equality in all activities and policies through "mainstreaming" and through "cooperation".

The plan identifies 8 main points of action:
- Introduction of a gender perspective in public policies
- Gender equality (economic issues)
- Equality in decision-making
- Promotion of quality of life for women
- Equality in citizenship (civil life)
- Transmission of values
- Conciliation of work and home life
- Cooperation between NGOs and public institutions

The following actions are specific to the Ministry of Education:
- creation of and recognition of degrees in gender studies (eg Masters)
- promotion of women in universities, at postgraduate level and as researchers
- increase the proportion of women studying technical subjects at university level
- provide continued education for unemployed women.

The visibility of gender and gender discrimination through specific policies is a rather recent issue in the Spanish public agenda in general. Only since the late 1990s has gender violence - predominantly against women - become a matter of public concern and the subject of several official campaigns. In 2004 the new Socialist government promoted the first law dealing with this

problem. The law emphasizes the vital role of education for preventing this violence and overcoming sexism. Several studies (see for instance González Paredes 2006) have shown a worrying degree of sexist ideas among Spanish youths: 33 percent of teenage girls do not consider violence within a couple to be sexual abuse; 23 percent of teenage boys consider women inferior and 53 percent think that female infidelity requires severe reprisal. On a different note, Spanish women make up 54 percent of Higher Education student profile (Heredero Muñoz 2005) and their presence is quite frequent in media representation, just as professional women are becoming more common in television series, interviews and news articles.

Regarding sexual orientation, the fact that Spain has made homosexual marriage legal in 2005 has had indirect ramifications. The presence of homosexuals in the media is becoming more common, and there are social programmes that promote education and tolerance in this area. However, no specific administrative education policy appears to deal with this subject.

Religious minorities

One of the main objectives of the first democratic government was to separate education from the Catholic domination that it experienced under General Franco. According to the 1978 Constitution, Spain is a non-confessional state, and religious education is an optional course, whose take-up is decided by the student's parents. This change has meant that the conditions of religious education have changed in the last decades. Different laws have established variations regarding the voluntary or compulsory character of these classes, as well as their confessional or non-confessional character and the hegemony of Catholicism or the presence of other denominations. Further complications derive from the growing presence of immigrants, raising the question of how children with diverse religions can have their right to religious education in different denominations and religions guaranteed.

Considering this context, the latest education law (LOE 2006) makes an explicit reference to which other religions – besides Catholicism - may be taught. These possibilities are subject to agreements between the Spanish State and religious communities (such as the *Federación de Entidades Religiosas Evangélicas de España, Federación de Comunidades Israelitas de España o la Comisión Islámica de España).* However, even though these agreements may aim at achieving equality of opportunities for all believers to learn about their religions, critics complain that, in practical terms, it implies an unequal situation towards those beliefs because, due to their current limited extension in Spain, these religions are unable to compete with bigger communities for official recognition. Critics also argue that the possibilities of arranging agreements with the State for teaching resources are difficult and costly (see report by ATMAN foundation, report IoE 2001).

The question of religious rights – religious dress in public schools, the building of temples and mosques - has been fore grounded in mass media. Indeed, the latest education bill that makes religion optional has created considerable polemic and debate between conservative and progressive spheres of society, exacerbated by the attention of the mass media.

3. Explanation of project summaries included in database

A range of programmes, projects or initiatives taken by local agents to address educational disadvantage is included in the project summary database (see EPASI webpage http://www.epasi.eu). In order to select the projects to be included, the Spanish research team first elicited advice and proposals from experts in education policies **-** specifically experts within the thematic fields covered in this report- in the format of a preliminary survey. In the survey, the experts were asked to recommend policies and/or measures they considered relevant or they felt had

made an impact in one or more of the thematic areas. More than 100 requests for collaboration were sent out; however the response rate was extremely low (this lack of interest is perhaps indicative of the general lack of coordination and hesitance in sharing information between different special interest groups in Spanish education). This poor collaboration from experts implied searching for other selection criteria. Thus, it was decided that selection would include already established experts' recognition, eg prizes, positive external evaluations, official mentions, etc. An attempt was made to try to cover all seven groups described above and in some cases, projects and/or programmes were selected that covered more than one group.

