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SPANISH EDUCATION RESHAPED BY POLITICAL CHANGES, ECONOMIC REALITIES

by Kevin F. Rolwing

It could be argued that Spain has undergone more profound political, economic, and social change than any other Western European country in the past quarter century. Since the death of General Franco in 1975, Spain has been transformed from an oppressive military dictatorship into a vibrant parliamentary democracy.

Once snubbed by other Western European nations because of its despotic military dictatorship, Spain was admitted to the European Union in 1986. Other European countries then began to pour investment moneys into its economy and Spain increasingly adopted European Union standards and practices. After years of political and social isolation, Spain has emerged as a European and world player.

The transition has seen a continual shift and transfer of power from the central government to the regional and local governments. In the realm of education, Spain has been strengthening and diversifying educational structures, programs, and goals to adhere to European Union guidelines and to improve quality, and has been carrying out a policy of decentralization by giving more financial, administrative, and curricular responsibility to the regional governments.

Spain under Franco

Economic decline and resulting worker discontent and labor strife had led to a victory by a coalition of left-leaning and socialist parties in the elections of 1931. The coalition was both strongly anti-monarchical and anti-clerical, and proposed, among other things, abolition of the monarchy, transition to a socialist form of government, separation of



Church and State, state-control of education, and more regional autonomy.

In 1936 General Franco took control of a military uprising and united all anti-government groups—monarchists, fascists (the Falangists), and conservative Church authorities—to form the Nationalist front. Abetted by the critical aid of the Continent's other two Fascist dictators, Mussolini and Hitler, Franco's forces defeated the Republican loyalists in the brutal Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939.

Franco ruled Spain with an iron fist for 36 years from 1939 to 1975 as *Caudillo por la gracia de Dios*, Leader by the grace of God, which was stamped on every Spanish coin. Political parties were banned, trade unions were outlawed, and strikes were declared acts of treason. The only political organization allowed was the National Move-

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ment, which consisted of different and sometimes competing vested interest groups: monarchists, Falangists, conservative Catholics, the armed forces, business interests, and civil servants. Roman Catholicism was made the state religion, and by the Law of Succession, Spain was declared to be a Catholic, social and representative monarchy.

Franco saw himself as the savior of Spain, and rather than impose a new social structure, wanted to return Spain to its traditional form of governance by a strong monarchy supported by the armed forces and the Roman Catholic church.

When the bells tolled for Generalísimo Francisco Franco y Bahamonde on November 20, 1975, no one could foresee what lay ahead for Spain, but most Spaniards hoped that the death of the dictator would spell a rebirth of their nation.

Juan Carlos I and the New Democracy

In 1969, Franco had named as his successor Juan Carlos I de Borbón, the nephew of Alfonso XIII, who had abdicated the throne in 1931. Few would have envisioned that Franco's protégé would be the man to lead Spain skillfully and quickly to a new constitution and democratic government.

In his very first speech after assuming power as king and head of state, Juan Carlos I announced that he would restore all liberties to the people. In the early and uncertain days following Franco's death, many thought Juan Carlos I would be pushed aside by forces opposed to the liberalization measures proposed by the new king and his hand-picked government. Yet by 1978, Spain had a new constitution guaranteeing universal suffrage, the freedom to form unions, the freedom to strike, the separation of church and state, establishment of a bicameral legislature, and guarantees of autonomy for the distinct cultural regions. The socialist and communist political parties were allowed to operate once again. Many political observers see the new constitution, reforms, and political climate brought about by the astute maneuvering and brokering on the part of Juan Carlos I as little less than a political miracle.

The Autonomous Communities

Contemporary Spain has grown out of an amalgamation of different kingdoms with their own distinct histories and languages. "Spanish" is not usually referred to as "*español*" in Spain, but rather as "*castellano*" (Castilian), in acknowledgment that one in four Spanish citizens speaks as a mother tongue something other than Castilian Spanish: Catalan, Basque, Galician, or Valencian. As part of the devolution of power and rights to the regions of Spain, the 1978 constitution allowed the existing political units, the provinces, to group themselves on the basis of shared historic, ethnic and linguistic background into larger political units called the autonomous communities. The process was completed in 1983 when 17 autonomous communities of widely differing populations and economic strength emerged from the 50 existing provinces.

