INTRODUCTION TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SPAIN

The **Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education**, modifying the 2006 Education Act, was passed in 2013. Its implementation finished in the academic year 2016/2017.

This reform recognizes the need to combine **quality** and **equity** in the training provision. School enrolment is not enough to meet the right to education, but quality is a constituent element of that right.

Main characteristics of the ADMINISTRATION of the education system

1. Decentralisation: educational competences are shared between the General State Administration (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport) and the authorities of the Autonomous Communities (Departments for Education):

- the **central education administration** executes the general guidelines of the Government on education policy and regulates the basic elements or aspects of the system

- **regional education authorities** develop the State regulations and have executive and administrative competences for managing the education system in their own territory.

Schools have pedagogical, organisational and managerial **autonomy** for their resources.

2. Participation of the education community in the schools' organisation, governance, running and evaluation.

Characteristics of the EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- **Declining trend in the early school leaving rate** (19.0% in 2016), although it is still far from the European average (10.7% in 2016) and the 15% objective planned in Spain for 2020 (10% in the EU)

- **Objectives of the implemented reform:**

    o reduce the early school leaving rate

    o improve the educational results (rate of excellent students and rate of students holding the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate)

    o improve employability and stimulate students' entrepreneurial spirit

    o prepare students for the exercise of citizenship, as well as for active participation in the economic, social and cultural life, with a critical and responsible attitude and capable of adapting to the changing situations of the knowledge-based society

- **Principles of the implemented reform:**

  - increase in school autonomy,

  - reinforcement of the management capacity of school leaders, external evaluations at the end of each stage

  - rationalisation of the educational provision

  - flexibility of pathways

  - **transmission and implementation of values which promote personal freedom, responsibility, democratic citizenship, solidarity, tolerance, equality, respect and justice, as well as helping to overcome discrimination of any kind**

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT, GUIDANCE AND INTEGRATION IN SPAIN

The above mentioned Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education does not make any changes to the measures for treating diversity, although, for the first time, it includes students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) within the group of students needing special educational support.

One of the main principles of the Spanish education system is the one concerning **attention to diversity**. This principle is set up as essential and it must rule the whole education, with the aim of providing all the students with an education adapted to their characteristics and needs. On this manner, the focus is not only on students with different needs, but on all students.

Title II, *Equity of Education*, of the Education Act establishes the following principles that must guide the education authorities:

- have the necessary means to maximise students' personal, intellectual, social and emotional development
- ensure the resources required so that students who need education services different from the ordinary may develop their personal capabilities and the objectives generally established for all students to the maximum extent possible
- establish the necessary procedures and resources to early identify students' special educational needs
- guarantee regular schooling and ensure the participation of parents or tutors in decisions affecting the schooling and educational processes of these students
- take appropriate measures so that the parents of these students receive proper individualised counselling.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned principles, the following resources are required:

- teachers of the corresponding specialisations and qualified professionals, as well as the necessary means and materials to adequately cater for these students
- provide educational institutions with the necessary resources to adequately cater for these students

- educational institutions will have the adequate school organisation and make the necessary curricular adaptations and diversifications to facilitate that the objectives established are achieved
- promotion of teacher training, as well as the training of other professionals, related to the attention of students with special educational needs
- collaboration with other administrations or non-profit public or private bodies, institutions or associations, in order to facilitate the schooling and a better integration of these students into the educational institution.

The measures established by the regulations for meeting students' needs range from those having a total ordinary nature to other ones which are extraordinary. Therefore, when the target groups of these measures are defined, all students attending ordinary schools are taken into account, including those with specific needs for educational support or those socially disadvantaged:

TARGET GROUPS OF THE MEASURES FOR ATTENTION TO DIVERSITY	MEASURES
ALL STUDENTS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM	ordinary measures

STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT
 	
- special educational needs
 	
    - physical, mental or sensory disability
    - serious conduct disorder.
 	
- gifted students
- late entry into the education system
 	
    - students coming from other countries
    - other reasons.
 	