Further criteria included projects, programmes or policies that encompassed a variable range of sizes, organisations, etc. (balance between "macro" measures – administrative policies, legal norms - and concrete "micro" cases or applications). Social recognition of some projects or of the actors/institutions that have been implemented was another criteria employed, as well as an attempt to cover the spectrum of different educational stages and modes: pre-school stages, formal school stages, informal and extracurricular programmes, higher and continued education (programmes aimed at entry and student retention in higher education).

Finally, the question of whether the projects were up-to-date served as criteria – projects that had been recently implemented (most of them still in progress) or in some cases, projects that were in their design-implementation stage. Geographic distribution in order to achieve a balanced perspective of the different Spanish regions was also a factor in selection.

4. A summary of educational disadvantage in Spain today

Despite the highly significant progress which can be found in the projects outlined as good practice in the projects highlighted here, it is apparent that educational inequalities persist. These are considered below in relation to the seven indicators considered in all the project country reports:
- literacy levels
- exclusion/expulsion rates
- attainment levels at end of compulsory education.
- continuing in education post compulsory leaving age
- participation rate in higher education
- employment rates
- evidence of social exclusion and being bullied.

It should be noted that conclusive and/or reliable data was not always available in relation to these indicators for all disadvantaged groups. In national reports about education outcomes, the percentage of non-native students enrolled in schools throughout Spain were usually given, however, outcomes of language, mathematics or science attainment were not broken down into different social sectors or other markers, apart from gender.

In the PISA 2006 report, it was found that in all of the different autonomous regions of Spain, the overall results of immigrant students was lower than for the other students, reaching a difference of as much as 70 points. It also pointed out that in Spain those from privileged socio-economic groups tended to perform better in the test, although there was no really significant difference between those in private and public schools. While these results are not a direct assessment of **literacy levels**, it can be assumed that they are in some way related to the attained **literacy level** of the students.

A further discriminatory practice related to **literacy** has been identified in the Autonomous City of Melilla. According to information provided by the Spanish Government, a dialect of Berber

("Chelha") is spoken by a significant minority in the city of Melilla, probably amounting to 25 percent of the total population. Apart from this, there have been no attempts to teach or use Tamazight within the official education system and the Spanish Government has not created any inspectorate or controlling body in relation to the teaching of Tamazight, thus effectively forcing a large population of the Autonomous city of Melilla to attend basic education in their second language (Committee on the Rights of the Child, UHRI 2004). A similar situation exists in Ceuta.

Similarly, explicit data on **exclusion or expulsion** from school was not found, however, studies show a relatively low "school life expectancy" among working class students after compulsory education (INCE 2003). Likewise, according to a report by the Universal Human Rights Index Committee (UHRI 2008), one in four Roma students leave school early and tend to have more difficulties in employment throughout life. In the same report, the committee expressed concern about differences between the balance of subjects for non-native students who are often 'tracked' into vocational routes, resulting in an institutionalised **exclusion** from alternative, more academic routes.

In a similar vein, participation rate in higher education in Spain is not extremely high, with less than 30 percent of the Spanish population attaining **tertiary education**. At the same time, the demand for skilled jobs is around 35 percent of the population. On the whole, **employment** of youth in Spain is problematic, with almost 66 percent of youth employed on temporary contracts. This is especially true of women, which are more likely to be on temporary contracts (3 points higher) compared to the OECD average (OECD 2006). Although data on unemployment of specific population groups was not located, data from the Spanish Case Study 3, young immigrants between the ages of 16 and 18 represented 31 percent of the people who participated in the *Occupational Training and Job Placement Plan for Youth* during 2006-2007 (Dooly and Vallejo 2008:4). This may indicate that a significant number of youth from this population have difficulties in finding employment. This is further exacerbated by problems with legal situations since many immigrant youth have few problems getting student visas but run into legal barriers when applying for a work permit.

