EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK

SPAIN

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

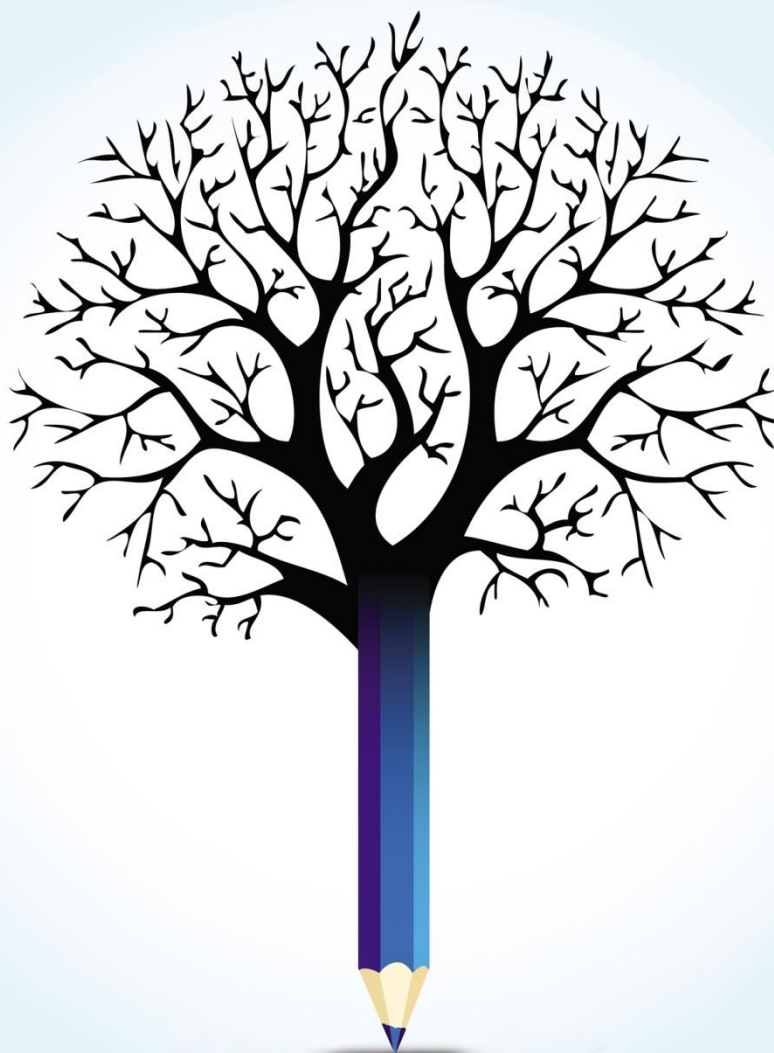April 2014

EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK

This **policy profile on education** in Spain is part of the new *Education Policy Outlook* series, which will present comparative analysis of education policies and reforms across OECD countries. Building on the substantial comparative and sectorial policy knowledge base available within the OECD, the series will result in a biennial publication (first volume in 2014). It will develop a comparative outlook on education policy by providing: a) analysis of individual countries' educational context, challenges and policies (education policy profiles) and of international trends and b) comparative insight on policies and reforms on selected topics.

Designed **for policy makers, analysts and practitioners** who seek information and analysis of education policy taking into account the importance of national context, the country policy profiles will offer constructive analysis of education policy in a comparative format. Each profile will review the current context and situation of the country's education system and examine its challenges and policy responses, according to six policy levers that support improvement:

- Students: How to raise outcomes for all in terms of 1) equity and quality and 2) preparing students for the future

- Institutions: How to raise quality through 3) school improvement and 4) evaluation and assessment

- System: How the system is organised to deliver education policy in terms of 5) governance and 6) funding.

Some country policy profiles will contain spotlight boxes on selected policy issues. They are meant to draw attention to specific policies that are promising or showing positive results and may be relevant for other countries.

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Sources: This country profile draws on OECD indicators from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the Survey of Adult Skills and the annual publication *Education at a Glance*, and refers to country and thematic studies such as OECD work on early childhood education and care, teachers, school leadership, evaluation and assessment for improving school outcomes, equity and quality in education, governing complex education systems, vocational education and training, and tertiary education.

Most of the figures quoted in the different sections refer to Annex B, which presents a table of the main indicators for the different sources used throughout the country profile. Hyperlinks to the reference publications are included throughout the text for ease of reading, and also in the References and further reading section, which lists both OECD and non-OECD sources.

More information is available from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills (www.oecd.org/edu) and its web pages on Education Policy Outlook (www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm).

For further information, you are invited to contact the OECD's Education Policy Outlook Team (EDUPolicyTeam@oecd.org).

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Spain's educational context

Students: For 15-year-old students in Spain, achievement has remained below the OECD average over the years, while the impact of socio-economic background on mathematics performance is slightly above the OECD average, according to PISA. Spanish 16-24 year-olds are more proficient than the overall adult population, but perform below the average of their peers in other countries participating in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills. Spain has close to 100% enrolment in early childhood education and comprehensive education for all students until age 16. Grade repetition hampers equity and completion; enrolment in VET is lower than the OECD average; and dropout rates from upper secondary education are high among students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Tertiary enrolment and attainment have increased to the OECD average. Those with lower educational attainment are particularly affected by unemployment, more than in most OECD countries. Also, youth unemployment has risen sharply, with almost 25% of Spain's youth population neither employed, nor in education or training in 2011.

Institutions: Spanish learning environments are positive, according to the views of 15-year-old students. The ratio of students per teacher is below the OECD average at all levels of education. Principals are elected or selected from among teaching staff and follow a short training course. They tend to focus more on administrative tasks than pedagogical leadership. Salaries for teachers are competitive in relation to workers with similar experience. Spanish teachers have access to professional development, but appraisal opportunities seem less common for teachers in Spain than for their counterparts in other countries. Evaluation and assessment is organised partly at the central government level (in co-ordination with regions) and partly at the regional level.

Governance and funding: The education system is steered by national and regional education ministries, with the national level defining the overall framework and guidelines. Education objectives are aligned to EU 2020 priorities. Most schooling decisions are taken at the regional level and to a lesser extent by the central government, with limited autonomy for individual schools. Funding is determined and mainly distributed by the regional governments. Although public funding has seen some reductions due to the economic crisis, expenditure per student continues to be above the OECD average.

Key policy issues

Spanish system-level policies such as grade repetition have the potential to impair equity and contribute to student dropout. High dropout and youth unemployment rates require efforts to consolidate basic skills and better match labour market needs, focusing on quality of education and provision of vocational education and training. At the same time, quality of teachers and school leadership can be improved through more targeted initial and continuing training. Schools require sustained support to respond to the rapid and large increase in the proportion of immigrant children they have experienced. Given the on-going crisis and recent budget cuts, Spain faces a major challenge as it strives to continue delivering and raising the quality of education and skills. This is especially important for more disadvantaged groups, because higher education attainment and skills generally translate into greater labour force participation and higher wages.

