



## **Questionnaire on the positions of education councils regarding the Corona Crisis**

### **A. Policy issues**

Describe the main policy issues regarding the COVID 19 education policy.

- Which were the main measures adopted during the lockdown (particularly those measures related to teaching and learning), Specify if relevant the education level concerned e.g. primary, vocational, higher education, special needs, others, ...

After the Declaration of the State of Alarm (14/03/2020), the Government immediately took measures in the educational field. The first two were: to adapt the school calendar to the new situation (Royal Decree-Law 7/2020, March 12) and to cancel or temporary suspend face-to-face teaching and classroom activities (Royal Decree 463/2020, March 14).

In addition, already on March 9th, a few days before the declaration of the State of Alarm, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, sent the first health recommendations to schools to avoid infections.

In the first days, some resources were made available to facilitate distance online learning. These materials were designed to cover up the Autonomous Communities and the teaching staff, such as the distance training elements available (1,162 professional modules with 104 degrees), the resources provided by the National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF), and the launch of a site from which resources and tools for teachers, families and

students themselves are channelled. This site has logged more than 350,000 visits making it one of the most daily visited.

At the same time, the programme "We learn at home" was launched in collaboration with Radio Televisión Española (RTVE), an initiative aimed at students from 6 to 16 to facilitate learning during the suspension of face-to-face educational activity. In these broadcasting weeks, it has produced more than 2,000 educational videos that have reached almost 11 million viewers, covering almost 8 million people in the range of age 8-18.

On March 30th, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training made some devices available to the most vulnerable high school and vocational students: 23,000 internet access cards, 1,000 smartphones, 2,400 tablets, 131 computer equipment and 1,500 scientific calculators, in cooperation with the Regional Authorities of the Autonomous Communities, and the contribution of several companies.

Meetings and contact with the educational community and the Autonomous Communities have increased and agreements have been reached through various regulatory instruments. Thus, some provisions were approved:

- To make teaching more flexible;
- To organize Baccaureate evaluation;
- To set out guidelines for the third school term;
- Regional cooperation programs were postponed/deferred; - Double bachelor's degree and student admission.

Among the main agreements, it was decided to establish a working group that aims to design contingency plans to address the start and development of the next school year. Likewise, the State School Council, the highest educational advisory body, has held several meetings of the Permanent Commission, issuing proposals and measures for the end of this school year and the beginning of the next.

- What were the main pitfalls to overcome? e.g. continuing education activities, impact on learning outcomes, inequalities, infrastructure, impact on wellbeing of pupils (psychological, social, ... )

In this difficult situation, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is considering 10 main issues as a priority. The aim is to update the education system, assure and support the continuation of teaching and learning activities and to avoid leaving students behind.

1. Curricular reform,
2. Innovation and updating of the teaching profession
3. Intensify the digitalization of the educational system
4. Modernization of Vocational Training
5. Education in civic and democratic values
6. Individual tailor-made education so that no talent is lost, and the drop-out can be reduced
7. Reinforce Early Childhood Education and Care (0 to 3)
8. Improve the educational community participation in the school organization and management
9. Improve the school pedagogical and organizational autonomy
10. Invest in R&D and educational research

In Spain, students' lockdown lasted for several months (last term of the school year) and the teaching-learning process was based on distance learning. They only came back to school for final exams (and not in all the Regions or all the education levels).

The “normalization process” is meant to occur at the beginning of the school year 2020-2021, if the situation of the pandemic improves. That's the reason why we cannot answer the questions below.

However, some initiatives have been agreed with the Regional Authorities:

- Obligation to maintain, in general, a safety distance of 1.5 meters;
- In Pre-Primary and Primary Education, “stable groups”, between 15 and 20 students, can be created. Its members could interact without having to maintain the safety distance, and avoiding contact with other groups.
- It is also recommended to prioritize outdoor activities, organize the school timetable specially for arrival and dismissal time procedures, design other measures to avoid crowds and reduce the number of groups of student moving around the school.

- What were the main innovations that opened new opportunities for renewal in education policies? Are there any lessons learned for new approaches in education (e.g. added value of blended learning, blended counselling of pupils, ...)?
- What was the role played by distance learning? Blended learning? What are the lessons learned by these innovations?

## **B. Positions and recommendations of education councils**

- Did your Council release recommendations on education in pandemic times? Or are recommendations planned? In progress?

The State School Council has held several meetings of the Permanent Commission, issuing proposals and measures for the end of this school year and the beginning of the next (2020-2021).

Specially two of them (Agreements reached on April 7th and June 16th) had considerable impact and were taken into account to design some other sets of guidance and measures. The decisions taken in these two meetings were based on absolute majorities and in highly participative working sessions.

- What is the main focus of those recommendations?