- specific learning difficulties
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
	ordinary and extraordinary measures

SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS - people, groups, geographical areas in disadvantaged situations - students from rural areas.	ordinary and extraordinary measures

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS PROVISION WITHIN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

Target group(s)

In ordinary schools, according to the model of attention to diversity provided by the Spanish education system, the development of measures for meeting the education needs takes into account the total number of students attending the school. These measures, depending on the level of support for students, can be **ordinary** and **extraordinary measures**

Specific support measures

Specific support measures aim at responding to the specific needs of students and meeting the objectives of the educational stage.

The preparation of pedagogical proposals by educational institutions must consider diversity and the access of all students to mainstream education, and methods that take account of the different learning speeds must be devised.

In addition, the education authorities regulate the measures for students with specific learning difficulties, students with difficulties integrating into the school environment, gifted students and disabled students. These measures include:

- curricular adaptations

- integration of subjects into areas

- flexible grouping

- support in ordinary groups

- group splitting

- offer of specific subjects

- personalised treatment programmes

- programmes to improve learning and performance.

In line with the guidelines established by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, regional education authorities prepare Plans on Attention to Diversity. Their purpose is to implement education measures and actions allowing the maximum adaptation of the teaching-learning processes to the whole students' characteristics. These plans include both ordinary and extraordinary measures.

1. Attention to diversity ORDINARY MEASURES

Ordinary measures have an impact on the general organisation of the school, such as:

- organisation of the groups of students

- strategies favoring universal accessibility and allowing active and complete students' participation in learning (access to spaces, curriculum and resources, host activities, promotion of actions aimed at students socialisation and diversity appreciation, organisation of support and supporting activities, absenteeism and early school dropout prevention)

- tutor and guidance action

- use of spaces

- coordination and teamwork between the different professionals and collaborators at school and in the classrooms

- participation of external stakeholders in social and educational actions

- guidance, training and family mediation actions favouring families rapprochement to schools, making possible families implication in their children's education process and, if necessary, their integration in the social context.

These measures also include the prevention and detection of learning difficulties, among which the following stand out:

- implementation of reinforcement and support mechanisms

- individualised attention

- adaptation to the different learning speeds

- support in the classroom, group splitting and flexible grouping

- selection and implementation of different resources and methodological strategies

- non-meaningful curricular adaptations

- curricular material adaptation

- optional studies expected for compulsory secondary education.

Measure	Characteristics
Meaningful curricular adaptations	- in order to adapt the ordinary curriculum to the most specific needs of students, the essential aspects are modified: objectives, contents and evaluation criteria.
Basic vocational training	- the implementation of the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education in the 2014/15 academic year involved the establishment of the new basic vocational **training cycles**. In order to have access to them, students must be between 15 and 17 years of age and have completed the first cycle of compulsory secondary education or, exceptionally, the 2nd year of compulsory secondary education
Programmes to improve learning and performance	- these programmes are primarily aimed at students with relevant learning difficulties for reasons other than lack of study or effort and are developed from the 2nd year of compulsory secondary education - they are aimed at students who have repeated at least a year at any stage, students who have completed the 1st year of compulsory secondary education but are not ready for progression to the 2nd year, or students who have completed the 2nd year but are not ready to progress to the 3rd year, as well as for those who have completed the 3rd year of compulsory secondary education but are not ready for progression to the 4th. In this case, they can take part in the programme to repeat the 3rd year on an exceptional basis - a specific methodology is used: content organisation, practical activities and, if appropriate, subjects that are different from the ones generally established. The aim is that students may

	take the 4th year through the ordinary procedure and obtain the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate • they can be organised in an integrated way, or through subjects different from the ones generally established, in at least three specific fields: linguistic and social, scientific and mathematical and foreign languages.
Making the stay in the education level more flexible	• this measure is specific for each profile of the students with specific needs for educational support.

