

Proposals for improvement

Report on the status and situation of the education system

Academic Year 2008/2009

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Foreword

In this year 2010 when the Organic Law 8/1985 of 3 July regulating the Right to Education will be twenty-five years old, the State School Council, created by that Law, approved the twenty second report on the status and situation of the Spanish education system for the academic year 2008/09 in the plenary session held on 1 June. Thus, the highest consultative and participatory body of non-university education has complied with its function to participate in the general education program and to develop, approve and publish this report.

The diagnosis contained in this Report provides an overview of the Spanish education system with lights and shadows at a time in which we should take stock of our level of compliance with the 2010 objectives set by the Lisbon Strategy. If progress is undeniable in areas such as enrolment in Pre-Primary education, college graduation rates or adult education, some serious problems still exist in our system, such as lack of qualifications of our youngsters and early school leaving, which should be addressed immediately with everyone's efforts.

These weaknesses of our education system acquire special significance in the current economic crisis. People are faced with the need to adapt to the continuous demands for retraining and the country needs to mobilize human resources to progress. Therefore, giving the students a solid education represents an urgent requirement. In this sense the education system must ensure that 100% of the students have a future in both academic and vocational training and facilitate the return to education of those who left, with attractive ways to combine training and employment.

The Council is concerned about the deficits of equity and success of our education. There is lack of equity, because although it is quite acceptable considering the school population that gets qualifications after compulsory education, that equity is not so obvious when you consider that 30% of our young people finish compulsory education without any qualifications and, above all, if we note that there are significant differences in the Autonomous Communities in educational outcomes and also in the rates of age adequacy or dropouts.

Improving the quality of Spanish education is the priority. And improving quality implies in addition to achieving good results, achieving a balance between equity and excellence in the whole country and that all young people achieve the best results regardless of the school in which they are studying. This is essential to ensure

balanced enrolment among all schools, and adequate care to the students with greater difficulties.

It is also essential to measure the degree of success of the policies undertaken by means of indicators, to implement those measures for improvement recommended by the diagnostic assessments and to provide schools with pedagogic, organizational and management autonomy to enable them to address, more effectively the needs of their pupils, and consequently schools should be held accountable to society through assessments

A careful reading of the Report on the status and situation of the education system of the 2008/2009 academic year reveals the following challenges which must be addressed urgently:

1. The Education Authorities should strengthen the effort initiated by the Educa3 Plan and set all the indicators necessary to ensure the quality and the educational character of this stage.
2. The Education Authorities cannot merely apply the diagnostic evaluations in the fourth year of primary education and second year of secondary education. They should establish mechanisms for the analysis of the results, action plans arising from them and ensure that schools include commitments between the families, the students and the schools in their educational projects to allow all students to have a promising educational future.
3. The fight against school failure requires the early detection of learning difficulties, the implementation of actions to overcome them, the extreme care in the transition between all stages of education from Pre-Primary education and to undertake an General Urgent Action Plan in Secondary Education that allows 100% of students to have opportunities for education and training in the future, whether in Bachillerato, in Vocational Education Cycles or Initial Professional Qualification Programmes (PCPI) which should be offered in all secondary schools. The Plan should provide that most students get the qualifications and, in any case, that all of them achieve some certification of their basic competences, ensuring their further education.
4. It is imperative that the Sectorial Conference on Education continue promoting the measures provided for in the Early School Leaving Prevention Plan to increase, significantly, the rate of post-compulsory education graduates.

5. Public expenditure on education is the best investment for the future. Therefore, the School Council believes that the Sectorial Conference on Education should increase public expenditure for the next ten years to achieve the objectives set by the European Union for 2020, promoting shared and coordinated policies in spending priorities and their maximum degree of effectiveness and efficiency.
6. It is the Education Authorities' responsibility to provide students with disabilities with the support resources they require, throughout all stages, to ensure not only their access, but also their retention and promotion within the education system, according to the principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility established by the legislation.
7. Teachers are an essential element of the quality system. Therefore, without prejudice to the autonomy of universities, state and regional Authorities should ensure the quality and rigour in the initial training of primary and secondary teachers. In particular they should ensure that the practicum greatly improves the education of future teachers and maximize the experience of practicing teachers. It is also urgent to strengthen the social status of teachers and negotiate the Teachers' Statute to establish a real career.

