



Please cite the source as:

Digón, P. (2003). The Education Quality Act: A critical analysis of the new Spanish educational reform. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa*, 5 (1). Retrieved month day, year, from: <http://redie.ens.uabc.mx/vol5no1/contents-digon.html>

Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa

Vol. 5, No. 1, 2003

The Education Quality Act: A Critical Analysis of the New Spanish Educational Reform

La Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación: análisis crítico de la nueva reforma educativa española

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(Received: December 10, 2002; accepted for publishing: March 12, 2003)

Abstract

The primary purpose of this article is to analyze the changes introduced into the Spanish educational system with the approval of the Education Quality Act, as well as to show the main criticisms of this new reform, which for many represents a clear example of neoliberal and neoconservative policies in education.

Keywords: Educational reform, educational policy, neoliberal policies, neoconservative policies.

Resumen

El artículo que se presenta tiene como principal finalidad analizar los cambios que se introducen en el sistema educativo español con la aprobación de la Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación (LOCE), así como exponer las principales críticas hacia esta nueva reforma que para muchos representa un claro ejemplo de la aplicación de políticas de corte neoliberal y neoconservador en el campo de la educación.

Palabras clave: Reforma educativa, política educativa, políticas neoliberales, políticas neoconservadoras.

Introduction

In June of 2000 the Spanish Education Minister, Pilar del Castillo, announced that in this second term of the Popular Party, profound changes would be made in the Spanish educational system. During these years the Spanish government has approved with an absolute majority the reform of the Minimum of Required Courses for High School Education, the Organic Law of Universities, the Organic Law of the Qualifications for Professional Training, and recently, the Educational Quality Act. All of these educational reforms have been strongly criticized by different political and educational sectors, and have led to numerous protests, demonstrations and general strikes. These reforms of a clearly neoliberal and neoconservative cut carry with them the weightiest of changes in the Spanish educational system, and involve the denial of many of the advances made in recent years to promote a comprehensive education understood as a public service for all citizens. This article is an attempt to present the main changes introduced by the Education Quality Act, as well as the main criticisms which reveal the strongly neoliberal and neoconservative philosophy of this law.

Changes introduced by the Education Quality Act

The Education Quality Act (LOCE, its acronym in Spanish) introduces important changes in the stages of compulsory and non-compulsory education, and in the forms of school organization existing up to now. The need for these changes has been justified by referring to, among other things, the importance of education's responding to the new features of the information and knowledge society, and would promote the economic progress of our country. Special emphasis is placed on the great scholastic failure existing in Spain and the students' lower educational level; conspicuous is the increase in violence and conflict in the schools. To solve these problems it is considered crucial to develop a culture of effort and evaluation, to make the system flexible by introducing alternative ways of training, and to promote discipline in schools by giving more powers to the directors and more autonomy to the schools.

Children's Education, previously covering ages 0 to 6 years, is now divided into preschool education for children 0-3 years of age, and Early Childhood Education from 3 - 6. Preschool education continues to be voluntary, but acquires primarily the character of welfare, although educational; it should be taught by professionals with proper qualifications, but does not require certified teachers at this level. Pre-primary education (3-6 years) is still voluntary, but is established as free in the subsidized private schools that offer it. At this stage of only one year, teachers specializing in kindergarten education do the teaching. Conspicuous innovations are the defense of the need for a formal initiation into learning the techniques of reading and writing, the development of basic calculation skills, as well as beginning of learning the first foreign language which starts in the final year of this stage, and in information and communication technologies.

Regarding primary-school education, the LOCE does not introduce many changes, although it proposes to revise the core curriculum and enhance the instrumental areas (language and mathematics), foreign languages and the promotion of reading. It remains compulsory and free, with three years and six courses for children from 6 to 12 years old. The compulsory subject *Society, Culture and Religion* is introduced; it will include a confessional alternative and another, non-confessional one,¹ and will be used to compute the average grade. At the end of the stage there will be applied a diagnostic test to provide information and guidance. Instructors in charge of this stage will be teachers holding diplomas in various specialties.

Compulsory high school education (CHSE) undergoes important changes under the LOCE. It is still compulsory and free until the student turns 16, but important modifications are introduced. Conspicuous is the organization of this stage into *itineraries*² for students above the age of 14. In the third year of this stage the student body will be divided according to their performance, into two itineraries: technological and scientific/humanistic. In the fourth year, the students can choose between three itineraries: technological, scientific and humanistic. The technological itineraries will be oriented mainly toward professional training, while the other students will go to high school. The subject *Society, Culture and Religion* will be organized as in the primary-school stage.