Recent policy responses

Spain aims to promote education improvement, mainly through a new law, the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa*, LOMCE, 2013). Among its main measures are greater autonomy for schools, new preventive diagnostic testing in primary education, more vocational pathways starting in the final years of lower secondary education, and exit exams in lower and upper secondary education.

To reduce dropout, a range of targeted programmes is available, and a new dual VET system (2012) combines training with employment in companies.

In Spain, the performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics, reading and science was just below the OECD average in PISA 2012 and has remained unchanged over the years. The proportion of low performers in mathematics (23.6%) has also remained unchanged since 2003 (23%) and is around the OECD average (22.2%). In PISA 2012, the impact of socio-economic background on mathematics performance of 15-year-old students in Spain (15.8%) was slightly above the OECD average (14.8%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics, relationship between student performance and economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) (PISA 2012) and performance of adults in literacy (PIAAC)
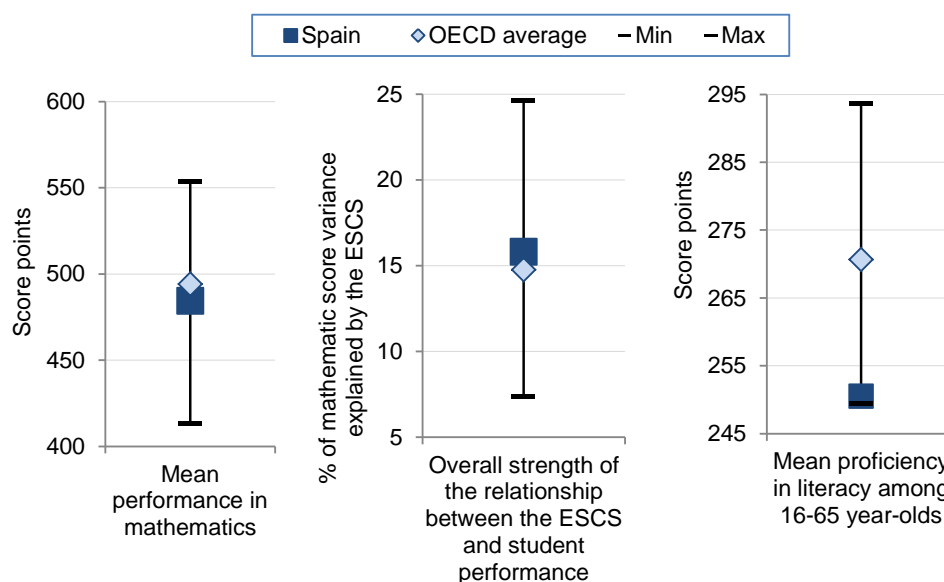
Source: OECD (2014), *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do (Volume I, Revised edition, February 2014): Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208780-en; OECD (2013), *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264204256-en.

In 2011, the proportion of Spain's population with at least an upper secondary qualification remained below the OECD average for 25-34 year-olds (65% compared to 82%), despite a significant increase (by 10 percentage points between 2000 and 2011). In 2011, the tertiary attainment rate for 25-34 year-olds was at the OECD average of 39%, also an increase (Figure 2). Overall, the attainment level of the population has improved since 2000 as the proportion of 25-64 year-olds with below upper secondary education attainment has decreased.

Figure 2. Upper secondary and tertiary attainment for 25-34 year-olds, 2011
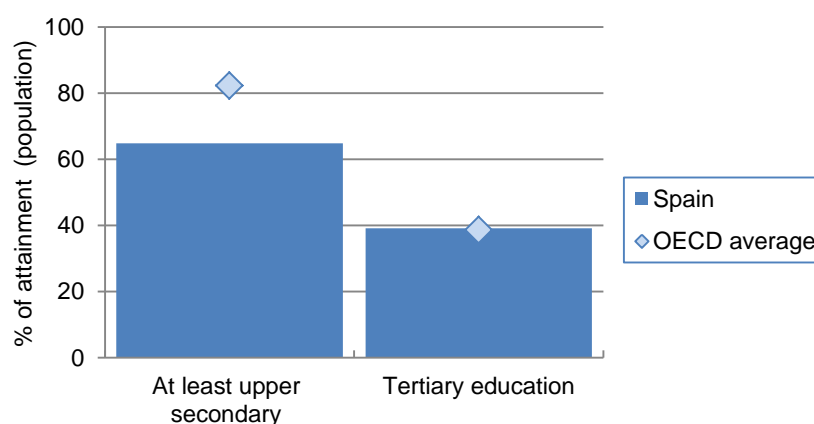
Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en.

EQUITY AND QUALITY: EARLY START IN EDUCATION BUT BARRIERS TO EQUITY AND HIGH DROPOUT RATE

Spain's performance has remained just below the OECD average level between 2003 and 2012 according to PISA, but inequities appear to be rising. Almost one in four students (23.6%) were below proficiency Level 2 in mathematics in PISA 2012 (Figure 3), close to the OECD average of 22.2%. The variation in performance explained by students' socio-economic background has increased by 3 percentage points to 15.8% in 2012, above the OECD average. Differences in performance between schools in Spain were much smaller than the OECD average, but differences within schools and across regions were larger than the OECD average. Spanish students perform better in mathematics, reading and science than in problem solving.

Fair and inclusive policies aiming to achieve an equitable system include early childhood education and care and comprehensive education until the age of 16. With close to 100% enrolment for 3-5 year-olds, Spain has one of the highest **early childhood education** enrolment rates among OECD countries. Early childhood education is provided by the government, although 25% of pre-primary students are enrolled in government-dependent private schools and 11% in independent private institutions.

Some system-level policies in Spain favour equity, but others, such as grade repetition, can hinder it. Comprehensive education until the end of lower secondary education allows temporary grouping of students by ability in core subjects such as mathematics or language. The proportion of students enrolled in privately managed schools is above the OECD average. While this can widen inequities, policies to promote more balanced distribution are in place to ensure that students with low socio-economic status have opportunities to attend their preferred school. Grade repetition is also largely used: about one out of three students (35%) have repeated a grade at least once by age 15. Evidence across OECD countries in an OECD study on equity and quality in education shows that grade repetition is ineffective in improving outcomes, can contribute to dropout and can be costly to the system. Furthermore, about 30% of students in lower secondary education in Spain do not graduate with the certificate necessary to access upper secondary education. To promote student success and prevent dropout, it is key to develop measures to address students' learning gaps during the school year, to build teachers' capacity to diagnose and address these gaps, and to provide the support teachers need to do this.