Finally, we ask the Ministry of Education to include in the State System of Indicators all those indicators needed to evaluate the actions that are undertaken in order to address each of the new challenges.

Formal aspects and contents of this Report

The structure adopted in previous years is maintained in order to focus attention on the most relevant aspects of the academic year 2008/09, which is the object of analysis in this case, without giving up the wealth of data and nuances of the statistical and documentary information. As in the previous year, in order to achieve widespread dissemination of the proposals for improvement that the Council brings to the Authorities, they are published in Castilian Spanish, in the co-official languages of the State and also in English. We do all this in order to maximize the institutional influence of the educational community.

The report is divided into three main sections. In *Section I* it reviews the highlights of the academic year 2008/09.

Section II, which starts with proposals for improving common to the entire education system, maintains seven chapters, already included in previous reports, referring to the four levels in which the education system is structured and also other three related to various important issues as expenditure on education, coexistence and equality in schools and educational participation. Two issues have been added, initial teacher training and the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs arising from disabilities. Those *proposals for improvement* which the State School Council deems convenient to submit to the Education Authorities are included in each of these chapters.

Section III contains all the statistical data and documentation, classified by epigraphs that maintain the structure of previous academic years in order to make it easier to find and compare data.

All the information contained in the three above-described sections is included in the CD that comes with the booklet (Sections I and II). In turn, the proposals for improvement on each one of the most relevant aspects of Spanish education, and the proposals for improvement of a nature common to the whole system are published in an offprint in order to attract the widest possible readership.

Carmen Maestro Martín
President of the State School Council

Proposals for improvement

0. General

1st) The State School Council proposes that the Education Authorities should implement the school autonomy in the sense established by the LOE, so that schools can develop their educational projects from the diagnosis of their needs, with collaborative work, involvement and participation of the entire educational community.

School autonomy is closely linked to assessment and accountability. Therefore, to help schools to conduct internal assessments and to make an accurate diagnosis of all the factors behind the situation of the education system, the State School Council urges the Ministry of Education and the Education Authorities to develop indicators to enable early detection of learning difficulties and of early school leaving and to carry out studies on, among other things, advantages or disadvantages of separating the two cycles of Pre-Primary Education in different schools, on the bilingual and trilingual projects existing in different territorial areas and on repeating a year and how it affects success at school.

The Council also considers that all schools should share the difficulties of a balanced distribution of students and, therefore, they should have adequate resources for this purpose. Therefore, the Council recommends the Education Authorities to implement all the policies and organizational measures necessary so that in all public and state-funded private schools the same teacher/students ratios are achieved and also the same teams of educational guidance, except in those circumstances that require specific actions.

2nd) The State School Council urges the Education Authorities, as in previous academic years, to conduct a suitable programming of educational provision, guaranteeing the fundamental rights of all students to education to make full and balanced education effective and promote integration of all students in public schools and state-funded private school, of foreign students, of late entries into the education system, of those who may have problems or risks of early school leaving and social exclusion, as well as students who have special educational needs. The Education Authorities should provide schools with the necessary human and material resources to carry all this out.

3rd) The State School Council believes it is necessary greater coordination between the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces and the Educational Authorities in order to promote and rationalize educational activities coordinated between central, regional and local levels to improve comprehensive care to the entire student population and also develop the involvement of municipalities in the general programming of education in subjects such as the generalization of the offer of Pre-Primary Education, education of adults, the provision of Special Training Courses, municipal obligations for the maintenance, operation and repair of public schools, the promotion of reading at public libraries, the use of ICT by increasingly larger groups of population, municipal cooperation in the integration of immigrant groups and their responsibility in any measure contributing to the reduction of school failure.

4th) The State School Council joins the Parliament and supports the Motion to protect educational heritage. This Motion urges the Government to propose, within the Sectorial Conference on Education, a Plan to protect, preserve and disseminate educational historical heritage that includes inventories and catalogues of its goods, measures for the preservation of documentary and scientific collections, a strategy for the conservation of historic school buildings, research and dissemination of that heritage and the financial funds for the implementation of that plan.