The New Democracy, the Autonomous Communities, and Education

The new constitution of 1978 set in motion a process of political and educational decentralization by granting the autonomous communities "fundamental responsibility" for education. It established the following principles: the fundamental right to education, the freedom of religious teaching, that basic education be mandatory, the autonomy of universities, and that education be the fundamental responsibility of the autonomous communities.

The 1978 constitution also gave autonomous communities the right to use their regional language on a "co-official" basis. Language use was, in fact, one of the most contentious issues of the new democracy. The use of Castilian Spanish, and its geographical extension, had traditionally been seen as a unifying force, whereas use of regional languages was considered divisive and encouraging regional separatism.

Franco had forbidden the use of any language other than Castilian. While people continued to use their regional mother tongue with friends and family, the Francoist prohibition strengthened the position of Castilian Spanish as the pre-eminent and preferred language. Many families from non-Castilian regions saw to it that their children became completely fluent in Castilian Spanish as a tool to get ahead in life, often to the point that their regional language was abandoned, no longer spoken even at home.

Heavy migration from Castilian-speaking regions to the more industrial regions of Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Valencia, especially to the urban areas, also contributed to the weakening of the regional languages, which began to be regarded as backward and rustic, having little value beyond quaint folkloric interest.

In order to stop this decline, the non-Castilian autonomous communities have formed special departments for the study of their regional languages and promote linguistic policies designed to re-invigorate their use. Their stated goal is to form a bilingual citizenry, capable of understanding and expressing themselves in two co-official languages.

Six autonomous communities with 42% of Spain's population now have an official regional language along with Castilian Spanish: Catalonia (Catalan), Balearic Islands (Catalan), Valencia (Valencian), Galicia (Galician-*Gallego*), the Basque Country (Basque-*Euskara*), and Navarre (Basque).

Instruction in elementary and secondary schools increasingly is being given in the medium of the regional language, although Castilian Spanish must, by law, also be taught as a language subject. At university level, students have the option to sit examinations in either the regional language or Castilian Spanish, and professors have the option to give lectures in either language. Often, a course will be offered in different sections along language lines. Educational documents are more often than not now issued in the regional language. Documents from the Basque Country are issued in a bilingual format.

Full control over management of federal education

funds also has been transferred to seven of the autonomous communities: Andalusia, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Canary Islands, Galicia, Navarre, and Valencia, and will be transferred to the other ten autonomous communities in 1998.

Public and private outlays on education have steadily increased in the past decade, both in absolute terms (1.55 trillion pesetas in 1986 as compared to 4.18 trillion pesetas in 1996) and as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (4.8% in 1986 to 5.7% in 1996).

In their successful parliamentary election campaign of 1982, the Socialist Party (*PSOE-Partido Socialista Obrero de España*) proposed two basic goals for the educational system: the guarantee of the right to education and the improvement of quality of instruction from pre-elementary level to university level. The Socialists remained in power for fourteen years until 1996, with Felipe Gonzalez serving the entire period as Spain's prime minister, and brought about three major educational reform laws:

- 1983 Law of University Reform (LRU—*Ley de Reforma Universitaria*)
- 1985 Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE—*Ley Orgánica del Derecho a la Educación*)
- 1990 Organic Law on the General Organization of the Educational System (LOGSE—*Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*)

The Law of University Reform

In general, a chasm was perceived to exist between a modernizing society and a stultified university system which was unresponsive to society's new demands. Degree programs and curricula had changed very little in decades; the most recent degrees in engineering, for example, had been introduced in the 1920s. Universities were seen as simply passing on stale, stodgy information and generating very little new or interesting research.

There also was little correlation between what the marketplace demanded and what the university produced. As an example of private enterprise filling this void, a number of American-style business schools had sprung up in the 1980s, offering degrees and programs not found at officially-sanctioned universities. Among the best-known were the Escuela Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas (ESADE) and the Escuela Superior de Marketing y Administración in Barcelona, and the Instituto de Empresa in Madrid.