In Spain, the proportion of **students with an immigrant background** increased from 3% in 2003 to 10% in 2012, and second-generation immigrant students have higher performance than first generation migrants. Schools have faced a significant challenge integrating this large increase of immigrant students into their classrooms. Disadvantaged schools in Spain generally have more or better resources than the OECD average. Schools with a higher percentage of disadvantaged students have had access to additional resources for teacher training, additional education programmes and translation services. Despite these efforts, Spanish data shows that dropout is more concentrated among students of low socio-economic background.

The challenge: Eliminating system-level policies that hinder equity, such as grade repetition, and preventing early dropout.

Recent policies and practices

The Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa*, LOMCE, 2013), aims to increase flexibility in lower secondary education and improve the transition into upper secondary vocational programmes (see Spotlight 1).

Several national plans aim to improve equity in education and social inclusion: the National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence 2013-2016 (*Plan Estratégico Nacional de Infancia y Adolescencia*) and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2013-2016 (*Plan Nacional de Acción para la Inclusión Social*), and the Programmes for Reinforcement, Guidance and Support (*Programas de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo*, 2005, modified in 2010), which provide resources to education institutions to address inequalities and social exclusion.

Efforts to reduce early school leaving have been ongoing. The Programme to reduce early dropout in education and training *(Programa para la reducción del abandono temprano de la educación y la formación,* 2008) which provides funding for preventive measures, has *shown a small impact* on reducing dropout. More recently, the National Reform Plan 2013, which lays out objectives to meet the European Union 2020 strategy, proposes to reduce dropout rates to 15% by 2020.

Figure 3. Percentage of low and top performers and performance difference between non-immigrant and immigrant students in mathematics (PISA 2012)

Spotlight 1. Efforts to strengthen the quality of education and prevent dropout
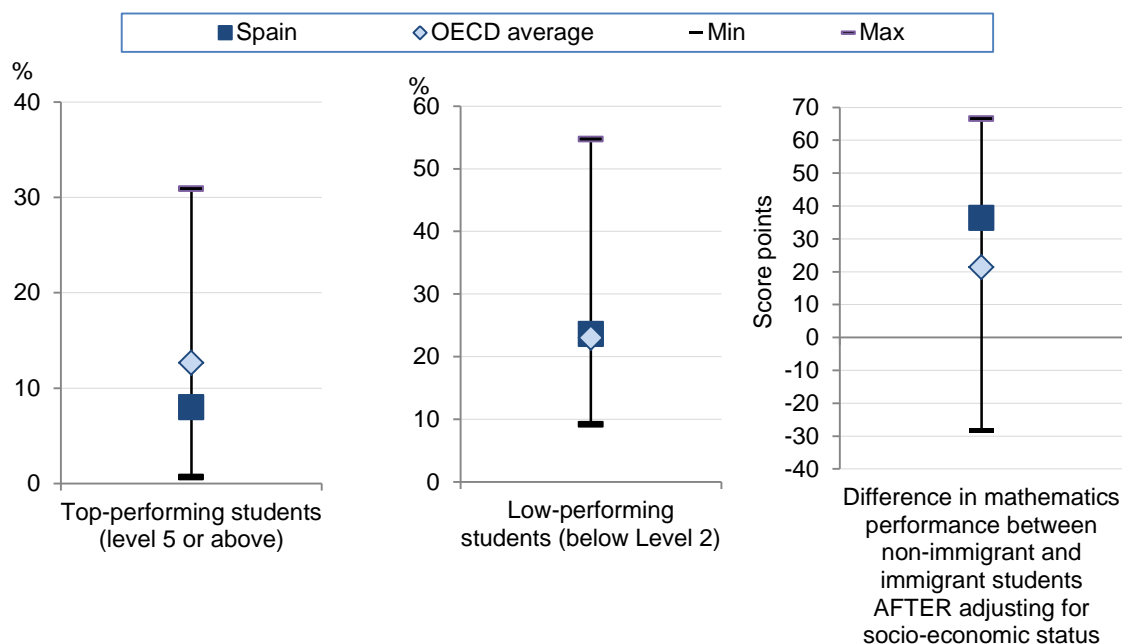
A new reform in process of implementation, the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa*, LOMCE, 2013), proposes to introduce greater flexibility in student pathways at age 15 instead of 16, ease the transition into upper secondary vocational education programmes, provide more autonomy to schools and school leaders, and strengthen external student assessments. To be implemented starting in September 2014, the reform is wide-ranging:

- It aims to define core common basic education throughout the country while taking into account the special requirement of regional governments. Together with evaluations for the entire national territory, the aim is to tackle the large differences among regions.

- It introduces a new Diploma on Basic VET which lasts two years for students between 15 and 17, ends with a professional certificate and gives access to Intermediate Level VET (*ciclos formativos de Formación Profesional*). Students can also take the final examinations to obtain one of the two diplomas in Compulsory Secondary Education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*, ESO).

- It establishes greater autonomy for schools in schedule, content and pedagogical approaches and will allow further autonomy in co-operation with the regional administrations.

- It modifies the selection process for school leaders to require candidates to have taken a specialised training course, to value previous experience and to consider candidates from any school (in the past, priority was given to internal school candidates).

- It introduces external assessments at the end of each stage of education. The tests will be for diagnostic purposes only in primary education, and high stakes in lower and upper secondary education.

Under this reform, students in the last year of lower secondary education can choose either general academic courses or more vocationally oriented courses that combine academics with specific training in one or more professional profiles. At the end of the year, students can take either the academic or the vocational examination, leading to a diploma that will give them access to their chosen pathway, either Baccalaureate or vocational education and training (VET).

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE: HIGHER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT FOR BETTER LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

The capacity of education systems to effectively develop **skills and labour market perspectives** can play an important role in the educational decisions of young people. Spain has one of the lowest average levels of skills in 16-64 year-olds among countries participating in OECD's Survey of Adult Skills. Young adults (16-24 years-olds) have higher proficiency levels in skills than the average for adults, but they perform below the average of their peers in other countries. Spain has also one of the highest percentages (16.8%) of over-skilled workers (in relation to the work they do) among the countries participating in the Survey of Adult Skills. Unemployment in Spain has sharply increased with the economic crisis. Those with below upper secondary education and younger age groups were the hardest hit: 26.4% of 25-64 year-olds without upper secondary education were unemployed in 2011, compared to 11.6% of the same age group with a tertiary degree. Between 2008 and 2011, unemployment for 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary qualification increased by nearly four times the OECD average (16 percentage points compared to 4.5 percentage points on average). At 24.4%, the share of Spanish 15-29 year-olds who are neither employed, nor in education or training (NEET) was one of the highest among OECD countries in 2011, much above the OECD average (Figure 4). Continuing to improve the quality of upper secondary education and vocational training can ensure completion and enhance individuals' skills and labour market outcomes.