The number of Spanish students in **continued education** has increased between 1999 and 2005, however, despite this increase, reports show that Spain is falling behind other EU countries as far as **early school leaving** and now has one of the highest rates for early school leavers (index of 29.1 in PISA report). At the same time, the Human Rights Index Committee has expressed concern over the **high drop-out rates and registered absences** of Roma children in primary schools, as well as the low number of both Roma and migrant pupils **completing higher education** (UHRI 2004 CERD/C/304/ADD.95)

The PISA report indicates that in Spain, **levels of graduation in secondary education** for females exceed those of males by more than ten percentage points (this refers to graduation of two years of **post-compulsory education**). A breakdown of the profile of students continuing in post-compulsory education was not available, apart from gender descriptors. However, significantly, despite higher female graduate levels following post-compulsory education, the proportion of females choosing science studies (including life sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, computing, engineering, manufacturing, construction and agriculture) is below 25 percent in tertiary education for particular subjects.

In the previously mentioned report by the Human Rights Index the Committee expressed concern about evidence of **social exclusion** of non-native students, predominantly in the form of being bullied (The Universal Human Rights Index 2004). Incidences of physical assault on immigrant students were cited.

5. Discussion: Significant policies, programmes or projects designed to address educational disadvantage

One of the first factors which stands out in this preliminary review is the general lack of interest or cooperation from those experts, politicians and professionals involved in the very creation or implementation of the policies we were looking to describe. Our preliminary survey was addressed to more than 100 persons and/or institutions, and the response rate was below 10 percent. As a result, in addition to including the recommendations received from the experts who did respond, it was also necessary to seek other criteria for the selection of the policies to be incorporated in this overview, considering the vast amount of national and regional policies, grassroots initiatives, individual school programmes and projects, etc. Thus, previous recognition in the form of regional, national or international awards, prizes, or financial aide was also a criteria incorporated into the first selection of examples included here.

Moreover, in the preliminary survey, the categorisation of the themes/groups established in the tables has presented difficulties for the Spanish, due to the differences in the use of the concepts in Spain. When asking the experts to "label" their recommendations, all the projects and policies referring to Roma pupils were labelled as "minority ethnic groups", putting them in the same category as recent immigrants, such as pupils from Africa or Latin America. Conceptually, it seems that in Spain both communities appear to be categorised under the same concept despite their significant differences: newly arrived groups from foreign countries as compared to members of minority ethnic groups that have inhabited Spain for centuries. Also, experts have included policies concerning other long-term established communities in the country - such as the Berbers, who are settled mostly in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla – as linguistic minorities rather than under policies for "minority ethnic groups". This is so, despite the fact that Berber speakers are the majority in Melilla (approximately 80,000 inhabitants) and the minority in Ceuta – both provinces of Spain and the point of origin of many immigrants into the mainland. Finally, but perhaps, most problematically, the label "indigenous minorities" is not used in Spain. It is not used for either long-time settled communities (eg gypsies), nor for the "national" communities that make up a significant portion of the country, such as the Basques or Catalans.

A further difficulty lies in accessing information about the costs of the projects or programmes. This information has been systematically absent; although it is not clear whether this is due to the prevalent lack of economic funds in many Spanish education compensatory actions, or to socio-cultural reasons, the merit of many of the projects – according to the experts responsible for their positive evaluation - lies precisely in the ability of those in charge to carry them out without significant resources.

Other factors which have emerged in this preliminary overview can lead to the following conclusions. In Spain, civil society - individual actors, non-lucrative institutions - play a fundamental role in the creation and implementation of compensatory "good practices" aimed at marginalised groups. This role includes financing – often through "un-official" means such as prizes, community collaboration, volunteers, etc. The role schools and teachers have in implementing their own initiatives are also highlighted in this overview, implying that opportunities and autonomy to take this initiative is an effective means to promoting new policies. Inevitably, the need for more support from the public administrations – including economic support - in order to assure the continuity of these "good practices" and extend them to other schools is made manifest.