In the first and second high school years reinforcement measures may be introduced for students having difficulties in achieving the objectives, inter alia, the training of so-called reinforcement groups. The fourth course called *Course for Academic and Professional Post-Compulsory Orientation* will have a propedeutic character for further studies or for job placement. After the second course the Report on Scholastic Orientation (RSO) will be prepared; these will help students and their families choose their scholastic routes. It also establishes the Professional Initiation Program (PIP), two years long, with basic training contents and professional modules, aimed at students who at 15 or 16 years have not adapted to high school and do not want to follow its itineraries. Foreign students can access these programs when they present difficulties in adjusting to the stage.

Evaluation in the CHSE will be by subjects, and those students who at the end of the course, and after failing the make-up examination, have suspended more than two subjects and must repeat the course. Once having passed the objectives of this stage or having successfully completed the PIP, they will obtain the title of Graduate of Compulsory High School Education, which will give access to high school studies and those of Intermediate vocational training, and to inclusion in the workplace. This title can be obtained provisionally with one course pending. In case of failure to achieve this title, the student will be given a certificate of education showing her* years of study. The teachers at this stage will be doctors, lawyers, engineers or architects who have obtained the title of Teaching Specialist, which is awarded after successfully completing a one-year course, part of which is theoretical, and the other part practical. The LOCE establishes the possibility for schools to specialize in their curriculums, and if they do, the law allows them to establish complementary admissions criteria.

As for high school studies, these will cover two academic years, with three modalities: Arts, Sciences and Technology, and Humanities and Social Science. The main novelty of this stage is the need to pass the General Baccalaureate Test (GDP) for the high school diploma. This test will evaluate students' knowledge in common and specific subjects; the foreign language examination will include a written exercise and another, oral one. Passing this test will be required for college entry, and each university in turn will determine its entrance requirements. The high school grades will be the average between the GDP score and the grade record for this phase.

The LOCE also refers to students with *special educational needs*, among whom it includes foreign students, the intellectually gifted and those with special educational needs: in the latter group are included students with physical, psychiatric, sensory, and severe personality or behavioral disorders. Regarding *foreign students*, as we saw before, there is a great possibility that at age 15 they will be included in the PIP when they have not adapted to junior high school education; there are also plans to develop specific programs of Spanish language and culture for these students. For *intellectually gifted children* there is established the possibility of promoting specific training courses. Finally, with regard to *pupils with special educational needs* there is determined the possibility of their integration into mainstream schools in regular and specific classrooms, their attendance at special education centers or combined schooling.

Other important changes introduced concern the organization and management of schools. The LOCE provides that the directors cease to be chosen by the School Board, and that they be submitted to a merit contest evaluated by a selection committee composed of representatives from the government, and school

*Translator's note: Before the emergence of the feminist movement, English, like Spanish, used masculine pronouns in situations including both genders. Today, however, such usage is considered sexist, and has been replaced by forms like s/he, his/her, etc. To avoid the awkward repetition of these forms, we shall sometimes use the masculine pronoun, and sometimes the feminine.

members. Furthermore, their skill will be reinforced, and they will be considered the representatives of the school administration. Prominent among their competencies is the role of imposing disciplinary measures and streamlining the dispute resolution procedures in line with the interests of the Act in reinforcing procedures aimed at maintaining harmony in the classrooms and schools. The directors will receive specific training, a wage increase, may be relieved of teaching, will be valued in relation to the provision of public teaching positions and in other goals of professional character, and will maintain the basis and the additional remuneration when their terms end, if their work was evaluated positively. The government organs for the control and management of the school are the individual posts of Director, Head of Studies and Registrar. The School Board and the School Faculty are organizations of participation in the school's control management. Only students in the third grade of primary education and the first two years of compulsory junior high school education and who shall not have been the object of sanction may be elected to participate on the Council.

On the other hand, the LOCE speaks of the schools' *pedagogical, organizational and economic autonomy*. Pedagogical autonomy becomes a reality in developing specific educational programs, tutorial, academic, and professional guidance plans of action, and in every case, the development of educational projects. Schools, according to this autonomy, will adopt textbooks and other materials they consider appropriate. As we saw earlier, the law also provides for the possibility of *the curricular specialization of schools* and the introduction of new criteria for admitting students. The organizational autonomy is concretized in the production of general programming and internal regulations every year. Finally, economic autonomy means, among other things, the regulation of procedures by which schools obtain resources.