5th) The State School Council considers that the Teachers' Statute should establish a real career, both vertically and horizontally so that teachers receive the acknowledgment of their work. It also proposes the urgent negotiation of the above-mentioned Statute which, in addition to establishing the rights and duties of public school teachers, defining suitable professional profiles and continuing to raise the social and professional recognition of public education, should contain the extension of voluntary early retirement at the age of 60. This measure, besides being a recognized right for teachers due to the nature of their role, has allowed a partial replacement in a group that shows some aging.

6th) The State School Council urges the Ministry of Education to develop, within the framework of the objectives for 2020, a comprehensive Plan of action in Ceuta and Melilla, to match their educational reality and their school results to the state and European average. This plan should provide for periodic assessments and some of its measures should be urgent actions to ensure that no students leave the first cycle of primary education being unable to read and write.

7th) The State School Council requests that the process of disaggregation of data by both sexes and those relating to public, state-funded private and private schools

should be continued, in order to obtain a more real knowledge on the education system and to develop more effective measures.

1. Pre-Primary Education

1st) The State School Council, while recognizing the great effort made by the Ministry and the Local Education Authorities in Pre-Primary schooling as part of the Educa3 Plan, urges the Authorities to make a bigger budgetary effort for the creation of public places to meet the current needs, to remedy the gap between public and private provision in this first cycle of Pre-Primary Education and to meet, in this sense, the European objectives proposed for the 2010 about schooling in this educational stage.

In this regard it welcomes the fact that in several Autonomous Communities the first cycle schools which are not dependent on the Education Authorities have been transferred to the Regional Ministry of Education and urges other Communities to carry this out to ensure the unavoidable educational target for this stage.

2nd) The Council proposes that the Education Authorities should ensure the equitable schooling of foreign students in the first cycle in all schools that receive public funds, providing them with the human and material resources required and establishing the necessary standards to regulate the criteria for admission of students to correct the current imbalance between public and private schools and to ensure quality education for all students.

3rd) The State Board of Education urges the Ministry of Education to lead, within the framework of the Sectorial Conference on Education, the evaluation of the Educa3 Plan and the Institute of Evaluation to establish the appropriate quality indicators related to the quality of schools educational projects and their adaptation to the educational nature of the cycle, to the implementation of the minimum requirements for schools, to the ownership of schools and educational services, to the qualification of the staff who work there, trying to eliminate employment discrimination at this level where there is a clear feminization, to the quality of facilities, to ratios, to the coordination with the schools providing the second cycle, to the degree of satisfaction of families and to the efficiency of public resources invested.

4th) The State School Council insists one year more that the Educational Authorities should strengthen the effective and early detection of specific educational support

needs, notably those associated with disabilities, whose early attention is a factor of prime importance in the success of quality and inclusive education.

5th) Although the LOE (Organic Law of Education) stipulates in article 14.7 that the requirements to be met by the First Cycle of Pre-Primary Education schools should be regulated by the Regional Education Authorities, the State School Council, given the importance of schooling at an early age to ensure the principle of equal opportunities, urges the Central Government to initiate the necessary legislative reforms, in order to have accurate frameworks for the whole country, on the minimum requirements for schools and the core curriculum, in particular, in the first cycle of Pre-Primary Education. It also proposes that the Regional Education Authorities and the State Education Authorities should reach an agreement, within the Sectorial Conference on Education, on some common minimum requirements to be met by all schools providing this cycle, from the perspective of the educational character the Law attributes to this stage.

2. Primary Education

1st) Once the first application of the diagnostic evaluation in the 4th year of primary education was carried out in the spring of 2009, the Council believes that its results should become a privileged instrument to detect learning disabilities and to encourage measures for improvement. Therefore, we urge the Education Authorities to extend this assessment to all schools for the guidance and improvement value it represents for the entire educational community.