More students enrol in general **upper secondary education** (55% in 2011) than in upper secondary vocational education and training (45%). The proportion of 25-34 year-olds with at least an upper secondary education in 2011 (65%) was below the OECD average (82%), but has improved compared to 2000 (55%). Only 8% of 25-64 year-olds had obtained a vocational secondary qualification in 2011, the lowest percentage among 27 OECD countries. The student dropout rate was 23.5% in 2013, nearly double the European Union average, and this has become a policy priority.

Vocational education and training (VET) can facilitate entry into the labour market. In Spain, VET is offered in upper secondary and tertiary education. To improve the system, Spain has recently sought to make access to post-secondary education more flexible and to align VET diplomas to individual competences defined by the Ministry of Labour (see below). In 2011, 53% of students graduated from pre-vocational and vocational programmes (compared to the OECD average of 47%), an increase compared to the rate in 2005 (36%, compared to the OECD average of 44%). Further actions to improve VET programmes can include increasing academic standards of the VET curriculum (literacy and numeracy), developing workplace training to facilitate transition into the labour market, ensuring that teachers and trainers have relevant field experience, and linking career guidance to labour market needs. A recent reform has introduced new measures (see Spotlight 1 and below).

Tertiary education has expanded rapidly in Spain. In 2011, 39% of 25-34 year-olds attained the tertiary level (around the OECD average of 38%). With increases since 1995, graduation rates in academic tertiary programmes (type A) in 2011 were 32%, below the OECD average (39%).Graduation rates are above the OECD average for technical tertiary programmes (18%, compared to OECD average of 11%). Adults with tertiary education can expect to earn 40% more than those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (below the OECD average of 57%). To improve the quality of tertiary education and student outcomes, it is important to develop a strategic vision for the future in collaboration with key stakeholders, and to ensure integration of the various tertiary sector options available to individuals.

The challenge: Aligning education and training to promote better links with the labour market.

Recent policies and practices

The Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa,* LOMCE, 2013) incorporates optional vocational pathways into the final year of lower secondary education from age 15 that aim to give access to high-level VET (see Spotlight 1).

A dual VET system, developed in 2012, combines training with employment in companies. The aim is to provide a professional qualification by harmonising teaching and learning processes between training institutions and workplaces. Basic requirements for the dual system are regulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (*Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte*), with implementation by regional governments. In only one year, the new system has doubled the number of students and companies. Measures to support tertiary education have also been introduced (see Spotlight 2).

Figure 4. Percentage of 15-29 year-olds in education and not in education, by educational attainment and work status, 2011
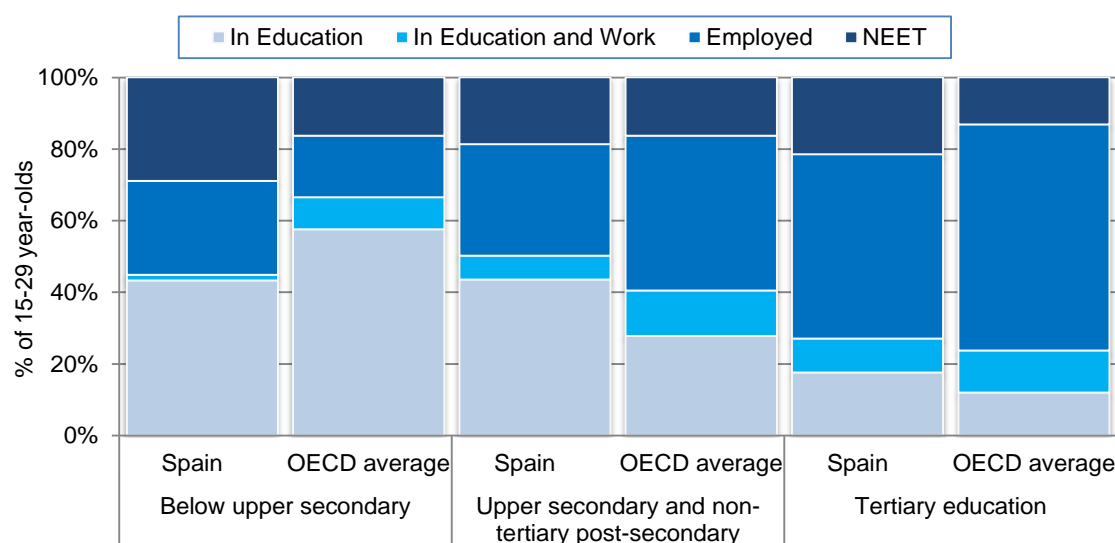
NEET: Neither Employed, nor in Education and Training
Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en.

Spotlight 2. Enhancing university education in Spain

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport has launched a dialogue with the university community and other education stakeholders on the reform of Spanish universities. This process started with the publication in 2013 of the Proposals for the reform and improvement of quality and efficiency of the Spanish university system (*Propuestas para la reforma y mejora de la calidad y eficiencia del sistema universitario español*), by the Experts' Commission for the Reform of the Spanish University System (*Comisión de Expertos para la Reforma del Sistema Universitario Español*). The proposals focus on five main aspects:

- governing bodies of the universities

- professors and academic career

- funding

- degrees and titles

- quality evaluation.

In addition, the Ministry has started publishing data on graduates' employment by type of university degree in order to build better knowledge on professional employment of university graduates in Spain.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: PEDAGOGICAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The key to raising achievement in schools in Spain is developing the conditions for school leaders and teachers to succeed. **School environments** are positive in Spain. In PISA 2012, about 87% of students reported that they feel happy at school (compared to the OECD average of 80%), and a large majority (93%) reported that they feel they belong at school (compared to the OECD average of 81%). Also, just 20% of 15-year-old students attend schools where the school principal reported that bullying hinders learning, below the OECD average of 32%. However, student responses indicate that classrooms are less conducive to learning than the OECD average (Figure 5). The ratio of students per teacher is below the OECD average at all levels of education. The annual number of days of instruction in compulsory education is below the OECD average (176 days in 2011, compared to the OECD average of 185 days in primary and lower secondary education), while the number of hours students are taught per year in primary and lower secondary schools is among the highest in OECD countries.

School leaders in Spain have had less autonomy in curricula and the use of resources than those in other OECD countries, as suggested by PISA 2012 (58% of students attend schools that play some role in determining which courses they offer, compared with 82% attending such schools across OECD countries). Principals focus more on administrative tasks than pedagogical leadership. They adapt the curriculum and co-ordinate the work of the leadership team, which includes the head teacher, head of studies and school administrators. School leaders hold temporary posts, are elected or designated by the education community from among the teaching staff, and since 2006 must follow a short initial training programme. Most school leaders continue to teach with a 5-12 hour reduction per week of their teaching time, which can limit their capacity to fulfil their role as pedagogical leaders. Their salaries are 20% higher than a teacher's salary and are defined by the regional governments according to type of education and size of the school. The new education law aims to give more autonomy to schools and school leaders (see below).