Some of the gravest problems affecting university education were as follows:

- University massification: the student population had increased almost tenfold in the period 1960-1980 (71,000 to 650,000).
- Dropout rates deemed too high (30%).
- Rigid curricula: new degree programs had been introduced at a snail's pace, and the curriculum was too rigidly controlled by the Ministry of Education and Science.
- Unsuitability of degrees awarded vs. market demand.

The Law of University Reform (LRU—*Ley de Reforma Universitaria*) enacted in 1983 was designed to comply with the new constitution, to adapt university education to

European Union directives in expectation of Spain's admission to this body, and to qualitatively reform the university sector. It gave more power to the autonomous communities and the universities and included the following provisions:

- Universities could offer their own degree programs (*títulos propios*) in addition to degree programs officially sanctioned by the Ministry of Education and Science (*títulos oficiales*).
- Degree programs could be shortened by the universities.
- For the first time, private universities could be established. (There are now six: Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio, Universidad San Pablo, Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, and Universidad Europea de Madrid, all in Madrid; and Universidad Ramón Llull and Universidad Oberta de Cataluña, both in Barcelona).
- Degree programs (*títulos oficiales*) approved by the Ministry of Education and Science would be less rigidly controlled by granting the universities more input into structure of curricula.
- New university governing bodies, the university councils, made up of community civic groups, professors and students could be established.
- Power of budgeting decisions was ceded to the autonomous communities and the universities.
- Personnel selection was ceded to universities.

Official university degree programs are classified as: short cycle (*ciclo corto*) which lead to intermediate degrees (*Ingeniero Técnico*) (Engineering Technician) and terminal degrees such as *Título de Enfermera* (Title of Nurse), and long cycle (*ciclo largo*) programs leading to a licentiate degree or professional degree such as Title of Engineer (*Título de Ingeniero*); and doctorate (*doctorado*).

In order to reduce the burgeoning student population and the stress and drain on university infrastructure, long cycle university degree programs have been reduced in the main by one year. Almost all licentiate-level (long cycle) programs had been five years in length, with the exception of six-year programs in the more professional and technical fields such as engineering, medicine, and architecture; the LRU now allows universities to impart licentiate-level programs in four and five years. The more professional and technical programs such as engineering and architecture have been reduced to five years of study, while the curriculum of medicine has remained at six years in length. The proportion of university students enrolled in short-cycle programs rose from 27% in 1986 to 34% in 1996.

The LRU has made official degree programs (*títulos oficiales*) more flexible by allowing the universities much more control in curriculum design. The new law stipulates that at least 25% to 30% of the courses of official degree programs be mandated by the Ministry of Education and Science (*materias troncales*—core courses), with the rest being determined by the university and the student. Previously, the Ministry of Education and Science had mandated 100% of the curriculum. Universities may at their discretion stipulate obligatory courses (*materias obligatorias*) and

optional major study courses (*materias optativas*) to fill out the curriculum. An innovative feature of the law is the option granted to students to choose 10% of their courses from all the courses offered by the university (*materias de libre elección*—elective courses).

In order to better measure students' academic progress and accomplishment and to facilitate student mobility between institutions, a credit system has been established, with a credit defined as ten hours of theoretical or practical instruction. Short cycle (*Diplomado, Ingeniero Técnico*) degree programs carry a minimum of 180 credits for three years of study, while licentiate programs have a minimum of 300 credits for their four and five-year programs.

Most of the *títulos propios* created by the universities have taken the form of graduate degrees not corresponding to the traditional university educational ladder: master's degrees (*título de master*) and specialist degrees (*título de especialista*), as well as various shorter continuing education and certificate programs. Admission to the graduate degree programs requires an intermediate degree (*Diplomado, Ingeniero Técnico*, etc.), or a licentiate-level degree.

Lengths of the programs are expressed in terms of credits and vary. For example, at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid the *Título de Master* consists of at least 50 credits and a degree project, whereas the *Título de Especialista* program consists of at least 10 credits. Students who do not pass all the examinations or complete the degree project receive as consolation a Certificate of Attendance (*Certificado de Asistencia*).

Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE)

The 1985 Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE—*Ley Orgánica del Derecho a la Educación*) developed further the basic principles set out by the constitution and returned management of schools to the local communities. It established the following: the right to free compulsory education, that education respect Spain's different languages and cultures, control of public schools by school boards (*consejo escolar*) formed from the school community (local government, teachers, parents, students), and that private schools which meet certain conditions be financed by public funds.

The LOGSE Educational Reform of 1990

The educational act of 1990, the *Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*—[General Arrangement of the Education System (Organic) Act], hereafter referred to by its Spanish acronym LOGSE, fundamentally alters elementary and secondary education by setting new priorities in terms of curriculum and by the implementation of a new structure of education.

Compulsory education has been extended from eight to ten years. Foreign languages and technical education receive more emphasis. Pupils must now learn at least one

foreign language from the age of eight on; English is the overwhelming choice. LOGSE has been designed to be implemented gradually year by year until 2000, so that educational credentials from the old elementary/secondary educational ladder, (*Educación General Básica* (EGB), *Bachillerato Unificado y Polivalente* (BUP), and *Curso de Orientación Universitaria* (COU), also will be issued during the transition period.

Primary Education (*Educación Primaria*) consists of six years (ages 6-12) and is divided into three cycles of two years each: A foreign language is taught by a specialized teacher to pupils eight years and older. Physical education and music are also taught by specialized teachers. Classroom sizes are limited to 25 pupils.

Obligatory (Lower) Secondary Education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*) consists of four years (ages 12-16) and is divided into two cycles of two years each. Options exist at this stage for a second foreign language, cultural studies, or occupational education. Classroom sizes are limited to 30 pupils. The title of *Graduado en Educación Secundaria* (Secondary Education Graduate) is awarded. This completes compulsory education and gives access to upper secondary study (*Bachillerato LOGSE*), or intermediate (*Grado Medio*) occupational training.

Upper Secondary Education — *Bachillerato LOGSE*—consists of two years (ages 16-18). There are four university-preparatory streams: Arts, Natural and Health Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Technology. Classroom sizes are limited to 30 pupils.

Occupational Training: in the past, occupational training was one of the weakest areas of the educational system, especially when compared to the excellent training programs offered by other countries of the European Union. Employers thought little of the programs, preferring to train their own employees. To bring its occupational training programs in line with European Union guidelines and to improve their quality, acceptance, and effectiveness in the labor market, Spain has upgraded the academic admission requirements to the programs and the teaching qualifications of both the general subject and technical subject teaching personnel.

Occupational training now consists of two levels: Intermediate (*Grado Medio*) and *Grado Superior* (Higher), each consisting of 1,000-2,000 hours of occupational training at a job site and theoretical instruction at an educational center. Access to *Grado Medio* follows completion of obligatory secondary education (10 years of schooling) and leads to the title of *Técnico* (Technician). (Previously, one had access to the first level of occupational training after eight years of elementary education.)

Access to *Grado Superior* follows completion of the *Bachillerato LOGSE* (12 years of total schooling) and leads to the title of *Técnico Superior* (Higher Technician).

Teachers are required to have more pedagogical training. General Education teachers must complete a *licentiate* program, and a one-year teacher training program, the

Certificado de Aptitud Pedagógico (Certificate of Pedagogical Aptitude).

Technical subject teachers must have completed a short-cycle (*Ingeniero Técnico, Arquitecto Técnico, or Diplomado*) program and the one-year teacher training program, the *Certificado de Aptitud Pedagógico* (Certificate of Pedagogical Aptitude).

Programs of Social Guarantee (*Garantía Social*): for those students between the ages of 16 and 21 who have not completed obligatory secondary education (tenth grade), and thus are not eligible for admission to *Grado Medio* technical training, special employment/training programs managed by local governments and non-profit organizations are available.

