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Proposals for improvement

Report on the status and situation of the education system

Academic Year 2009/2010



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PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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FOREWORD

The State School Council, the highest consultative and participatory body of the education community –of non-university education– has complied, in the 25th anniversary of the LOE that created it in accordance to the Constitution, with its function to prepare, approve and publish the annual Report on the status and situation of the education system. In the academic year 2009/2010 dominant element has been the process of discussion and negotiation between the Ministry and organizations representing the education community to achieve a social and political pact on education, a process that raised huge expectations and, unfortunately, was not completed successfully. This course has also completed the implementation of the system introduced by the LOE and its financing plan for it. It has spread to 4th and 5th grades in primary education and 2nd grade in *Bachillerato*, the new model of University Entrance examination has been launched and the General Diagnostic Assessment has been applied to students in the 4th grade of primary education which means that from now on the system will have a rigorous tool to observe the development of the results. Moreover, this year in which Spain has held the Presidency of the European Union, education has been placed at the heart of Europe 2020.

The most important aspect of this course has been the strong performance of the rate of graduates in ESO at the age of fifteen, which has become 74% in the school year 2008/2009 compared to 69.2% in the year 2006/2007. We can add to these figures 7.8% of students who obtained a degree in programmes for adults, either distance learning or face-to-face education, so that the rate of graduates is situated in 81.8%, 10 points away of the fateful figure of 30% of people who had failed to successfully complete compulsory education. It is also positive the increase in enrolment rates at 17 and 18 years of age and in rates of graduates in post-compulsory education so we can say that we have a trend change. For this reason, the joint work of all society is essential to prevent that budget cuts dictated by the

austerity policies arising from the crisis may affect education. Our country cannot allow itself a turning back in the improvement.

The Council noted with satisfaction that many of its suggestions and recommendations raised to the Education Authorities in recent years have been well received. In fact, they can be recognized in very relevant measures which have been implemented or whose implementation has been announced. These include the extension of the Educa3 Plan, the success of reinforcement and support plans, the improvement of language skills and, particularly, the flexibility of the education system by strengthening the guidance nature of the 4th grade of ESO or facilitating access to intermediate vocational training after completing the PCPI to prevent students leaving the system without any qualifications. It has also accepted the reiterated proposal by the Council that all students who do not obtain the ESO certificate can at least get a certification for the basic competences they have acquired, so that their further education is guaranteed.

We can also be satisfied because some of the measures taken have been sensitive to the population's training needs in times of crisis and have tried that all students have expectations of continuing their academic and professional training and facilitate the return to education of those who left, with solutions that make it possible to combine training and employment. In this context the Council welcomes the fact that the Strategic Plan for Vocational Training has been included into the Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

However, despite admitting clear progress, the Council is deeply concerned about the deficits that have not been overcome yet. Among these we can include important territorial differences which hinder social cohesion and are manifested in the uneven expansion of schooling in the first cycle of Pre-Primary Education, with some regions where minimum levels of quality in the education provided are not always guaranteed. There is also an alarming difference in the investment made by the different Regional Education Authorities which can directly impact the quality of the service provided. These differences between regions are at their most worrying

level in the students' outcomes in both national and international assessments, in graduation rates or levels of school drop-out. We should insist that we will only speak about an education system with no equity and success deficits if the percentage of our young people ending compulsory education with no qualifications can be drastically reduced and, above all, if the striking differences among some Autonomous Communities disappear.

I should keep insisting that the priority of this Council, which should be taken by the whole Spanish society, is improving the quality of education. And improving quality implies besides achieving good results, achieving a balance between equity and excellence in all regions and that all young people get the best results regardless of the school they are studying. This is essential to ensure a balanced enrolment among all schools, and proper care of students with greater difficulties.

It still applies as well the Council's defence of a culture of evaluation, of the Education Authorities' commitment 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 teaching, organizational and management autonomy to enable them a more effective care of their students' needs, and consequently schools should be held accountable to society through assessments.

As in previous years, I would like to note the future challenges that emerge after a careful reading of the Report on the status and situation of the education system of the 2009/2010 academic year, and in the same way, from the Council we summon the Education Authorities to meet them promptly and effectively:

1. The biggest challenge in the education system for the coming years will not only imply maintaining but progressively increasing investment in education to overcome the historical deficits of our country with respect to neighbouring countries in order to reach 7% of GDP to avoid any drop in achievements. Therefore, the School Council considers it is imperative that

the Education Conference sets a minimum level of education spending that should always be maintained and below which providing a quality educational public service would be difficult. Also, maximum efficiency and effectiveness require shared and coordinated policies on spending priorities.