Teachers in Spain must complete a pre-service training programme (at least a bachelor's degree and, for secondary school teachers, a master's degree). There is a competitive examination to enter the profession and a teaching practicum can be required as well. The pedagogical preparation of Spanish future teachers appears to be better than their academic knowledge, according to a recent study on initial teacher training. Their annual teaching hours are higher than the OECD average, but average total working time is lower.

Professional development is accessible to teachers at all levels. Salaries are generally competitive, and for teachers with 15 years of experience, salaries are at least 20% higher than those of workers with similar education. These are among the highest levels in OECD countries, although salaries of primary and secondary school teachers were affected by the economic crisis. The age distribution of teachers in Spain is similar to the OECD average, with more than 50% of teachers in primary and secondary education over the age of 40. In 2011, 5.1% of teachers in secondary schools were 30 years old or younger, compared to 10.2% on average in OECD countries, suggesting challenges to entry into the teaching profession in Spain.

The challenge: Supporting teachers and school leaders to improve their professional capacity to respond to greater autonomy.

Recent policies and practices

The new education law (LOMCE, 2013, see Spotlight 1) establishes greater autonomy for schools and more decision-making capacities for school leaders in terms of curriculum and schedules, within a national framework.

Recruitment processes for school leaders have been modified to introduce a course requirement and to give candidates from different schools the same opportunity in selection processes.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport is developing a new information and communication technology (ICT) plan for schools (*Plan de Cultura Digital en la Escuela*), which comprises five main lines of action: school access to the Internet; standards for interoperability between management systems of different educational administrations and other systems and tools of the educational ecosystem (especially virtual learning environments); an Open Educational Resources (OER) platform (based on the existing Agrega 2 Project); a catalogue of commercial educational resources; and enhanced digital competence for teachers.

Figure 5. The learning environment (PISA 2012)
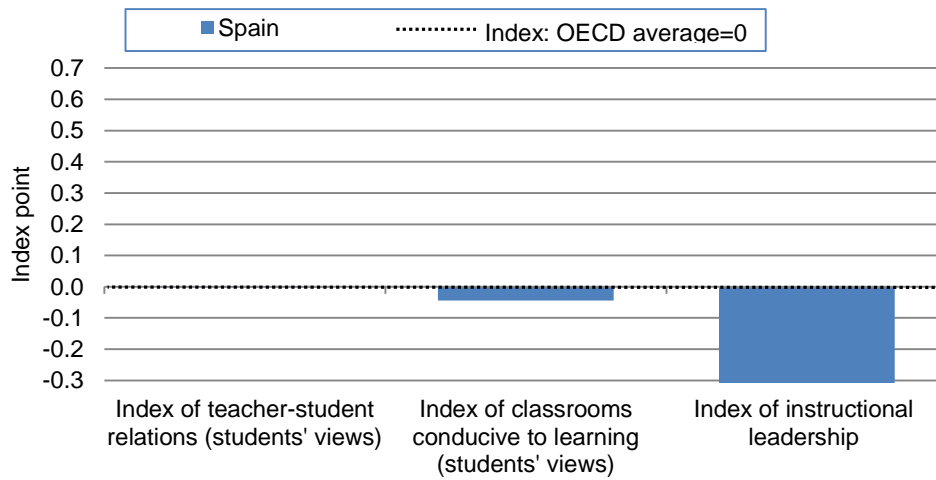
Source: OECD (2013), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices,* PISA,, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION ON EDUCATION EVALUATION

To improve the quality and transparency of the education system, the central government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, collaborates with regional education bodies to **evaluate the education system**. The National Institute for Education Evaluation (*Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa*, INEE) was established in 1990 as the central government body responsible for the evaluation of non-university education (Figure 6).

System evaluations are carried out by INEE, regional education authorities, and the State Educational Inspectorate (*Inspección General de Servicios de Educación*) to ensure compliance with legislation. INEE reports to the Spanish Parliament annually, using various system evaluations: general diagnostic evaluations; international student assessments, such as PISA; results of the National System of Education Indicators (*Sistema Estatal de Indicadores de la Educación*); and the report of the State School Board (*Consejo Escolar del Estado*), a participatory body of key education stakeholders. The objectives of system evaluations are to improve the quality and equity of education, guide education policy and increase the transparency and effectiveness of the education system. Evidence on the education system can be used to help decision-makers develop informed policies leading to improved student outcomes.

Schools are expected to participate in internal and external evaluations. Internal evaluations are carried out by school staff with support from regional education authorities. External evaluations, the responsibility of education bodies in each of the regional governments, should consider students' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as the school's environment and resources. A development plan is prepared for each school, based on evaluation results. Internal and external evaluations should be complementary to provide a broader perspective of evaluation and assessment and focus on improving student outcomes.

No formal national **teacher appraisal** system exists in Spain. Each Autonomous Community is responsible for appraisal and improvement of its teachers, but PISA 2012 findings suggest that teachers in Spain have few opportunities to receive appraisal (in line with previous findings from TALIS 2008). According to school principals' reports, only 10% of students are in schools where the principal or senior staff observes lessons (compared to the OECD average of 69%), and only 15% of students are in schools where classes are observed by inspectors or other persons external to the school (compared to the OECD average of 27%).

Student assessments in primary and lower secondary education include a general diagnostic evaluation undertaken by INEE, as a representative sample of primary and lower secondary students' knowledge of basic skills in the curriculum of each Autonomous Community. Each education authority in the regional governments is responsible for creating evaluation and assessment processes linked to the core curriculum. Within each school, the Teachers' Assembly and the teachers are responsible for implementing student assessments. Until the 2013 reform, education assessments and evaluations were for formative purposes. But there has been an increase in the proportion of schools that use student assessments to compare school performance against regional or national benchmarks, from 18% in 2003 to 44% in 2012 (still below the OECD average of 62%).

The challenge: Ensuring a balanced evaluation and assessment framework that sets national education goals and standards for improvement for both students and teachers.

Recent policies and practices

Given the autonomy of tertiary institutions, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (*Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación*, ANECA) was created in 2002 to improve the quality of tertiary education through evaluation, certification and accreditation of the institutions.

The Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa,* LOMCE, see Spotlight 1), introduces a formative and diagnostic internal assessment after primary school, which serves as an early detection system, and external high-stakes student assessments at the end of lower and upper secondary education.

To support school improvement, Spain has piloted the PISA for Schools Test (*PISA para Centros Educativos*), aiming to have it available for schools at the end of 2014.

Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported assessments of students in national modal grade for 15-year-olds (PISA 2012)
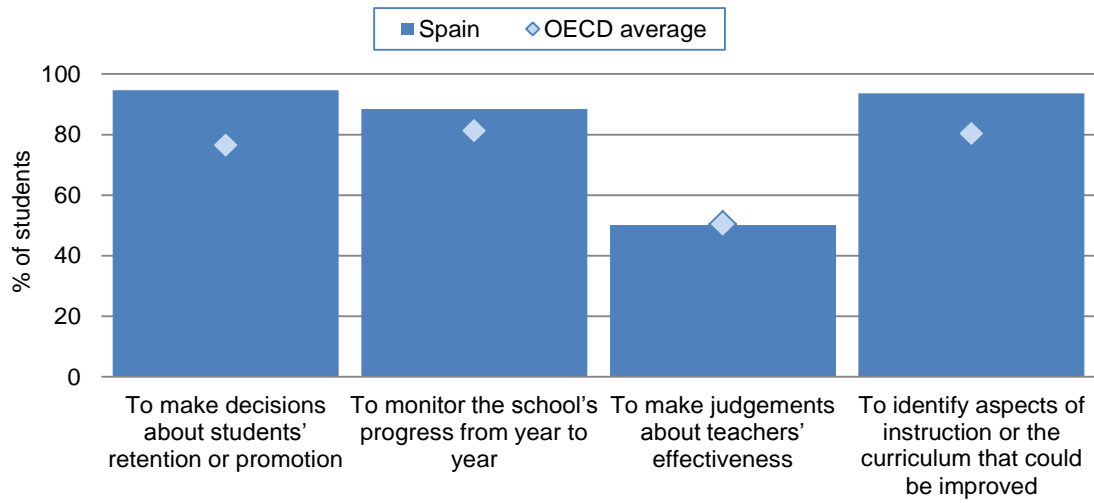
Source: OECD (2013), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes a Schools Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices,* PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en.

GOVERNANCE: REGIONAL AUTONOMY WITHIN A CENTRALISED FRAMEWORK

The Spanish education system is relatively decentralised. Through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (*Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte*, MECD), the central government designs the legal framework regulating the principles, objectives, and organisation of the different school levels, as well as a proportion of the contents and subjects studied. Ministries (or departments) of education from the 17 regions develop and manage their education systems based on these guidelines. Other bodies also shape education policy:

- The Education Sector Conference (*Conferencia Sectorial de Educación*) brings together the MECD and regional authorities to develop education policy for a coherent and inclusive education system.
- Within the MECD, the State Secretariat for Education, Vocational Training and Universities (*Secretaría de Estado de Educación, Formación Profesional y Universidades*) is the main body defining qualifications for the education system and teachers and for promoting equity policies.
- The State School Board (*Consejo Escolar del Estado*) brings together key education stakeholders, including school owners, teachers' unions, parents and student representatives, and provides advice on the education programme, quality, school funding and innovation at the school level.
- The university sector is guided by the national conference of university deans (*Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Españolas,* CRUE).
- Higher-level arts education is the responsibility of the central government, with advice from regional governments and the Higher Board of Arts Education (*Consejo Superior de Enseñanzas Artísticas*) regarding the structure and basic course content. The Regional Councils for Advanced Artistic Education (*Consejos Autonómicos de Enseñanzas Artísticas*) focus on advanced art education.
- Regional Councils for Vocational Training (*Consejos Regionales de Formación Profesional*) prepare their Regional VET Plan, evaluate vocational education and propose improvement of the VET system.
- Local authorities or municipalities work with the regional ministries to monitor early childhood education and care as well as compulsory and special education schools, among other responsibilities

Most schooling decisions in Spain are taken by the regions or the central government (approximately 43% of decisions in lower secondary education), and about one-quarter of decisions are taken by schools (Figure 7). Regional authorities have responsibility for organising and delivering education and maintaining schools, and for decisions on funding (including teachers' salaries), on part of the curriculum, among others. Targeted capacity-building at these levels to support decision-making and implementation of these decisions can help to promote better results. School Councils (*Consejos Escolares*), which participate in decision-making in schools, include representatives of the teaching and student body, the town council, parents and non-teaching staff. In vocational training schools, the councils might include representatives from labour institutions or employers' organisations.

In 2012-13, the university system comprised 79 universities, 50 of which were public and 29 private. Administrative and political matters in **higher education** are co-ordinated by the General Conference of University Policy (*Conferencia General de Política Universitaria*), while academic coordination is ensured by the Council of Universities (*Consejo de Universidades*). Each public university has its own governing body, following the framework of the 2001 Organic Act on Universities (*Ley Orgánica de Universidades*). Within the new learning scenario of the European Higher Education Area, each university has established its own internal quality assurance systems as a tool for improving its practice. These quality assurance systems are supervised by the regional educational authorities and by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (*Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación*, ANECA).

The challenge: Ensuring consistency across regions to meet national and regional education priorities.

Recent policies and practices

The Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa,* LOMCE, 2013), reforms the 2006 *Ley Orgánica de Educación* (LOE). One of the objectives is to increase the autonomy of education institutions while supporting greater accountability.

To set its priorities, an annual National Reform Programme (*Programa Nacional de Reformas*, 2012) presents objectives to meet the European Union 2020 strategy.

The Education Sector Conference (*Conferencia Sectorial de Educación*), bringing together the national government and the representatives of the 17 regional governments, defines objectives and reviews progress.

Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken in public lower secondary schools at each level of government, 2010[1]
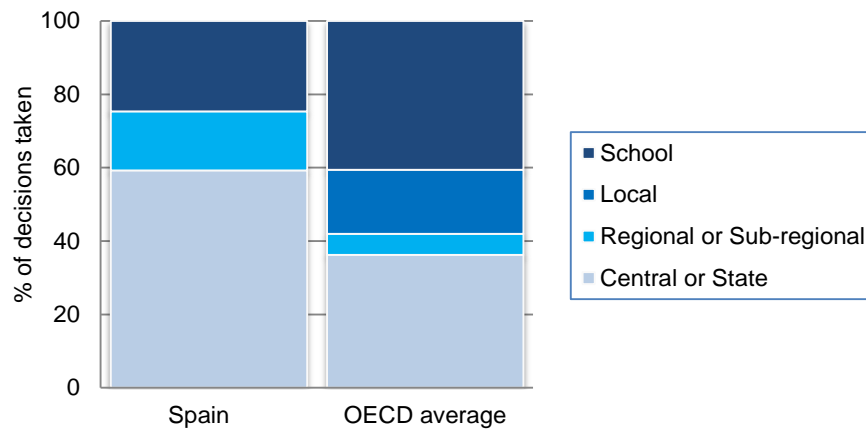
Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-en.

FUNDING: AUTONOMOUS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Spain has increased its **investment on educational institutions** in recent years, but it remains below the OECD average. Expenditure on education institutions reached 5.6% of GDP in 2010 (below the OECD average of 6.3%) (Figure 8). Between 2005 and 2010, Spain increased spending by 1 percentage point (above the OECD average of 0.5 percentage points). As in most OECD countries, most expenditure on educational institutions is from public sources (85.4% in 2010, compared to the OECD average of 83.6%) except at pre-primary level, where expenditure from public sources is 26.8% (still higher than the OECD average of 17.9%).