The suspension of face-to-face classes caused by the coronavirus pandemic has required a rethinking of teaching and learning. This situation may be extended as long as sanitary conditions so advise. In these circumstances, the Spanish School Council formulated some sets of proposals addressed to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and to the Regional Authorities. The main focus of the educational community, as members of the Council, is to provide some advice aimed at the best educational use, the effectiveness of teachers' work, a fair evaluation/assessment of the learning process in the last term, as well as to enhance positive participation of families in these extraordinary circumstances. The first set of suggestions (aimed for the end of 2019-2020 school year) were grouped considering that two different scenarios could occur. First, that face-to-face classes could be resumed sometime before the end of the course. Second, that the evolution of the coronavirus pandemic advised that face-to-face classes

be suspended until the beginning of the next school year. It also seemed appropriate to distinguish between the different levels and educational options.

The second set of proposals was meant for the next academic year. They were arranged in five sections:

- 1.- Investment in education: Material and Human resources. Social divide and digital divide.
- 2.- School autonomy: managerial, financing and pedagogical autonomy.
3. -Teaching staff: provision of teams, methodology and teamwork.
- 4.- Adaptation of the curricula for the new academic year 2020-2021 and the following
- 5.- Primary and Secondary Educational success: students' assessment.

- What are the most relevant recommendations produced by your Education Council?

One of the main recommendations, common to both set of proposals, is that we strongly request all authorities, public administrations and the media to promote public recognition of the efforts made by teachers, families and students in Spanish public, charter and private schools so that the education process can be kept active under these adverse conditions.

#### 1. - Investment in education

It is essential that education recovers the investment levels, lost with the previous crisis, and that the current and future effects of the pandemic can be addressed with the required resources. These resources are essential to design an Action Plan that guarantees equal opportunities for all students, especially those at risk of social exclusion. In order to be successful, the coordinated participation of the central, autonomous and local administrations, as well as the entire educational community (families, students and teachers) is essential, in collaboration with the other organizations and institutions involved in education and training.

The increase of material and human resources will allow a true attention to diversity, taking into account both face-to-face and distance learning: organization of time and space, student groups and teachers' teamwork. Therefore, now, more than ever, specific support and reinforcements will be offered to students in situations of vulnerability due to their age, personal circumstances and / or social and economic situation, as well as scholarships that take into account the families most affected by the crisis, and promotes equity. Therefore, inclusive solutions are

proposed so that no one can be let behind because of the digital or social divide, providing initiatives such as:

- School canteen allowance.
- Reinforcement programs for students who have been affected by the digital divide
- Teaching staff adaptation to the Common Framework of Digital Competence for Teachers
- Increase of educational resources on free access digital platforms
- Digital scholarships for students
- Free and open software platforms

## 2.- School autonomy

Each school can develop its own Action Plan, after a deep analysis of its current situation and taking into account that each case is unique, assuring that teachers, families and students are involved. The aim should be the flexible reorganization and adaptation of spaces and classrooms, teachers' teamwork, families' participation, as well as students' involvement in their individual and group learning.

- Go beyond the traditional school model
- Educational Administrations could offer support, flexibility and constructive work that favours new forms of teaching and learning
- Study all spaces and facilities available at schools to increase the possibilities of face-to-face education
- Take the necessary sanitary measures: limit the number of students in the classroom; promote flexibility in shifts and schedules; use individual protection (masks and hand sanitizer); cleaning of common areas and school bus service.

## 3. -Teaching staff

Teachers had to face the sudden closing of the classroom and the urgent need of distance learning, together with an uncertain future in isolation. This situation has urged them to use resources, strategies and methodologies that are not always available. Many of them did not have enough training. It is essential that teachers get all the necessary means and training to be able to successfully approach the next school year. At the same time, teaching is a cooperative task. The existence of a space for teachers to work together for the same purpose, as a shared activity,

is a condition directly related to the quality of teaching. Shared work is now more necessary than ever. Proposed initiatives:

- Rethinking of the current professional model
- Methodological updating - Promoting social support and trust towards teachers, with a high degree of autonomy and freedom
- Provide the adequate staff to help students with special educational needs

#### 4.- Adaptation of the curricula for the new academic year

At the beginning of the next school year, teachers should take into account the fundamental learning and basic competences, to focus their effort more strongly on closing the gaps in educational attainment, reorienting and adapting the school curricula. The key issue should be the most relevant contents and the acquisition of basic skills. The focus of the curricula must also be balanced, so that it shifts its weight from what "must be taught" to what the students "should learn". Proposed initiatives:

- To place the start of the next school year on the first possible date in September
- To rethink and reorganize the contents of the curricula
- To support the orientation teams that must prepare tools for coming back to face-to-face teaching,

#### 5.- Primary and Secondary Educational success: students' assessment.

It is essential to redesign the students' assessment, repetition and promotion, taking into account that education must be based in offering fundamental training to assure that they become responsible citizens and to enable their access to social and labour life in the best possible conditions. Proposed initiatives:

- Update the regulations that are governing students' assessment.
- Course promotion should really be based on internal and collegiate decisions about basic competences
- Repetition should be exceptional.
- Students' self-evaluation is essential: learning to make a conscious reflection on their own learning.