2. Education Authorities, while maintaining the effort initiated by the Educa3 Plan should establish, in the Education Conference, all the indicators necessary to ensure educational quality and the educational nature of this stage. Similarly, the Council reiterates the recommendation to the Central Government to begin/initiate the necessary process of legislative reforms so that the first cycle of Pre-Primary Education has accurate frameworks to ensure those quality standards.
3. It is imperative to deepen the measures that have initiated the change in trend in students success so that all students may have a promising educational future: early detection of learning difficulties, paying attention to transitions between different stages of education, maintaining and expanding reinforcing programmes, setting up mechanisms to analyze the results of diagnostic assessments and to implement action plans arising from them and ensuring that schools include commitments between families, students and schools in their educational projects
4. To face school failure successfully is urgent to address the specific problem of grade retention– a system not only expensive but clearly ineffective– and develop policies based on individual attention to students with the biggest problems in achieving the objectives of each year in compulsory education. Besides, there must be enough provision of Initial Vocational Training Programmes in all ESO schools so that all students have a chance to continue their education after compulsory education.
5. To consolidate the improvement in enrolment rates between 16 and 18 years of age and rates of graduates in upper secondary education it is

imperative for the Education Conference to continue to promote the measures provided for in the Early School Leaving Plan. In this sense, although the Council reiterates its support to all measures to increase enrolment in Intermediate Vocational Training and facilitate the return to education to adults who have not achieved the level of upper secondary education, it also recommends the Education Conference to establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure a similar supply in all the State. It is also essential that the assessment, recognition and accreditation of skills acquired through work experience and non-formal learning are carried out in an identical manner and coordinated throughout the state, in order to ensure the workers mobility.

6. One more year boys and girls achieve quite different academic results. Education Authorities should launch campaigns that promote identical educational opportunities among students regardless of gender, strengthen the value of effort and egalitarian education as a good vehicle for personal and social promotion of all students and in this way men and women can access the working world in equal conditions.
7. The State School Council defends an inclusive education model and considers the Education Authorities should provide the support resources that students with disabilities require throughout all stages to ensure not only 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 legislation.
8. Teachers are an essential element of the quality system. Therefore, all Education Authorities, state-level and regional, must ensure the quality and rigor in the initial and permanent training of primary and secondary teachers. It is also urgent to restore, as soon as possible, teachers' salaries to those they had before the cuts experienced during this year, strengthen

their moral and professional authority and social consideration, and negotiate the Teachers' Statute to establish a real career.

To understand the impact of all measures taken, analyze trends in different aspects of the system rigorously and develop educational policies to improve it, we request the Ministry of Education to include in the State System of Indicators all those indicators required to assess policies which are being carried out.

Formal Aspects and contents of this Report

As noted by one of the speakers who presented this Report to the Plenary Council for approval, the ceremony of the debate and vote has a dialectical liturgy that uses many verbs such as urge, provide, guarantee, favour, propose, develop, promote, implement, increase, reassert, recommend, encourage ... and sometimes the verb has something else attached: be necessary, improve standards, value positively, worry very much, watch with concern, consider necessary,... This language, meant to be used by the whole education community, contains intense work by the Counsellors who I would like to thank from these lines.

This report maintains the structure adopted in previous years in order to focus attention on the most relevant aspects of the academic year 2009/10, 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, in order to achieve widespread dissemination of the proposals for improvement that the Council brings to the Authorities, they are published in 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 education community.

The Report is divided into three main sections. In *Section I* it reviews the highlights of the academic year 2009/10.

Section II includes 6 chapters which contain the most relevant aspects of the system.

Section III includes all the *Proposals for Improvement*, those general ones which affect the entire education system and also those which refer to the content in each of the chapters in *Section II*.

Section IV 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 four above-described sections is included in the CD that comes with the booklet (Sections I, II and III). In turn the proposals for improvement are published in an offprint in order to attract the widest possible readership.

I sincerely hope that the diagnosis contained in these pages is accurate and, especially, that the Education Authorities and all the society welcome these proposals for improvement made by the education community. This way we will have carried out the unavoidable duty to contribute to a better future for our children and youth.

Carmen Maestro Martín
President of the State School Council

PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT ---

0. General

1st) The State School Council defends a model of quality inclusive education firmly. To build this model it is essential to make an investment that ensures the necessary human and material resources and it requires the joint efforts of the whole Spanish society.

Therefore, Education Authorities are urged to implement measures that enable the best provision for schools, initial and permanent quality training for teachers and educational guidance staff, assessment of the education system, initiatives that promote quality with equity and territorial cooperation necessary to avoid the inequalities that still exist in the educational results of the different territories.

2nd) The State School Council proposes that the Education Authorities should implement school autonomy in the sense established by the LOE, so that schools can develop their educational projects from the diagnosis of their needs, with teachers' collaborative work, family involvement and participation of the entire educational community. All this without neglecting the full and balanced schooling and inclusion in public and state-funded private schools of immigrant 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, providing the necessary human and material resources equitably.