Spain spends comparatively more per student than other OECD countries. From primary to tertiary education, in 2010 expenditure per student (USD 9 484) was higher than the OECD average (USD 9 313), and Spain allocated more per student than the OECD average at secondary and tertiary levels (excluding research and development). Globally, expenditure per student at primary, secondary and tertiary levels increased by 13% between 2005 and 2010, as expenditure increased more than enrolment. Ensuring that this spending is allocated to where it is most needed is particularly important in a context of economic crisis. For example, the total annual cost per student who repeated a grade is estimated at more than EUR 20 000 in Spain. Grade repetition in Spain represents almost 8% of the total expenditure in primary and secondary education – one of the highest rates among OECD countries.

In Spain, in the context of decentralised financial responsibility for education by the 17 regional governments, education is mainly based on **public funding sources.** Regional governments have autonomy to manage their annual budget and how it is allocated to schools. Schools receive a small amount of funding based on the number of students enrolled. Most students at primary and secondary levels attended publicly funded schools in 2011: about 68% attended public schools and 28% attended publicly-funded private schools, a higher proportion than the OECD average. At upper secondary level, 79% attended public schools and 12% attended publicly-funded private schools. Publicly-funded private schools must meet certain requirements to receive funding.

In addition to public funding, public **universities** receive private funding from registration and tuition fees, organisation of specialised courses, agreements with private enterprises and other sources such as private institutions, which give donations or grants. In 2010, about 21.8% of funding of tertiary institutions (public and private combined) came from private sources, including 17.6% from households.

Recent **budget cuts** at national and regional levels affected the education system through budget adjustments starting in 2010, but recent data show that funding has stabilised. Selected programmes are being reviewed by the central government (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) to make sure that funds invested achieve their aims. Regional governments have also faced budget cuts in order to achieve a -1.5% deficit in regional GDP for 2012.

The challenge: Building on evidence of what impacts learning, reviewing expenditures and allocating funds where they are most needed.

Recent policies and practices

A measure to respond to the economic crisis (*Real Decreto-ley 14/2012*) addresses the rational use of resources in education, allowing for an increase in teaching hours per teacher, reviewing class size, adjusting education to demand and reviewing university fees. Some of these measures are temporary, and regional authorities can decide on their application.

The Ministry is financing evaluation of selected policies or programmes to determine their impact (*PROA, Educa 3.0, Escuela 2.0* and *Abandono Escolar*).

Figure 8. Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, by level of education, 2011
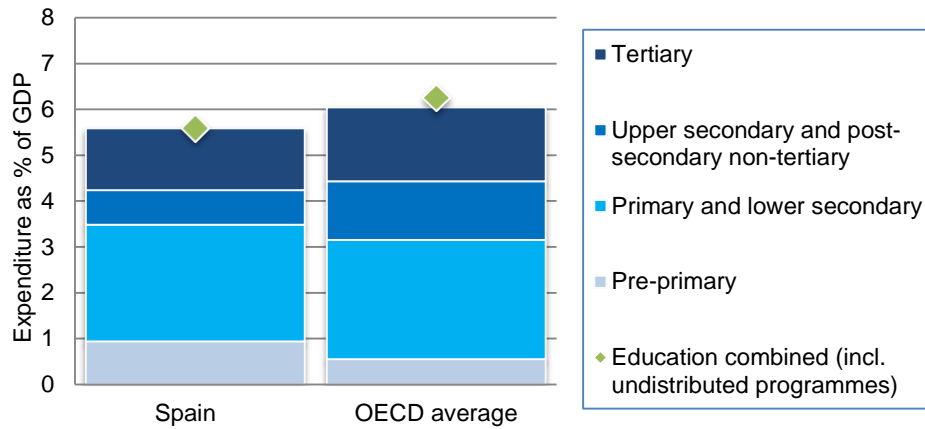
Legend:
- Tertiary
- Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary
- Primary and lower secondary
- Pre-primary
- Education combined (incl. undistributed programmes)

Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en.

ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF SPAIN'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Spain

Theoretical starting age

Key

- ⇧/△ Starting/ending age of compulsory education
- ▲ Recognized exit point of the education system
- ↑ Student flow
- ↑ Transfer from a programme to another
- Programme designed for part-time attendance
- Vocational programme
- Single structure education (integrated ISCED levels)
- May be provided within one school structure

ISCED 6 23-27

Doctorate
Year 6
Year 5
Year 4
Year 3
Year 2
Year 1

Master's
Year 2
Year 1

University degree (long studies)
Year 6
Year 5
Year 4
Year 3
Year 2
Year 1

University (first degree)
Year 3
Year 2
Year 1

Bachelor's
Year 4
Year 3
Year 2
Year 1

Vocational training advanced level certificate
Year 2
Year 1

ISCED 5A
ISCED 5B 18

University

Specific vocational training (advanced level)

ISCED 3 16

General upper secondary education
12th
11th

Vocational training (intermediate level)
12th
11th

Initial vocational training
12th
11th

ISCED 2 △16 12

Lower secondary education
10th
9th
8th
7th

ISCED 1 ⇧6

Primary education
6th
5th
4th
3rd
2nd
1st

ISCED 0 2

Pre-primary education

Special needs education

Adult education

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ANNEX B: STATISTICS

#	List of key indicators[1,2,3]	Spain	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
	Background information				
	Political context				
1	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, 2010 (EAG 2013)	5%	5.8%	3.8%	8.8%
	Economy				
2	GDP per capita, 2010, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs (EAG 2013)	31 574		15 195	84 672
3	GDP growth 2011 (OECD National Accounts)	-1.6%	1.5%	-6.4%	5.6%
	Society				
4	Population density, inhab/km^2, 2010 (OECD Statistics)	91.8	138	2.9	492
5	Population aged less than 15 as a percentage of total population, 2010 (OECD Factbook 2011)	15%	17.3%	13%	28.1%
6	Foreign-born population as a percentage of total population, 2009 (OECD Factbook 2011)	14.3%	14.1%	0.8%	36.9%
	Education outcomes				
7	Mean performance in mathematics (PISA 2012)	484	494	413	554
8	Annualised change in mathematics performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012)[4]	0.1	-0.1	-3.3	4.2
9	Annualised change in reading performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012)[4]	-0.3	0.0	-2.8	4.1
10	Annualised change in science performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012)[4]	1.3	1.0	-3.1	6.4
11	Enrolment rates of 3-4 year-olds in early childhood education and primary education, 2011 (EAG 2013)	98.7%	74.4%	11.6%	98%
12	% of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is lower secondary education or below, 2011 (EAG 2013)	46%	25%	7%	68%
13	% of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is at least upper secondary education, 2011 (EAG 2013)	65%	82%	43%	98%
14	% of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is tertiary education, 2011 (EAG 2013)	39%	39%	19%	64%
15	% of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is vocational upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, 2011 (EAG 2013)	8.4%	33.5%	8.4%	73.9%
16	***Unemployment rates of 25-64 year-olds by educational attainment, 2011 (EAG 2013)***				
	Below upper secondary	26.4%	12.6%	2.7%	39.3%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	19.2%	7.3%	2.2%	19.2%
	Tertiary education	11.6%	4.8%	1.5%	12.8%
	Students: Raising outcomes				
	Policy lever 1: Equity and quality				
17	First age of selection in the education system (PISA 2012)	16	14	10	16
18	***Students performing at the highest or lowest levels in mathematics (%), (PISA 2012).***				
	Students performing below Level 2	23.6%	23%	9.1%	54.7%
	Students performing at Level 5 or above	8%	12.6%	0.6%	30.9%
19	*Variance in mathematics performance between schools and within schools as a percentage of the OECD average variance in mathematics performance (PISA 2012)*				
	Between schools percentage of variance	17%	37%	6%	65%
	Within schools percentage of variance	74%	63%	34%	90%
20	% of students reporting that they have repeated at least a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools (PISA 2012)	32.9%	12.4%	0%	36.1%