The Education Authorities, from the results of external assessments, should take actions in schools seeking firstly an internal analysis of results by the educational community, secondly improvement targets should be agreed upon to be included in the Educational Project in which any necessary teaching or organizational autonomy measures should be detailed, and thirdly a document should be developed specifying the commitments to improve the schools and the staff and material resources (ratios, splits, groupings...) which the Administration will provide to achieve the quality objectives proposed. In this document mechanisms for evaluation and accountability will be established so that those commitments can be updated annually.

2nd) Although the State School Council appreciates the efforts made by the Education Authorities to promote reading, it believes that, as already indicated in last year Report, a specific Plan (facilities, staff, funds...) should be developed to provide all teachers with the training, tools and resources to successfully accomplish the goal

that 100% of pupils complete Primary Education having acquired the habit and the pleasure of reading and therefore, a good level in reading comprehension as a key to success in other basic competences. The Plan should be accompanied by the relevant financial report and an annual evaluation of the results so that effectiveness is guaranteed.

3rd) The State School Council recommends the Education Authorities to increase their efforts to facilitate the transition between the stages of Pre-Primary Education and Primary Education, on the one hand, and between Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education on the other hand, by developing adequate coordination programmes between the teachers who work at the various stages and levels, including the provision of support resources.

4th) Given the distance between the actual rate of age adequacy of primary schoolchildren at 12 years old and the objectives of age adequacy set in the National Reform Program, approved in 2005 by the Government in line with the Lisbon objectives 2010, the State School Council urges again the Ministry of Education and the Regional Educational Authorities to effectively reinforce the measures of attention to the diversity of students in Primary Education as a means to prevent learning gaps and to raise age adequacy rates throughout compulsory education, thus reducing substantially school failure and early school leaving at the end of compulsory education.

In the same way, the State School Council notes with concern the uneven implementation of the Reinforcement, Guidance and Support Plans (PROA) in the Autonomous Communities, therefore it recommends the Ministry to lead, within the Sectorial Conference on Education, the evaluation of the Plan to identify possible deficiencies, establish new quality requirements and verify the effective use of public funds.

5th) The State School Council urges the Ministry of Education and those Regional Education Authorities which have not done it yet to set a maximum of 20 pupils per classroom, reducing that number if students with special educational needs are enrolled.

It also proposes that the Education Authorities should ensure there are enough teachers with adequate training to adapt their task to the educational needs of students with disabilities and other properly trained and qualified staff, as well as

programmes to care for the students in need of specific educational support in all public and private schools.

3. Compulsory Secondary Education

1st) The State School Council is concerned about the negative trend in age adequacy rates which directly affect school failure and early school leaving. Also, the percentages of qualifications in Compulsory Secondary Education are lower than those achieved in the EU countries and show significant inequalities in the Autonomous Communities. Therefore, in order to ensure that all students acquire the basic competences, without sacrificing excellence, this Council urges the Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Authorities to overcome this situation, to promote a culture of perseverance and an enterprising spirit and to continue with the plans and actions of attention to diversity, to promote activities aimed at overcoming learning difficulties such as splits and reinforcements of basic skills and to increase the programmes of diversification and the Reinforcement, Guidance and Support Plans (PROA), which should be adequately evaluated.

It also proposes the development of a General Urgent Action Plan, after consulting the Sectorial Table, within the Sectorial Conference on Education, to address the problems expressed in this Report, in order to establish educational equity as defined in Title II of the LOE, without forgetting the necessary compensatory measures for those schools which, for social or cultural reasons, enrol a relatively high percentage of pupils with special educational needs, and trying to avoid their excessive concentration in a single centre.

2nd) Another concern that the State School Council shares with society is early school leaving, closely related to the high percentage of students who complete compulsory education without any qualifications. Unfortunately, the data have not improved during the present academic year and the differences between regions pointed to in previous reports still remain. Although there has been a positive implementation of the Early School Leaving Prevention Plan adopted by the Sectorial Conference on Education, it is urgent to provide a way forward to students who complete their compulsory schooling and do not get qualifications. In particular, the Council proposes that an official certificate should be issued to these students. This certificate should be valid for employment purposes and should provide access to specific vocational modules, according to the students' situation and possibilities.