Summary

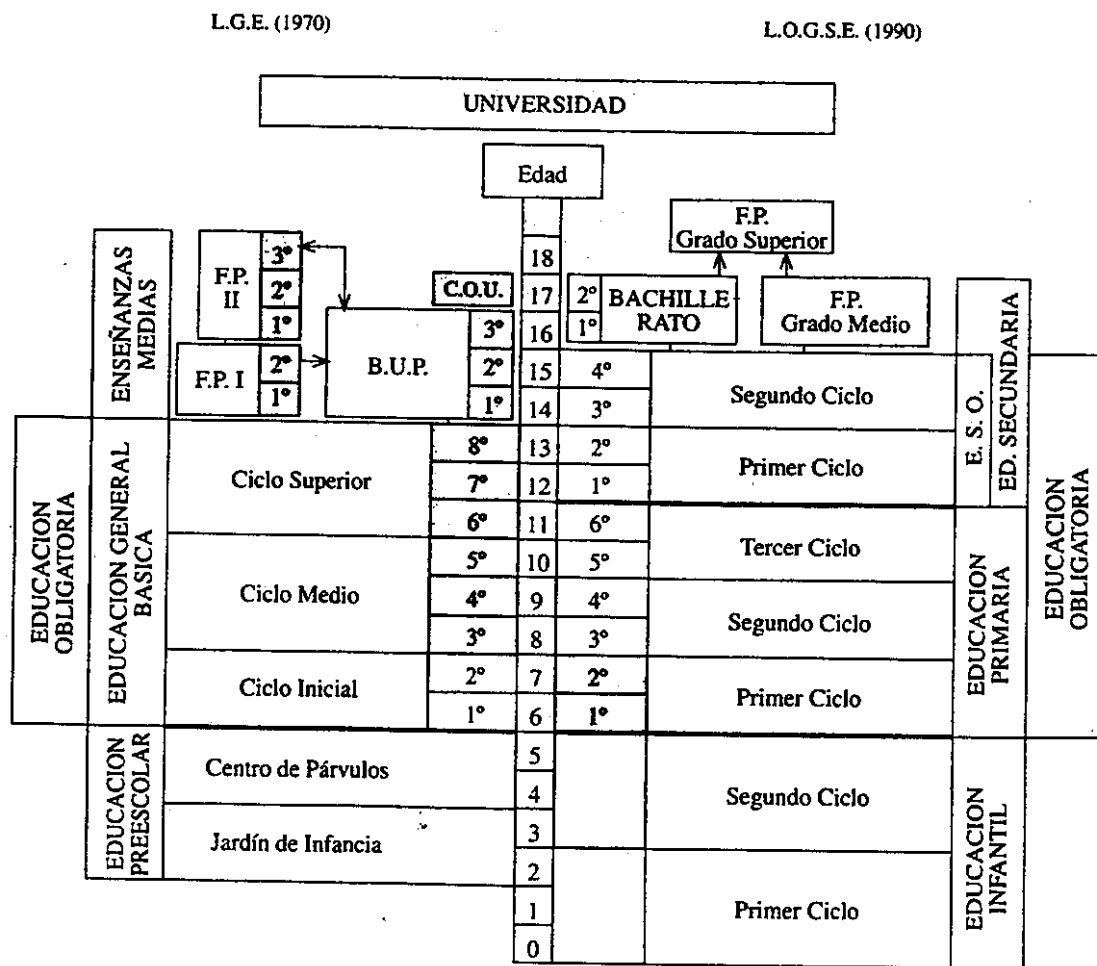
The result of the new reforms in Spain is a more democratic, decentralized, responsive educational system.

The Ministry of Education and Science recently was merged with the Ministry of Culture to become the Ministry of Education and Culture. The once overbearing and unwieldy bureaucratic giant now plays a more limited role in maintaining the national integrity of the educational system by establishing the educational framework and the minimum curricular content for programs and awards.

Despite efforts to streamline university programs, Spain must still contend with the problem of a rapidly growing student population.

Chronic unemployment of 20% in the general workforce persists, motivating young people to enroll in higher education in greater numbers than ever. Between 1986 and 1996, university enrollment rose from 900,000 to 1,500,000. Spain now has one of the highest participation rates in higher education in Europe (25% for the age group 18-21), but also ranks very high among countries whose graduates (14%) cannot find employment.

EDUCATIONAL LADDER OF SPAIN, SHOWING THE OLD SYSTEM (LEFT) AND THE NEW SYSTEM (RIGHT)



Source: *Education: National Report*, Ministry of Education, Spain 1994