#	List of key indicators	Spain	average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
21	Percentage of variance in mathematics performance in PISA test explained by ESCS (PISA 2012)[4]	**15.8%**	**14.8%**	7.4%	24.6%
22	Score difference in mathematics performance in PISA between non-immigrant and immigrant students AFTER adjusting for socio-economic status (PISA 2012)[4]	**36**	**21**	-29.0	66.0
23	Score differences between boys and girls in mathematics (PISA 2012)[4]	**16**	**11**	-6	25
	Policy lever 2: Preparing students for the future				
	Adjusted mean proficiency in literacy among adults on a scale of 500 (Survey of Adult Skills, 2012)				
24	Among 16-65 year-olds (adjusted)	250.5	270.7	249.4	293.6
	Among 16-24 year-olds (adjusted)	263.0	278.0	260.0	297.0
	Upper secondary graduation rates in % by programme of orientation, 2011 (EAG 2013)				
25	General programmes	51%	50%	18%	82%
	Pre-vocational/ vocational programmes	53%	47%	4%	99%
26	Average annual growth rate of upper secondary graduation between 1995-2011 (EAG 2013)	2.2%	0.6%	-1%	3.6%
	First-time graduation rates (2011) and average annual growth tertiary education graduation (1995-2011)				
27	Graduation rate tertiary-type A (general programme)	32%	40%	21%	60%
	Graduation rate tertiary-type B (technical programme)	18%	11%	0%	29%
	Average annual growth ratetertiary-type A	1.6%	4%	-1%	11%
	Average annual growth rate tertiary-type B	14.1%	0%	-20%	14%
28	% of 15-29 years-old not in education, employment or training, 2011 (EAG 2013)	24.4%	15.8%	6.9%	34.6%
	Institutions: Improving schools				
	Policy lever 3: School improvement				
29	Mean index of teacher-student relations based on students' reports (PISA 2012)	0.00	0.00	-0.42	0.47
30	Mean index of disciplinary climate based on students' reports (PISA 2012)	-0.04	0.00	-0.33	0.67
	% of teachers below the age of 40 by education level, 2011 (EAG 2013)				
31	Primary education	44%	41%	15%	60%
	Lower secondary education	34.1%	39%	11%	56%
	Upper secondary education	33.3%	34%	7%	47%
	Number of teaching hours per year in public institutions per education level, 2011 (EAG 2013)				
32	In primary education	880	790	589	1 120
	In lower secondary education	713	709	415	1 120
	In upper secondary education	693	664	369	1 120
	Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education, 2011 (EAG 2013)				
33	In primary education	1.23	0.82	0.44	1.34
	In lower secondary education	1.38	0.85	0.44	1.34
	In upper secondary education	1.40	0.89	0.44	1.40
34	Growth rate of teachers' salaries between 2000 and 2011 in lower secondary education, (EAG 2013)	8%	16%	-9%	103%
35	% of lower secondary education teachers reporting impact of appraisal/feedback on their knowledge or understanding of their main subject field(s) (TALIS 2008)	12.5%	33.9%	10.9%	69.1%
36	% of teachers who wanted to participate in more development than they did in the previous 18 months, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)	60.6%	55%	31%	85%

#	List of key indicators	Spain	average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
	Policy lever 4: Evaluation and assessment to improve student outcomes				
	% of students whose school' principals reported that assessments are used for the following purposes (PISA 2012)				
37	To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	94.6%	76.5%	1.5%	98.2%
	To monitor the school's progress from year to year	88.5%	81.2%	48%	100%
	To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	50.1%	50.4%	14%	88.2%
	To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	93.7%	80.3%	49.4%	99.4%
	% of lower secondary education teachers reporting appraisal/feedback on their work with this frequency, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)				
38	Once every two years or less	65.6%	35.8%	13.8%	65.6%
	At least once per year	28.1%	52.2%	27.6%	68.6%
	Monthly or more than once per month	6.2%	12%	3.3%	29.8%
	Systems: Organising the system				
	Policy lever 5: Governance				
	% of decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education, 2010 (EAG 2012)				
39	Central or state government	59%	36%	0%	87%
	Regional or sub-regional government	16%	6%	0%	36%
	Local government	m	17%	4%	100%
	School government	25%	41%	5%	86%
	Policy lever 6: Funding				
	Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions, for all services, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, 2010 (EAG 2013)				
40	Pre-primary education	6 685	6 762	2 280	20 958
	Primary education	7 291	7 974	1 860	21 240
	Secondary education	9 608	9 014	2 470	17 633
	Tertiary education	13 373	13 528	6 501	25 576
	Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on educational institutions, 2010 (EAG 2013)				
	Public sources	85.4%	83.6%	57.9%	97.6%
	All private sources	14.6%	16.4%	2.4%	42.1%
41	Index of change in expenditure on educational institutions, public sources, (constant prices, 2000=100)	140	136	100	195
	Index of change in expenditure on educational institutions, all private sources, (constant prices, 2000=100)	167	211	104	790

Notes

1. The average, total, minimums and maximums refer to OECD countries except in TALIS and the Survey of Adult Skills, where they refer to participating countries.

2. "m": included when data is not available.

3. "NP": included if the country is not participating in the study.

4. Statistically significant values of the indicator are shown in bold.

EDUCATION POLICY
OUTLOOK

NOTES

1. In Figure 7, central or state decision-making is shown together. Overall decision-making at lower secondary education is as follows in Spain:

- central: 16% (compared to the OECD average of 24%)

- regions or state: 43% (compared to the OECD average of 12%)

- provincial/subregional: 16% (compared to the OECD average of 5%)

- school: 25% (compared to the OECD average of 41%).

More local levels (about 18% at OECD average) do not participate significantly in decision-making at this level of education in Spain.

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