3rd) It is necessary that the Education Authorities request an additional effort from schools in order to improve student success and reduce early school leaving. And, consequently, they should encourage, guide and support schools. To this end, in the framework of autonomy in accordance with the LOE, they should encourage each school, in view of its situation, to set explicit, realistic goals and in line with those goals, to take concrete measures for improvement which should be expressed in the school Annual General Programme. Such measures should include, among others, teaching strategies focused on the needs of students, educational commitments between families and the school and an effective system of information and guidance in view of students' individual situations.

It is also requested from the Ministry of Education to carry out detailed studies on other aspects that may influence on the qualifications of students such as academic year repetition, actual teaching time for secondary students and rate of teacher absenteeism, the causes that motivate all this and the measures implemented by different Authorities to control and mitigate its effects.

4th) The gap between the academic performance of male and female students remains. The so-called "school failure" is still more pronounced in the case of males. It is urgent, therefore, that Education Authorities begin the study of the reasons for this difference and prepare specific plans to offer young people attractive training opportunities including awareness campaigns addressed to the families and specific actions for students with family and social deprivations or who reject educational institutions.

5th) On the other hand, the State School Council believes that the Initial Professional Qualification Programmes (PCPI) are one of the most appreciated measures of attention to diversity by the students who are currently enrolled in these programs. In this sense, it is necessary that the Education Authorities and the Ministry of Education create an attractive and sufficient offer to meet the existing demand, to spare no resources to its implementation in all compulsory secondary education schools and jointly establish a common basis with a two-year structure in the whole country. It also aims to facilitate access from this initial qualification to the Intermediate Level Cycles of Vocational Education, taking into account criteria such as economic environment and the real needs of education and employment.

4. Post-Compulsory Education: Bachillerato and Vocational Training

1st) The huge deficit of Spain in relation to the success rate of students in the 18-24 age group in obtaining post-compulsory secondary education qualifications still remains. Therefore, the European objective for 2010 which set this rate at 85% is still distant. The imbalance between the students enrolled in Bachillerato and Vocational Training also worries the State School Council. It is therefore recommended that the Education Authorities should take measures to increase enrolment and qualifications in vocational studies, promoting a culture of perseverance and an enterprising spirit, to establish an integrated system of information and professional guidance, to promote information campaigns on job training suited to the demands of the production system and to establish greater flexibility between Vocational Cycles, Bachillerato and college.

In this sense, the State School Council urges the Ministry of Education to change the current regulations in order to guarantee that students who pursue Intermediate Level Cycles of Vocational Training, whose teachings have continuity in Higher Level Cycles, can access the latter directly, once passed the Intermediate Level. If any students want to access a Higher Level Cycle not directly related to the Intermediate Cycle they have studied, they should pass a specific training course, with a significant value, to access the Higher Level Cycles.

2nd) The State School Council recommends revising the current structure of Bachillerato, making its organization more flexible with the goal of achieving a greater number of students, including those currently leaving these studies, to achieve the objectives of this stage by an arrangement suitable to their personal characteristics and circumstances. It also proposes increasing the quality and the diversity of the courses offered in this stage of education, including a sufficient supply of properly planned Bachillerato night courses as well as distance learning courses throughout the whole State, reinforcing guidance in the last year of Compulsory Secondary Education so that students have broad information, including the design of the university studies included in the Bologna Plan, which allow them to choose the type of studies or path most appropriate to their competences and interests. The implementation of the new University Entrance Tests requires proper coordination between Secondary Schools and Universities so that they are in accordance with the contents and functions of Bachillerato and the Council proposes the Ministry and the Education Authorities to establish mechanisms to evaluate the performance of the new test model to see if it meets the objectives.

3rd) The State School Council considers it is necessary to continue to develop all measures aimed at increasing enrolment in Intermediate Level Cycles of Vocational Training: completing the development of the Catalogue of Vocational Training Qualifications within the framework of the LOE, increasing the number of schools providing this education with quality assurance, strengthening the Work Centre Training (FCT), allowing to do part of the FCT in other countries and establishing specific financial mechanisms for students while studying this training module. To prevent early school leaving, we recommend the development of a plan of specific grants for students of Vocational Training and financial incentives to students and business in order to facilitate the development of education and employment solutions, which allow students to combine training and part-time work.