No major changes have been made with regard to *teacher training*. In initial training the different degrees for teachers in the stages of Primary, Junior High and High School have been retained, as well as the didactic specialty course for teachers in the last two stages, although, reduced to one academic period and another of practice teaching. Passing this course yields a degree in Didactic Specialization. One of the last amendments adopted, moreover, allows junior high school teacher trainees to do their practice teaching in private schools. As for ongoing education, there is talk about general plans for regularly-organized training. Particular attention is paid to assessing the teaching function defined as the need to provide incentives for the teaching career through promoting and evaluating professional and economic issues such as the tutorial role, updating, leadership and collaboration on innovation plans. As well, there are created new bodies of teachers, Professors of Junior High School, of Official Schools of Language and of Visual Arts and Design. Teachers with a B.A. or B.S. degree, and who are approved in a selective process can join these bodies. These professors have preference for the management of innovation projects, presidency in the PGB exam³ tribunals, the coordination of training programs, management of practical training for incoming teachers, and so on. The LOCE also includes other issues relating to the valuation of the teaching profession and ensuring protection and

legal assistance for teachers, the possibility of reducing the length of the work day for teachers over 55 years of age, and paid leave.

Finally, in regard to the *evaluation of the education system* it states that this depends on the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports through the National Institute for the Evaluation and Quality of the Educational System (INECSE, its acronym in Spanish). Evaluations will be external and internal. The external assessments include *general diagnostic evaluations*. The INECSE will periodically prepare a State System of Education Indicators and a General Plan for System Evaluation. The results of these evaluations will be released periodically. Moreover, the education inspectorate will implement evaluation plans for schools supported with public funds by publicizing the results. In relation to *school inspection*, the Act refers to the High Inspectorate and the Education *Inspectorate*. The latter establishes the existence of different specialties based on different levels, courses and educational programs.

Critique of the process followed in developing the Educational Quality Act

The process of the production and adoption of the LOCE has been accompanied by sharp criticism from political and educational sectors. Clear evidence has been given that this Act will be implemented without social consensus, which will adversely affect the educational community and society as a whole.

The process followed in the preparation of the LOCE was marked by haste and the lack of dialogue and debate, as well as secrecy, intentional feeding of doses of information through the media, and denying different groups and social sectors access to documents. The few meetings that were held became more of a political and publicity game than a real discussion and debate. Criticisms and proposals from different sectors were ignored, and only those from sectors in line with the government's ideology, such as the introduction of the Catholic religion as a compulsory subject, which also reinforced the alternative subject, something the Spanish Catholic Church had been rooting for years, and the regulation of free early childhood education, an old demand from the charter schools (private schools supported with public money). The 1,166 amendments were debated in Congress at a rate of 53 seconds each, and the changes (20 amendments from the Socialist Party, Canaria Coalition and Convergence and Union were accepted, and 56 from the Popular Party itself) did not involve substantial changes, but simply tried to soften the language (for example, they speak of reinforcement measures rather than reinforcement groups) and to silence the opposition (for example, there was introduced a section of compensatory measures for students with special educational needs).

It is interesting to recall what happened in the government Board of Education meeting where counselors of the LOCE walked out when this reform was going to be debated, because they were prevented from submitting their amendments and their views on the report. Many of those who left the session—such as Counselor

Marta Mata, driving force behind the movement for educational renewal who also resigned her post after 16 years on the Council—complained about the authoritarian way the rules were interpreted and the denial of freedom of expression. She also denounced the imbalance of forces on the School Council since last year when the State Education Authority took over from several renowned personalities (Moran, 2002).

The development of the reform has not come from an adequate diagnosis of the educational reality, nor has it considered the history of education in Spain; it has been marked from the outset by a manipulated search for “social panic and alarmism.” Through the communications media numerous reports were spread and statements about the alleged “severe and pervasive” problems of indiscipline and violence in schools, and the “serious and widespread” scholastic failure and decline of Spanish students’ education level due to the Socialists’ reform and their incompetent measures of understanding and automatic promotion. These issues were also related to the “serious and widespread” deterioration of values in Spanish youth reflected in the problems with “the bottle” or juvenile delinquency. The data used from the PISA report were analyzed in a decontextualized manner, omitting the fact that, for example, Spain is one of those European countries that invests the least amount money in education: public spending in this area represents 4.5% of GDP and occupies the eleventh position among the 15 countries of the European Union. In addition, public spending on education has stagnated for five years, the fact that private secondary education in Spain is stronger than public education—32.7% versus the European average of 15.1% (Gimeno Sacristán, 2002). In contradiction to these data, and consistent with neoliberal philosophy, education is blamed for the existing social and economic problems because of the alleged decline in the educational level, and at the same time is made responsible for the country’s economic progress, thus reducing the educational objectives to economic objectives (Apple, 2000).