2. Attention to diversity EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES

Extraordinary measures are aimed at meeting the most specific education needs of students, and they complement those with an ordinary nature. They are aimed at those students with more learning difficulties than the others due to different reasons. That is why they need an education attention different to the ordinary one and the establishment of specific resources. The implementation of these measures requires a previous diagnose of the students education needs, through the psycho-pedagogic evaluation made by the guidance specialised services. In addition, a continuous monitoring is necessary for adapting the decisions taken and allowing the greatest access of these students to the curriculum and the ordinary education.

These extraordinary measures are only applied in compulsory education (students from 6-16 years old).

Main extraordinary measures for treating diversity in compulsory education

Measure	Characteristics
Meaningful curricular adaptations	• in order to adapt the ordinary curriculum to the students' needs, the essential aspects are modified: objectives, contents and evaluation criteria. • support teachers in the educational institutions, School teachers with the specialities of Therapeutic Pedagogy or Hearing and Speech, strength the work of the teachers in charge
Curricular adaptations (access)	• it allows changes or resources forecasts, both personal and material, so that those students with some access difficulties will be able to study the ordinary curriculum. They are based on technical assistance, alternative and augmentative communication systems or the removal of architectural obstacles.
Classrooms for special education in mainstream education	• they are group programmes aimed at students with serious physical, psychological or sensory disabilities, or serious personality or conduct disorders. Very significant adaptations required are carried out in a specific classroom within the ordinary school, but they are compatible with their participation in some ordinary extracurricular activities, which favor their social adaptation and integration.

Reduction in the number of students per classroom	• when in a classroom there are students with special education needs, the number of students in the said classroom is reduced.
Support by specialised teachers	• this support is possible within or without the classroom, individually or in small groups, depending on the students needs and on the curricular adaptation made.
Making the stay in the education level more flexible	• the schooling of students with special educational needs can be extended for another year. If this repetition takes place in the 3rd or 4th year, the age limit will be increased by one year. On an exceptional basis, students will be able to repeat the 4th year for a second time, provided they did not repeat the previous years of the stage. In repetitions, the curricular conditions will be adapted to students' needs and will aim at overcoming the difficulties identified. This measure will be accompanied by a specific personalised plan aimed at overcoming the difficulties identified the previous year.

The ordinary and extraordinary measures previously described adapt to every target group as explained bellow:

2.1 Students with special education needs associated to disability or serious conduct disorder

The answer given to these students consists of providing them with the necessary support for following their studies. In many cases these students require to adapt the curricular elements to their needs and/or to have an easier access to the contents through technical assistance.

Measures for students with special educational needs related to disability or severe conduct disorder

Measure	Characteristics
Meaningful curricular adaptations	• in order to adapt the ordinary curriculum to the students' needs, the essential aspects are modified: objectives, contents and evaluation criteria. • support teachers in the educational institutions, School teachers with the specialities of Therapeutic Pedagogy or Hearing and Speech, strength the work of the teachers in charge.
Curricular adaptations (access)	• it allows changes or resources forecasts, both personal and material, so that those students with some access difficulties will be able to study the ordinary curriculum. They are based on technical assistance, alternative and augmentative communication systems or the removal of architectural obstacles.
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2.2 Students with specific learning difficulties

The schooling of students with specific learning difficulties is based on the principles of normalisation and inclusion with the aim of ensuring non-discrimination and effective equality in access to and continuance in the education system.

The education authorities will establish the principles that must underlie the identification, assessment and intervention of the educational needs of these students, adopting the necessary measures so that they are carried out at the earliest possible opportunity.

2.3 Gifted students

The education authorities are in charge of:

- adopting the necessary measures to early identify and assess gifted students

- adopting action plans and curriculum improvement programmes that meet those needs, so that students can develop their full potential.

The schooling of gifted students can become more flexible by teaching contents and including skills of upper courses, as well as by increasing the contents and skills of the current year, among other measures.

The learning speed and style of both gifted students and students that are particularly motivated to learn will be taken into consideration.