4th) In the current economic crisis, last year recommendation by the State School Council remains in full force: paying specific attention to the groups of adults who have not completed Higher Secondary Education and could return to the education system, preferably to obtain the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate or to do Intermediate Level Vocational Training. For this, it is necessary to increase the number of qualifications, including Voluntary Social Worker and make the courses that require attendance more flexible so that they can be studied at night, in addition to developing e-learning and distance learning platforms. The State School Council also thinks it is convenient to increase the Integrated Centres Network to optimize human and material resources and achieve a simultaneous formation of the two subsystems of Vocational Training. But this increase should not imply that non-integrated schools are affected and their resources decrease.

5th) It is very positive that the recognition and accreditation of Level 1 professional competences, which are integrated into the Professional Certificates of the Employment Authority, has been initiated as recommended by this Council in previous reports. But to develop this measure to its full extent and to ensure the mobility of workers, the State School Council urges the Educational Authorities that the assessment, recognition and accreditation of competences should be made in an identical manner and coordinated throughout the State, with reference to the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications. This assessment, recognition and accreditation should also cover all the teachings which are intended to professionalism.

5. Expenditure on education

1st) In spite of the increase in public expenditure on education in the year 2009, Spain lags behind with respect to levels of public spending calculated as a percentage of GDP, below the average of the European Union and OECD countries. The State School Council reiterates the need to increase our public education spending to reach the average of the European Union countries, an obligation that derives from our own education legislation.

2nd) The State School Council urges the Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Authorities to compensate for the regional inequalities in regard to education spending and increase the rate of investment in education to reach 7% of GDP, to correct the historical deficit that we maintain about most European Union countries.

3rd) Notwithstanding the current difficult economic situation, we must not forget that expenditure on education is an investment of undeniable value to improve our economic and employment figures. That fact, combined with the element of equity and personal and social balance that a quality education for all involves, not only advises the maintenance of existing educational spending today but its increase in the levels outlined above, to place education in a prevalent place in overcoming this crisis our economy is facing

4th) The increase on public education expenditure by the Education Authorities to reach the same average as the countries in our geographical, political and economic environment must be expressed, by legal requirement, in a plan for the ten years following the entry into force of the current Organic Law of Education. The Council urges the Education Authorities, within the Sectorial Conference on Education to make further progress with the establishment of such a plan to increase our expenditure on education, fostering shared and coordinated policies in spending priorities, their highest level of effectiveness and efficiency and placing students as the principle public education spending policy should revolve around.

5th) The State School Council urges the Ministry of Education to establish by law a maximum lag relative to the average educational public spending in Spain under which the Autonomous Communities cannot spend to avoid, on the one hand, that their lack of educational investment, prevents ensuring equity and quality education with the same guarantees as in the rest of the Autonomous Communities and, secondly, that the Spanish average decreases and gets away from achieving the objectives set for the entire state.

6. Coexistence and equality in schools

1st) The State School Council believes that the involvement of the educational community in order to foster school life /climate based on respect is the best platform to achieve adequate academic performance. It would therefore be desirable for the Ministry of Education to revitalize the Coexistence Observatory in order to expand and disseminate the studies it has been doing. These studies place particular emphasis on the quality of teacher/student relationship; they consider the students the main character in education and include valuable recommendations for improving school life, relying on the consensus of the rules of coexistence and conflict mediation.

It is also proposed that indicators on school life and coexistence in schools should be established to assess the improvement impact of the measures adopted with respect to the assumption of civic values and habits, to the effective integration of foreign students or to effective equality between men and women.

2nd) It is recommended that specific, basic regulations should be introduced to ensure that all schools have the necessary material and human resources to implement their Educational Project and Coexistence Plan and sufficient organizational capacity to provide singular responses in required cases. In the same way, the Ministry of Education is urged to enact a Royal Decree updating the 1995 one on students' rights and duties, adapting it to the current education system and representing a common framework for all students. It is also proposed revising the regulations on coexistence and the impact of best practices within the Sectorial Conference on Education and carrying out awareness campaigns by the Education Authorities and educational community addressed at secondary students and their families to encourage studying and to strengthen the non-sexist and non-racial academic and professional guidance, both at Compulsory Secondary Education and in Bachillerato.