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 the remedial measures to supplement grade retention so that it has positive effects in school success.

3rd) The State School Council proposes coordinating the attendance of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces to the meetings of the Education Conference 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 Education Conference, 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, a strategy to ensure full universal accessibility of people with disabilities to the educational 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 recognition for their work. It also proposes that, when possible, teachers' salaries, which have been reduced significantly in the present year, should be restored. It is also urgent the negotiation of the above-mentioned Statute which, in addition to establishing the rights and duties of public school teachers, defining suitable professional profiles and recognizing by law the dignity of education civil service, should contain the indefinite 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 work, has allowed a partial replacement in a group that shows some aging. Also, the State School Council urges the different Authorities to allow all teachers over 55 to get a reduction of teaching hours, in at least one third, without entailing any reduction in remuneration.

The Council notes with concern the practice for the first time of a replacement rate of 30% of the teaching staff. Therefore the government is urged to establish at least a replacement rate of 100% for the coming years in order to ensure a stable workforce in schools that is able to cope with their educational needs.

The State School Council has been calling for the improvement of initial teacher training and teaching traineeships. At this time, the widespread use of new degrees of Pre-Primary and Primary Education and the Master's degree to specialize in teaching in the context of adaptation to the European Higher Education Area is bringing about a number of significant changes that should improve these processes. We therefore ask the Ministry to provide enough data so that we can analyze these processes of implementation and make suitable contributions, in particular on the models of teaching traineeships.

6th) The State School Council considers it is appropriate that government budgets should allow in the shortest time possible real equal pay to teachers in state-funded

private schools with their counterparts in the civil service. The sector table of teachers in state-funded schools, created at the end of this academic year 2009/2010, should be the main area to make some measures possible, among other issues this sector has been raising for years, increasing the number of teachers, reducing the current teaching hours, including the administration staff under the same payment structure or the maintenance of early partial retirement in the conditions prior to the planned reform. The Council believes that all teachers in public schools and state-funded private schools should benefit from voluntary early retirement.

7th) The State School Council believes that the enterprising spirit and also those values and skills needed to function in society and business, such as: the culture of effort, entrepreneurship, decision-making, teamwork, analysis and problem solving, communication, creativity, innovation, and so on, should be encouraged throughout the entire education system and also transversely in order to get enterprising citizens that create a future social and economic impact in the country.

The State School Council proposes that the real image of the entrepreneur and the role of business in social and economic development are transmitted to education. It is also essential to include this content in initial and permanent training of teachers of all levels of education, including compulsory education.

1. Pre-Primary Education

1st) Schooling at an early age is a factor of particular importance for both personal and academic development of students along the education system and early detection of specific needs of educational support that may arise.

Our country has achieved high enrolment rates in the second cycle of this stage, whereas in the first cycle enrolment rates are still inadequate, despite the intensive efforts made by various Authorities. Therefore, the State School Council urges the different Education Authorities to strengthen the fiscal effort in order to provide enough public school places, trying them to be no cost, to ensure the demand for educational services in the first cycle of Pre-Primary Education and thereby improve the quality and equity of our education system.

2nd) As indicated in the proposal for improvement made last year on this aspect, determining the minimum requirements for schools providing the first cycle of Pre-Primary Education corresponds legally to the different Education Authorities. This fact has led to heterogeneity in the different regions where the necessary minimum levels of quality of the education provided are not always guaranteed. The role of local authorities in Pre-Primary Education 0-3 is increasingly significant to the point that, after the Educa3 Plan, they can become the main providers of pre-primary education. So there is a need for better coordination with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, and its equivalent bodies in the Autonomous Communities and this coordination should be particularly extended to the improvement of labour regulation of the staff working at municipal schools.

The State School Council once again reiterates the need that the Central Government initiates the necessary process of legislative reforms to create frameworks in the first cycle of Pre-Primary Education that guarantee quality and equity for all students in a stage of educational nature and simultaneously achieve that only Education Authorities have responsibility for that stage.

3rd) As provided in the Organic Law of Education, Pre-Primary schools can offer the first cycle of this stage, the second cycle or both. They may also offer a whole cycle

or only part of it. These regulations may entail difficulties to develop educational projects optimally along the stage if the schooling of students is interrupted.

Therefore Education Authorities are urged to conduct investigations and to prepare accurate reports about it, in case it is necessary to modify the existing legislative provisions and initiate the necessary reform processes.