2.4 Students entering late the education system

The schooling of students entering late the education system is made in response to their circumstances:

- knowledge

- age

- educational background.

Special attention should be paid to students with very limited knowledge of the official language, who will be simultaneously integrated into ordinary groups.

If the curricular gap is of more than two years, they will be placed in a lower year than they should for their age. In addition, the necessary reinforcement measures to facilitate their school integration and the bridging of the curricular gap will be adopted. Once the gap is overcome, students will be placed in the year corresponding to their actual age.

The education authorities have to support the entry into the education system of the students that come from other countries or, for any other reason, are incorporated late in the Spanish education system. Plans and programmes are designed and measures are developed which must ensure the schooling of these students.

Programmes and plans include:

- **hosting programmes and plans.** Aimed both at students of foreign origin and all late students joining the education system. These include measures to prepare the school for the arrival of new students, such as the inclusion of the values of intercultural education in the school development plan, teacher training, adjusting center resources or preparation of information documents in multiple languages. They address, therefore, linguistic, curricular, attitudinal and school context aspects

- **programmes and plans for teaching the language of the host society.** It includes measures of two types: On one hand, *language classrooms*, which aim to provide students with the necessary linguistic competence to enter the mainstream classroom. Their stay is flexible, meeting their needs, so the student does not attend there the whole day. On the other, *linguistic and curricular reinforcement actions*, which facilitate the study in all areas or subjects of the course with fewer difficulties

- **programmes for teaching the language and culture of the country of origin**. These programmes are targeted to students from other countries to continue studying their native language, while studying the host language. It is sometimes done in collaboration with the country of origin and with public non-profit organizations. Usually the courses are developed outside school hours, although in some Autonomous Communities initiatives are being considered for including these contents in the curriculum. In addition, some communities encourage all students, not just the immigrant, to attend them.

As for the **measures**, the main ones are:

- **information in several languages** on the Spanish education system, aimed at both students and families. They are also informed about their rights, duties and opportunities, not only relating to education but also to other environmental resources that could be of use

- **support services for intercultural mediation, and translating and interpreting services.** These are often external services. Their working and approach depend on regional and local resources, and on the needs of schools

- **measures supporting the teaching function,** through the inclusion of other professional profiles as a support inside and/or outside the classroom, specific training and resources related to interculturality and work with foreign students

- **making stay at the educational level more flexible**. Students who incorporate late to the education system and present a gap of more than 2 courses in their level of curricular competence may be enrolled in a course prior to the one which would correspond to them by age

- **reduction of groups' size in the classroom.**

SUPPORT MEASURES FOR LEARNERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

Target group(s)

The 2006 Education Act and the 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, modifying it, establish that the people or territorial groups and areas that are at a disadvantage due to social, economic, cultural, geographical, ethnic or other kinds of factors must be the target of compensatory actions that reinforce the action of the education system with the aim of avoiding inequalities.

Specific support measures

With the purpose of applying the principle of equality in the exercise of the right to education, the education authorities provide with the economic resources and the necessary support for developing compensatory actions.

The adjustments implied in the education system are a part of the continuous attention to diversity measures developed in the schools. For this reason, most of the measures for attending students' education needs in mainstream education can respond disadvantaged students. In addition, they have other kinds of specific actions.

The actions aimed at disadvantaged students are implemented in every Autonomous Community and they are regulated through the curricular organisation for primary and secondary education. Some education authorities also develop specific regulations on this field, both at general level and regarding a specific group. The actions are the following:

School attendance

- **measures aimed at assuring the most suitable conditions for attending school in pre-primary and primary education**:
  - free education in the second cycle of pre-primary education is established and the gradual increase of publicly-funded places in the first cycle, so as to raise the rate of students attending school, is promoted
  - a free school place in their own municipality or area of schooling is guaranteed to all students.
- **provision of schools with human and material resources in order to compensate the situation of disadvantaged students**. When the students have achievement gap and are at risk of education exclusion, they receive curricular support from specialised teachers. It can

be present in different modalities, from the support to the instrumental areas or subjects, within or without the classes, to the establishment of specific groups or classes for students with serious school adaptation problems. Likewise, when the students with these characteristics attend school it is possible to reduce the size of the class group

- **preventive and compensatory actions**. The schools where disadvantaged students attend develop compensatory education plans including actions for taking advantage of the resources of the environment, such as the intercultural mediation services or the opening of school libraries out of school hours. They also establish programmes against school absenteeism, mainly aimed at specific groups.