The lack of easily accessible information about "references" and "evaluation" for many of the projects and initiatives mentioned here has also become apparent. Of course, it can be argued that the lack of scientific or official evaluation was somewhat compensated by the allocation of prizes, awards or by public recognition. Many of the projects do include some protocol for their future

evaluation - usually in very detailed and specific terms -, but there are no available results that prove that these parameters have been really applied. When some information regarding the evaluation is available, it tends to have a more informal, observational style versus a systematic and quantitative approach.

A brief analysis of the policies discussed in this report highlights a correlation between the active participation of different members of society in the policies and initiatives and the official/non-official character of the policies. The projects implemented by official institutions and administrations generally lack the participation of the groups they are aimed to, leaving the at-risk group members and their families in the position of receivers. While civil-based initiatives (in many cases proposed and enacted in order to compensate the lack of official policies) are usually implemented precisely by members of the target-sector of the community. For example, heritage language, religion and culture classes are often run by members of that particular community and are held outside of school hours.

Another important factor to emphasise in this brief analysis is the relevance of a "culturally associative" society. Historically, schools, teachers and voluntary associations have provided integrative measures which do not receive specific funding. This may be due to problems dealing with centralised, heavily bureaucratic government entities, combined with a tradition of nuclear communities. Nonetheless, whatever the socio-historic tradition behind these initiatives, it is clear that the Spanish government promulgates this type of activity by publicly recognising (and providing token financial aide to) projects which display individual initiative, volunteerism and some degree of success despite the lack of funding.

The de-centralisation of the Spanish government resulting in a transfer of control over educational policies to the regional governments inevitably underlines the different attitudes of the regions towards different particular groups and issues. For instance, the focus of educational policies in Extremadura is directed towards socio-economic equality and improvement of rural areas, seemingly in parallel to the characteristics of the community itself which is principally rural and poor. In contrast, in Catalonia, the educational policies are aimed at ethnic minorities, indigenous groups and linguistic minorities, due to the high rate of immigration to the region and subsequent cultural diversity.

Despite these regional differences, there are some general tendencies which can be observed. For instance, the visibility of certain groups versus the invisibility of other groups can be noted. This can be seen in the lack of policies aimed at social or economic needs of "national communities" (Basques, Catalans) whereas the number of policies and initiatives for "non-territorial" members (immigrants from other countries) is quite high. Moreover, the policies tend to have an 'assimilationist' approach of integrating the "other" through majority language classes and "cultural training" of the host country. These initiatives are compulsory and carried out during the school hours, whereas the initiatives to teach heritage language and culture are usually limited to after-school hours or weekends (and do not usually cover more than two hours per week). Sexual orientation can also be problematised as a largely "invisible" disadvantage. For example, while bullying is beginning to be considered as an issue sufficiently important to merit new policies and laws, bullying of homosexuals is not usually considered.

Likewise, measures aimed at religious minorities are "invisible" throughout Spain, with the exception of the LOE – which has raised a polemic concerning the reform of the conditions of religious education in compulsory education. In other issues of religion – many of which have raised considerable debate in other European countries are practically null in Spain, eg the question

of religious symbols in schools[3]. In a similar vein, the needs of religious denominations, apart from Catholicism, must be covered by the religious communities themselves with their own resources.

On the whole, there appears to be an extensive use of "integrative" discourse albeit without specifications of what this discourse encompasses. There is a wide spectrum of policies and projects based on an ideology of "interculturality" and "values" without any clear outline of what this signifies, how successful "intercultural education" can be assessed, nor how it should be integrated into an overall concept of quality education for all.

Just as the above discussion underscores, educational policies and practices are often quite disparate. It is clear that many different sectors, both private and public, are engaged in working towards equality and equal educational outcomes. At the same time, it should be made clear that education alone cannot resolve social inequalities and there is a danger in placing too much emphasis on local, regional and national education agencies to do so. It may be more productive to focus on ways to continue supporting positive and effective initiatives such as those outlined in this report and in the database as well as drawing from these experiences in order to build on these and design new ways to confront the challenges of educational and social inequalities.

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[3] Notably, just as the final version of this report was being edited, an incident involving forced removal of crucifixes from schools in one of the autonomous regions of Spain was highlighted in national news.