On the other hand, much of the information used to defend the existence of these problems is contradicted by data published by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports itself, or by data from agencies such as the Center for Sociological Research, which demonstrates with statistics the existence of educational improvement in recent years, and a better education level. Also, statements about the failure of comprehensive systems in other countries and the existence of external and centralized evaluation tests ignore the fact that the very person in charge of the PISA report, Andreas Schleicher, criticized the practice of separating students at an early age into different learning itineraries, as is done in Germany, and forgot the past failure of highly-selective education systems in countries such as Australia (*streaming*), the United States (*curriculum tracks*), Canada, the United Kingdom (*streaming*) and our own country, with the experiences of Catalonia and the Basque Country, where it was proved that grouping by performance levels increased inequalities and especially harmed socially-disadvantaged groups (Gimeno Sacristán, 1999, 2002, Lingard, 2000; Zufiaurre, 1994). In addition, the prime minister defended the itineraries, using the example of Germany, Italy and Austria despite the fact that the first two had results below Spain in the latest PISA.

Many of the problems attributed to education are the result of broader social issues present in other countries with or without comprehensive education systems

Criticism of the measures introduced by the Education Quality Act

Besides the criticism of the LOCE drafting process, there are questions from various sectors about the measures introduced by this law, which reveal its strongly neoliberal and neoconservative philosophy, and show its lack of pedagogical foundation and its disregard of research done in this field. The following will discuss the most criticized aspects of the new reform.

The reform's financing measures are privatizational, and reflect the falsity of the declarations respecting the importance of education. To defend the need for the LOCE, constant comparisons have been made with other countries; however the Spanish Government now ignores the fact the estimated 91 million euros are totally ridiculous when compared with the 20 billion euros earmarked by the British government to carry out educational reform in their country or the 30 billion dollars channeled through the United States government for its reform. Attempts to give preferentiality to the private schools are clear in the LOCE, since, among other things, the regulation of free early childhood education involves increasing the number of agreements with these schools, and points to the possibility of recruiting practice teachers from them. If the contract reproduced here is modeled on the standard one for other business sectors, it could mean that these teachers would receive a lower salary than the rest of their colleagues (Pérez de Pablos, 2002b).

Moreover, as explained by Carme Chacón, a representative of Education of the Socialist Party (PSOE), the financial report shows that 967 public schools will receive more money, as compared with 1982 private schools that will have extra money to carry out the reform (*"El PSOE muestra las cuentas"*, 2002); of the 2300 new teachers, 738 will go to public schools, while 1560 will be destined for private schools (*"Del Castillo niega"*, 2002). The text says that the scholastic itineraries will be funded in compulsory high school education, only in those small schools with one or two classes per year; of these, 64% are private and 36% government (Pérez de Pablos, 2002a). Again, and in line with neoliberal policies in education, the application of privatization measures is based on a defense of the inefficiency of the public school, to which is attributed all the problems described above, and it is considered that only private enterprise can be really efficient and effective; public education should serve only the most disadvantaged and marginalized sectors of society (Torres, 2001).

Although the Act speaks of the importance of valuing the work of teachers, the reform shows a clear mistrust of teachers with increased centralized-control mechanisms. No new importance has been given to working conditions; and with the creation of new bodies that seek to benefit certain groups, there is an increase in the division and hierarchization of teachers. In the B.A program there is an insistence on promoting the need to "escape" lower levels of education, which are

seen as less important than the upper levels. Nor has any weight been added to initial and ongoing training; rather, the old system of different degrees for different teaching levels has been maintained: a diploma course for “teachers” of Elementary School, and a B.A. degree for “professors” of junior high and high school. The didactic specialty course for these last is neither changed nor improved. On the other hand, anything concerning specific plans for ongoing training has been removed from the bill passed in Congress, and the section referring to a specific amount of funding for teacher training is gone from the text of the financial report, which says only that such training requires an “additional effort.” This negates any real interest on the part of the government educational administration on the subject of improvement in teacher training.