3rd) ICT and the Internet are powerful tools of education and socialization of young people. While these new media offer many possibilities to their users, they are not exempt of risks that should be avoided to safeguard the physical and psychological integrity of children and youngsters. Therefore, this Council recommends the Education Authorities should develop initiatives to learn the impact of the media and

the Internet on the students, and should strengthen education in the wise use of media and technology.

4th) The State School Council believes that the recognition and professional authority of teachers should be promoted and the development of a basic law which includes teachers in state-funded private schools and is recognized state-wide should be considered. This Law should be supplemented by other measures, such as the incorporation of new professional profiles in the schools that complement the educational task, the decrease of the ratios, the increase in staff and guidance network and the improvement of teacher training in conflict resolution among others.

To improve school life it is essential a greater prestige of teaching, that families accept teachers' guidance and disseminate an image of schools as cultural and formative environments by the media. The coverage in the media of school conflict situations or harassment is an issue of particular relevance and the rights of children should be protected. Therefore, it is demanded that the Education Authorities and the media should reach an agreement on self-regulation to ensure children's rights and avoid distorting the image of schools

5th) The State School Council considers it is essential that the Education Authorities ensure compliance with the regulations governing the actions of the education system in relation to gender equality contained in the LOE (Organic Law of Education) and the Organic Law 3/2007 for the effective equality of women and men. It is also recommended the promotion of that principle among the school community and the specific training of the persons designated within the school councils for this purpose, the establishment of protocols to facilitate immediate enrolment in cases of students affected by gender violence and the development of specific plans of equality in education.

7. Participation in the educational community

1st) Participation of social sectors in education represents one of the most important constitutional principles around which education should develop in our system. Notwithstanding the above mentioned, it is noticed that there is significant ignorance of the real situation of participation in our schools and in our regional councils.

Therefore, the State School Council considers it would be extremely interesting to know the status of such participation accurately, and for this reason it is

recommended that the Education Authorities and in particular the Institute of Evaluation, when developing the State System of Education Indicators, should study the possibility of increasing the Educational Process Indicators, including indicators related to student participation in schools and also increasing the existing indicators on the participation of parents. It would also be desirable to include indicators on the participation of the sectors of students and parents in the processes for the election of representatives on the School Council.

2nd) As regards the exercise of associations of students and parents it should be noted that the operation of registries and regional censuses related to these associations is developed with criteria not always consistent, which hinders the aggregation of data throughout the state and the determination of the representativeness of the various organizations. After consulting the Education Authorities it would be of great interest if, the Statistical Committee of the Sectorial Conference could examine the advisability of introducing in Statistics of Education in Spain aspects related to the students and parents' associations in non-university education.

3rd) The network of students and parents' associations must be supported by the different Education Authorities. One of the ways to provide this support is sustained in public subsidies that are convened by the Authorities. As in previous reports, the State School Council urges the Education Authorities to update and increase the amount of subsidies to the associative network in schools, due to the importance of these actions to strengthen educational participation in our system.

4th) The State School Council, as in last year Report, urges the Ministry of Education to promote the enactment a Royal Decree on Participation to regulate and guarantee the material and economic resources for its development by parents and students, both directly and through their associations, and at different levels, guaranteeing the jurisdictional areas of the Autonomous Communities.

8. Initial teacher training

1st) The State School Council urges the Education Authorities, both government and regional authorities, without prejudice to the autonomy of universities, to implement with rigour and seriousness, from the academic year 2009/2010, the new Master's degree for secondary teachers with special attention to the competence curriculum

knowledge, the teaching of different subjects and the relationship between them, including training for the proper exercise of personal tutoring, the didactic use of existing technologies and all aspects about the running of schools . Under the current rules, universities can design this Secondary Master's degree as a distance learning degree. For this reason, the State School Council urges the universities and those non-profit entities with which the agreement may exist to plan and conduct the Secondary Master's degree online, with the monitoring and quality standards set by the Ministry of Education for this method of training with the goal that a greater number of people have the opportunity to make this Master's degree.