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Appendix 1: Project summaries

Theme	Project	Database Code	Subsidiary themes
Minority ethnic groups	Trip around books Project	218	
	School support/reinforcement programme	219	L
	Young Guides Programme (Buddy system)	220	
Socio-economic	Attended study	221	E
	Extremadura's educational policy on Communication and Information Technologies (ICT)	222	
	Catalonia's national pact for education (socio-economic measures)	223	
	Exit Project [Case Study nº2]	225	ERLDIG
	Occupational training and job placement plan for youth [Case Study nº3]	226	ERLDIG
	Transforming schools into "Learning communities" [Case Study nº4]	227	ERLDIG
Religious Minorities	LOE (Education Organic Law 2/2006): measures concerning religion and citizenship education	215	
	Religions in the world (Materials for a lay/non-confessional teaching of world religions in the framework of "The Atman Methodology for Intercultural Education and Training")	216	
	Three cultures project	217	
Linguistic Minorities	Maternal language instruction for Tamazight (berber) children in Catalonia	209	I
	Arabic in the school yards	210	
	Learning to produce intercultural goods with mass media (ICT)	211	I-C
Disabilities	CREDA: Educational resources centres for hearing disabilities	204	
	Bikes for everyone! from strolling in a wheelchair to strolling in adapted bikes, tricycles and tandems	205	
	ONCE Foundation (Blind Persons National Organisation)	206	
Indigenous Minorities	Plan for Roma community pupils	207	
	School attendance promoters	208	C
Gender	Coeducation programmes in educational centres	212	
	Coeducation Project	213	
	Galician Government's policy for teacher training on gender violence prevention (in the framework of the Galician Law for gender violence prevention and treatment)	214	
All	City Educational Project –PEC [Case Study nº1]	224	ECRLDIG

Key: E ethnic minorities; C Socio-economic; R religious minorities; L linguistic minorities; D disability; I indigenous minorities; G gender

Appendix 2: Project overview

✓✓Indicates main theme addressed
✓Indicates additional themes also addressed

Project	Target age range					Target theme(s)						
	pre-school	primary	Second-ary	higher	working life	minority ethnic	Socio-economic	religious minority	linguistic minorities	disability	indigenous minorities	gender
Trip around books Project	✓	✓				✓✓						
School support/reinforcement programme		✓	✓			✓✓			✓			
Young Guides Programme (Buddy system)			✓			✓✓						
Attended study	✓	✓	✓				✓✓		✓			
Extremadura's educational policy on Communication and Information Technologies (ICT)	✓	✓	✓				✓✓					
Catalonia's national pact for education (socio-economic measures)		✓	✓				✓✓					
Exit Project [Case Study nº2]			✓				✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Occupational training and job placement plan for youth [Case Study nº3]			✓	✓			✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transforming schools into "Learning communities" [Case Study nº4]	✓	✓					✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LOE (Education Organic Law 2/2006): measures concerning religion and citizenship education		✓	✓						✓✓			
Religions in the world			✓					✓✓				
Three cultures project		✓	✓					✓✓				
Maternal language instruction for Tamazight (berber) children in Catalonia		✓	✓						✓✓		✓	
Arabic in the school yards	✓	✓							✓✓			
Learning to produce intercultural goods with mass media (ICT)	✓	✓					✓		✓✓		✓	

Initiative												
[CREDA: Educational resources centres for hearing disabilities](#)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓✓		
[Bikes for everyone! from strolling in a wheelchair to strolling in adapted bikes, tricycles and tandems](#)	✓	✓								✓✓		
[ONCE Foundation (Blind Persons National Organisation)](#)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓✓		
[Plan for Roma community pupils](#)		✓	✓								✓✓	
[School attendance promoters](#)		✓	✓				✓				✓✓	
[Coeducation programmes in educational centres](#)	✓	✓	✓									✓✓
[Coeducation Project](#)		✓	✓									✓✓
[Galician Government's policy for teacher training on gender violence prevention (in the framework of the Galician Law for gender violence prevention and treatment)](#)				✓								✓✓
[City Educational Project –PEC](#) [Case Study nº1]	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