The LOCE does not prevent failure in school, but expulses from the system those who have more difficulty. It is therefore segregated, elitist and classist. Education becomes a form of “social Darwinism” with so many obstacles that few can overcome them, rather than providing suitable conditions for allowing everyone to succeed. If with comprehension there were incorporated into education, sectors previously excluded and students who had left school or were still in first grade at age 14, with this law there is promoted the belief that only the most privileged can scale the whole pyramid of the educational system. It denies the belief that education can always motivate students’ progress, making teaching attractive because skills are the result of the acculturation processes. It defends, rather, the idea that the capability gap cannot be reduced with education, and that separating students by levels prevents the loss of the “best.” It seems thus to affirm the existence of a determinism based on innate abilities and the inevitability of social inequality. Education seems to be understood as a private right rather than as a public service; the values of solidarity, tolerance and living together are left out of the new system. In line with neoliberal and neoconservative policies it blames students for their failure, and ignores their social status; it alludes to the innate, defending the idea that each one is born with certain capabilities and that, therefore, not all are “worth” receiving a good education (Torres, 2001, Apple, 2000).

The Quality Act favors the dualization of the school system, converting the public school into something that should help students with more difficulties and favoring private and charter schools whose budget allocations are increased and their freedom even reinforced to provide some learning itineraries and not others, to admit certain students and not others, thanks to new criteria, and have even seen eliminated the requirement for integration. Curricular specialization may cause students from rural zones and the most disadvantaged and marginalized urban areas to have near them only schools that offer no more than the less-valued scholastic itineraries, which lead to early entry into the labor market, while centers in high purchasing areas offer more socially-valued itineraries leading to university studies. This will result in social conflicts and lack of social cohesion. The defense of the supposed school autonomy professes to increase competitiveness among them by promoting at the same time the neoliberal policies of free choice of school. However, these forms of education decentralization are based on a false

autonomy, since they increase the external control mechanisms by making public the results of external evaluations; but by ignoring the schools' different situations and not providing them with adequate financial and human resources, all they accomplish is to blame the schools for students' scholastic failure (Torres, 2001).

The LOCE prevents equal access for all students to a basic common culture until the age of 16 years; high school education loses its identity as a stage by being propedeutic, and explicit itineraries are created (options in third and fourth of CHSE, PIP) and hidden (reinforcement groups, training offers tailored for students with special educational needs), thus homogenizing the education system to understand diversity as something negative, which shows the belief in pedagogy centered on the teacher and based on the class lecture. This reinforces the process of labeling students with the subsequent creation of positive or negative expectations by teachers and the students themselves. Ignored, as well, are the possible prejudices based on social class, gender or race that may affect a student's orientation by the teacher toward one itinerary or another. It is not difficult to predict in advance which students will go to some itineraries and which to others. The socio-economic and cultural life of the family, gender, race, difficulty of knowing for sure what to study at the early age of fourteen when the identity is not yet well defined, and reports done by assessment and advisory teams determine the student's choice. The schools will be internally segregated into groups of "good" students and "bad" students, and there will also be segregation between "failure" schools and "success" schools (Fernández Enguita, 2002).

Equality and excellence for all are waived in this way, and individual promotion is defended on the basis of personal abilities. Students will be divided without compensatory purposes, and the homogeneous groups of "bad" students will probably have resources of the poorest quality; for example, teachers with less experience, since teachers with more seniority will want to give classes to the groups of "good" students, forgetting that these too can have their problems. The development of anti-school attitudes and reactive subcultures will thus be favored, because of having been stigmatized. Resistance will be criminalized through the possible assignment of these students to reinforcement groups and with the inclusion of "personality disorders" in the group of students with special educational needs that can be separated from the groups of "normal" students (Fernández Enguita, 2002).

The LOCE has no pedagogical foundation, and neither analyzes nor takes into account the true problems of education, such as the lack of resources, poor teacher training, the inexistence of access to a variety of curricular materials in the schools, the problems of educational inspection. The defense of the culture of effort knows nothing about existing pedagogical research on motivation and the importance of making teaching attractive. The defense of the evaluation culture is based on the false assumption that academic achievement can be identified with learning, when these are not the same. It denies the importance of developing critical thinking, responsibility and the emancipation of the student in relation to his learning, reinforcing the need to study only to pass tests.