2nd) So that the initial teacher education can fulfil its role and reach the quality rate the education system requires, the Authorities need to ensure the appropriate relationship between the modules-common, specific and practicum- and the subjects, to unify the criteria for the establishment of specialties and the selection of students to enter the Master and the Regional Ministries of Education should motivate public schools to participate in order to ensure that the selection of schools to be included in the network of collaborating centres for the planning and development of the practicum is done with criteria of quality and innovation.

3rd) The State School Council considers it is imperative to integrate secondary education teachers on the delivery of the new Master's degree without limiting their participation to the practicum, as secondary education teachers are the professionals who know best the reality of this educational stage and the training requirements needed by future secondary school teachers. In return, this work must be recognized. Thus, this Council urges Education Authorities to integrate those secondary education teachers responsible for teaching the Master's degree in the university teaching teams as partners

4th) Permanent training is a right and duty of all teachers. The State School Council considers that teacher training should be understood as a continuous, systematic and organized process to cover the whole teaching career. Teacher training should be promoted as in-service training in order to contribute to the reconciliation of work and family life, and should be linked to the actions of the schools themselves, so it is they who should determine training needs. It is also necessary to expand programs subscribed with universities and to adapt training plans to the latest professional needs that are priorities, such as language training, development of basic competences in the classroom, use of ICT and early identification of special educational needs and educational support. To cope with the demand for teacher training, this Council requests that a wide range of online training should be promoted.

5th) The State School Council urges the Educational Authorities to care about budget provisions to cover the entire process and to assess the implementation of the Master's degree in all Spanish universities in order to learn effectively if the initial training of future teachers reaches the level of quality that the educational system needs and society demands.

Furthermore, it is essential to solve the problems arising from lack of coordination, delays in the publication of regulations and changes in ongoing studies, in order to prevent all damage that may arise for the Master's degree students in different universities.

9. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs arising from disabilities

1st) The State School Council urges the Education Authorities to establish the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a guiding framework and necessary reference of legislation, policies and decisions and educational practices of public authorities. This Convention was adopted by the UN in December 2006 and has been fully in force and applicable in Spain since May 2008. In particular, article 24, devoted to the inclusive education of persons with disabilities.

2nd) The State School Council considers it is necessary to include attention to students with disabilities between the quality indicators of the education system. It also considers it is essential the early detection of educational needs of specific support arising from disabilities. Diagnostic assessments will be considered a priority at this school population with the provision of support resources for immediate intervention after detection so that the students with special needs of educational support can pursue the objectives generally set for all the students. To achieve them, the Authorities must ensure the qualifications and competence update in initial and continuing teacher training, and in educational guidance staff, with knowledge of various current teaching, technological resources which allow to care these students with equal opportunities and in terms of quality and equity.

3rd) The State School Council urges the Ministry of Education and the Education Authorities to provide schools with the human and material resources required, especially in ordinary schools, to meet the educational needs of students with these

characteristics and to make inclusion possible. To ensure not only access but also the retention and promotion of students with disabilities within the education system, Education Authorities should ensure that adequate resources are available to support each student with disabilities over all stages, including non compulsory stages, allowing physical access to communication, learning contents, new technologies and the various activities carried out in general for all students, consistent with the principle of equal opportunities, non discrimination and universal accessibility required by the law in this area.

4th) The State School Council proposes the development of coordination programmes between the different levels and adequate counselling of these students, so as to facilitate the transition between stages, providing information and advice to students and their families about educational and employment options that best suit their abilities and attitudes, guiding them in the training process and, facilitating this way their subsequent insertion into the labour force. On the other hand, the Council proposes to establish, for students with disabilities who request so, flexibility measures and /or alternative methodologies of foreign language learning and flexible or alternative accreditation requirements of the level achieved, particularly in relation with speaking.

5th) The Organic Law on Education provides that Education Authorities should take appropriate measures so that these students' parents receive appropriate individualized guidance and the necessary information in an easy and understandable way, to assist them in educating their children, observing the necessary accessibility measures if the case requires. Accordingly, this Council urges the Authorities to give effect to the participation of families in decisions that affect the schooling and educational processes of their children with specific needs of educational support arising from disabilities.