Scholarships and study grants

Students with disadvantaged economic conditions have the right to obtain study grants and scholarships. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport establishes, funded under the State General Budget, a general grants system for covering the expenses of:

- travel
- urban transport
- residence
- teaching materials
- tax exemption.

In addition, there are grants and financial support for compensating the lack of work income, as well as other types of grants aimed at young people at risk of dropping out the education system to continue their studies.

Equal opportunities in the rural world

Regional education authorities are in charge of establishing the organisation and the necessary means for attending school needs of pupils in rural world. In some areas where pupils attend schools near their municipality of residence in order to guarantee the quality of education. In these cases, the education authority provides free-cost transport, canteen or boarding school services.

In addition, the schools spread out in nearby municipalities with small settlements group together making up one single school in organisational terms, allowing the students to stay in their town of origin. In these schools there are some itinerant teachers covering the specialities foreseen in the regulations. They have one single leadership teams and their teachers assembly is made up by all the school teachers attending the different schools that compose it. In addition, the yearly general programme and the school development plan are similar for every gathered school.

Organisational alternatives for itinerant students

Due to families' itinerant work (circus workers, carnival workers, pickers or similar), there are students who cannot attend school regularly. Regional education authorities implement some measures assuring that they will attend school, such as:

- establishment of supportive itinerant units
- schooling programmes and education support to those students coming from seasonal groups
- provision of a permanent school teacher, which is provided with all the teaching basic resources.

The children of agricultural seasonal workers can attend:

- schools of the host area, which are supported by the teaching staff
- prefabricated classrooms with teachers from the programme of compensatory education during the months that the job lasts, creating on this manner a minimum services infrastructure in the area of residence.

Organisational alternatives for hospitalised students

The Autonomous Communities organise different alternatives making possible education outside school (services, institutions and special units) for those students who cannot attend school under medical prescription and for those students hospitalised for a long period.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

Educational guidance services promote the quality of education and constitute a resource which is part of the educational action to improve learning, teacher support. It is a basic right for students, as well as a necessary means for achieving a comprehensive and personalised education.

The **purpose** of educational guidance is to provide the educational community with personalised advice in order to adequately cater for the diversity of students throughout their schooling.

The different education authorities are responsible for developing guidance. For this reason, currently, most of the Autonomous Communities have published specific regulations for their total or partial organisation. In addition, some aspects related to the functions and structure of education guidance are established through the regulation of the curriculum of primary education and compulsory secondary education of the Autonomous Communities and the schools organic rules.

The main **functions** of staff specialised in educational guidance are:

- participate in the Pedagogical Coordination Commission, giving advice on organisational and curricular measures to serve the needs of diversity, as well as on coexistence measures that might be proposed
- advise educational institutions and teachers to cater for the diversity of students regarding the planning, development and evaluation of their educational practice from the principles of normalisation and inclusion, universal accessibility, equal opportunities and non-discrimination
- prepare, adapt and disseminate materials and instruments that might be useful for the educational community to cater for the diversity of students as well as for academic supervision
- conduct the psychopedagogical assessment, diagnose special educational needs at a young age and guide parents for their children's development
- contribute to educational innovation
- collaborate with teachers in the planning, development and evaluation of measures to serve the needs of diversity (methodology, classroom organisation, schooling, student evaluation and progression, academic supervision, curricular adaptations, personal or material support, etc.)
- participate in tasks related to cooperation between the educational institution and families and between the former and external collaborators or institutions
- participate in the coordination tasks established by the educational guidance coordination unit.