It reinforces the academic approach and forgets the teaching of values. In keeping with the neoconservative policies on education, it defends the concept “back to basics,” underestimating other fields of knowledge, reinforcing the organization of contents into isolated disciplines, decontextualized and hierarchized, eliminating interdisciplinarity and globalization, and recovering the system of levels and propedeutic stages. It also emphasizes the importance of discipline and obedience to teachers, implicitly defending a teacher-centered, authoritarian and hierarchical pedagogy. With external testing and standards, educational content is reduced to those that allow students to pass exams. Knowledge becomes an end in itself and a tool for social selection (White, Bautista Martínez and Porlán, 2001), education is identified with instruction and the quality of learning with the amount of accumulated knowledge. The control of the curriculum is thus extreme, and the disqualification of teachers increases.

A strong indictment of “automatic promotion” as responsible for the decline in students’ academic level and increasing the chances of repeating a year in the high school stage ignores the problems and negative aspects involved in repetition. Various studies show the drawbacks of non-promotion for students and teachers. For the former, repetition creates problems of rehabilitation, loss of self esteem, breaking with the student’s group and other emotional problems; for the latter it includes increased feelings of guilt and failure and increased conflict with other teachers, families and students.

Moreover, the kindergarten stage of 0-3 years, now called Preschool, becomes an aimless attendance educational objective and without appropriately qualified professionals, and the stage from 3 to 6 years is put at the service of instructional objectives. Negated is all existing educational research on the significance and uniqueness of this educational stage. Also negated are all clear specific references to the role of educational and vocational guidance in schools, as well as to professionals with appropriate qualifications to carry it out.

With this new law is reduced the participation and decision-making power of members of the educational community by strengthening bureaucracy and managerialism in education and increasing the authority of individual constituents such as the director, who becomes the representative of the government educational administration, becomes more a businessperson than a pedagogical leader elected by the community, and sees an increase in his management functions to address problems of indiscipline and make quick decisions on punishment and expulsion. According to neoliberal philosophy, it is considered that education should serve economic interests, training future workers and acting like businesses to increase benefits and reduce costs. This requires taking action to encourage privatization and competition between schools; so that schools may be truly effective and efficient, it is necessary to apply the forms of business organization and management to schools (Apple, 2000).

The LOCE was first passed by Congress on October 31, 2002, with 182 votes in favor (Popular Party and the Canarian Coalition) and 131 against, and sent to the

Senate for debate and ratification. On December 23, 2002, the LOCE was finally approved in Parliament as a Legal Act. During the process of production and adoption of this law numerous demonstrations and a general strike were held, and were ignored and discredited by the government.

Conclusions

With the LOCE, all members of the educational community will again have to face a radical change in how to organize and understand their educational practices. However, as we know, educational changes do not happen by simply legislating the reforms, but require changing the school culture and the conviction of the protagonists of educational practices regarding the need for change. The badly-named Education Quality Act as a centralist reform designed top-down, runs the risk of being reduced to superficial changes that will keep intact the forms of work and educational practices entrenched in the schools. Moreover, the limited financial measures, and the assumption that it will be the autonomous communities who will have to provide financial and human resources to implement these changes on which they have neither been consulted nor heard, will make it even more difficult for the reform to be carried out the way the government expects. However, in the face of this small optimism, there is still concern about the possibility of our getting farther and farther from the ideals of public service and education as a right for all who, in conditions of equality, contribute to the development of critical and transformative thinking, to social integration, to the diminishing of social inequalities, to social cohesion and to democratic coexistence.

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¹ With this measure, all schools will have to include in their curriculums the compulsory subject *Society, Culture and Religion*, with two alternatives: the subject *Catholic Religion* and an alternative subject, *Moral, humanistic, historical, cultural and scientific dimension of the religious act*. So far, the alternative to the Catholic religion class was chosen from among several non-curricular subjects.

² At the end of 2001, the results of the first international project cycle PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), developed by the OECD, were published. The PISA project aims to measure school performance in the areas of reading, mathematics and natural sciences. Thirty-two countries participated—among them, Spain. Between 4,500 and 10,000 students were tested in each country in the spring of 2000. The participants, all 15 years old, were randomly selected. For more information on the report and its results, please consult the document of the OECD (no date), at <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/>

³ PGB university entrance examination given at the end of secondary school. Downloaded from <http://www.braintrack.com/linknav.htm?level=3&ppevid=39>, Sept. 18, 2010.