The **organisation** of the guidance model allows to establish three models of intervention:

1. the **classroom** level covers the actions established in the school Tutorial Action Plan. They are developed by the tutor and all the teachers of a group of students. In compulsory secondary education this tutorial action must 'pay special attention to the education and professional guidance of students'
2. the **direct intervention** level gathers different guidance structures. In pre-primary and primary education there is a predominance of guidance structures external to schools, Educational and Psychopedadogical Guidance Teams; while in secondary education these structures are usually integrated in them, constituting on this manner Guidance Departments. This level brings together the actions related to the direct work with students, teachers and families, counselling when preparing the school documents, the establishment of prevention measures, diagnose and intervention with students and, sometimes, teaching
3. the third level in the organisational model for guidance is **indirect intervention with schools**, constituted by external structures serving as a support to the said structures for indirect intervention. They also carry out coordination functions between the different education authorities of an area, keeping communication between institutions and professionals.

Academic guidance

The development of **academic guidance** is characterised by the following:

- at **classroom level**:

  - teachers-tutors are responsible for implementing the Tutorial Action Plan (including the organisation of every action of educational guidance)
  - it is carried out during compulsory and post-compulsory education
  - its main goals are:

    - help students to improve their academic performance
    - solve out their difficulties in the school
    - acquire the necessary aptitudes for living in society and to learn to think and take decisions.
- at the **direct intervention level**, guidance services:

  - collaborate in the development of the said Plan
  - collaborate and participate in the preparation of:

    - the school development plan
    - the Yearly General Programme
    - the Plan for attention to diversity
    - the Plan for academic and professional guidance.
  - in the field of prevention these services also have the following tasks:

    - early intervention tasks for those students at high risk or with special education needs
    - prevention of school drop-out and non-adjustment to school
    - collection of information from the schools where the students come from and preparation of days for welcoming students and make their entry easier
    - implementation of awareness campaigns for integrating students or prevention of risk and conflict conduct
    - design and development of plans for welcoming foreign students.

- develop diagnose functions, carrying out psychopedagogical evaluations, preparing the reports and formulating more adapted school proposals.
  - as **indirect intervention**:
    - external counselling services for academic guidance, specifically in questions related to:
      - education innovation
      - counselling to teachers
      - dissemination of materials.

Psychological counselling

The Tutorial Action Plan, a document including all the actions related education guidance, gathers aspects concerning the whole development of the student, including:

- improve self-knowledge and self-esteem
- acquire the necessary aptitudes for living in society
- learn to think and take decisions.

The tutor is the main responsible for students psychological counselling, since he/she is the first referent of the student and he/she ensures an harmonious and appropriate personal, emotional and social development. To this end they keep the necessary individual meetings, summoning students' relatives if necessary.

In order to carry out this counselling, tutors have the support and intervention of the corresponding guidance structure, which can also begin individual sessions or making a more exhaustive assessment.

However, none of these professionals make a therapeutic intervention itself. When the need of an intervention of this kind is detected, students are referred to external services, generally related to the field of mental health.

Career guidance

Career guidance is the set of actions, especially after compulsory secondary education, carried out with all the students of the school, oriented to making easier the decision-making concerning possible academic itineraries and the professional alternatives which adapt the most to their characteristics, interests and possibilities. The aim of these actions is:

- that students develop the skills implied in the decision-making process related to their life project
- facilitate information on the different education or work options in every education level
- promote a rapprochement to the labour work and to the processes favoring transition into active life.

At **classroom level**, the tutor is in charge of developing the actions in line with the Academic and Professional Guidance Plan, in collaboration with other guidance services for **direct intervention**. The Plan must go with secondary students during all their studies, specially highlighting the choice of elective subjects, the assessment of the possible itineraries at the end of compulsory secondary education (curricular diversification programmes or initial professional qualification programmes) and in the decision among the different branches of Bachillerato of vocational training cycles.

Source: Eurydice