4th) It is advisable due to the situation in Pre-Primary schools that the Education Conference and the Institute of Evaluation establish the corresponding indicators in the State System of Indicators about the quality of the educational projects of those schools, especially about the first cycle and its educational nature, about the application of the minimum requirements for schools, the ownership of schools and educational services, about the staff qualifications and their gender, about ratios, quality, provision and resources to care for diversity, and coordination among schools providing different cycles.

5th) Considering the data of schooling in Pre-Primary Education referring to foreign students enrolled during the school year covered by this report in public and private schools and comparing them with the previous year's data, we find that the enrolment imbalance remains.

Under these circumstances, the State School Council proposes that the Education Authorities should ensure equitable enrolment of foreign students in all Pre-Primary schools that receive public funds establishing the necessary basic regulations with specific support plans to guarantee the equal right to education regardless of the school where those students enrol and to regulate the admission criteria of students correcting the current imbalance between public and private schools.

2. Compulsory Education

1st) The data contained in this report show that rates of age adequacy (students in the academic year that corresponds to their age) are high at 8 years of age with 93.4% and will decline until the 59.6% at 15 years of age. This shows the high percentage of students repeating a school year over compulsory education (Primary and Secondary Education). However, several national and international studies (General Diagnostic Assessment 2009. Primary Education and also Education at a Glance 2010. OECD. Spanish Report) highlight that grade retention, if not supported by a specific personalized remedial plan for the students affected, does not guarantee the achievement of the objectives of the education system.

The State School Council urges Education Authorities to address the specific problem of grade retention in each region and develop policies in this regard based on individualized attention to those students with the biggest problems in achieving the educational objectives of each year in compulsory education.

2nd) The data contained in the report show that, despite the improvements in the last two academic years, there are still a large number of students who fail to promote to next grade through basic education and some even complete compulsory education without any qualifications. The State School Council believes that resources should be increased to mitigate the high rates of school population with learning problems and students with special educational needs who do not complete their studies or drop out school in the transition to secondary education. For this, personalized attention to every student is a specially recommended tool in these cases.

The State School Council is calling the Education Authorities to promote the plans, programmes and activities that develop in this direction. There are particularly favourable results with the implementation of the PROA Plan of regional

cooperation, although it is recommended to broaden its field of action to a larger number of schools as it still affects an insufficient percentage of schools and students.

3rd) The State School Council has welcomed the possibility, introduced by the recently approved Sustainable Economy Law, which allows students access vocational training cycles once they have completed the Initial Professional Qualification Programmes in Compulsory Secondary Education. This opens a way to reduce the high number of students who leave school without any qualifications.

To reach this measure's maximum effectiveness, The State School Council believes it is necessary that the Education Authorities strengthen their efforts to implement the already mentioned Initial Professional Qualification Programmes in all public and private schools who teach Compulsory Secondary Education and need them.

4th) The data in this report show different academic achievement between girls and boys. The study of the root causes of this situation should be done calmly and scientifically to facilitate the analysis of an undoubtedly multifactorial situation which does not recommend a maximalist approach to the subject.

The State School Council urges the Education Authorities to launch educational campaigns that promote the same educational opportunities among boys and girls regardless of their gender, that encourage and highlight the value of egalitarian effort, education and culture as vehicles of personal and social promotion for all students, highlighting the growing need for a qualified academic and vocational training in order to achieve the future access of all students to employment on equal terms.

5th) Improving the level of foreign languages in Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education through the implementation of bilingual or trilingual programmes developed in a foreign language with the language or languages of the students themselves, which various Education Authorities have undertaken in their respective regions is viewed positively by the State School Council because languages will encourage academic and professional mobility of our youth.

However, this Council wishes to express its opinion about some problems arisen with the implementation of these programs in some regions. First, the State statistical services and the Institute of Evaluation are requested to provide the necessary statistical data and indicators related to the number of bilingual programmes implemented in the different regions, the number of schools and students involved and the results of these experiences so far. Secondly, the implementation of such programmes should in no way affect the vested rights of teachers in those schools where such implementation takes place. As indicated in last year report on the same subject, the delivery of the curriculum only in foreign languages could have a negative impact on the knowledge of such content in the native language of students, so special care should be taken of this issue, especially for subjects which may be considered fundamental in the curriculum.

The State School Council strongly recommends keeping the teaching of a second foreign language in compulsory education for all students, those studying in bilingual programmes and those not doing so.

Finally, the Council believes that flexibility measures and/or alternative methodologies of foreign language learning and accreditation requirements of the level achieved, particularly in relation with speaking, should be established for students who request so in schools which implement bilingual programmes and enrol students with disabilities.

3. Post-Compulsory Education

1st) In this academic year enrolment rates at 17 and 18 years of age have improved, and also the success rate of students who obtain post-compulsory secondary qualifications. However, we are more than 20 points away from the European objective for 2010 –85% of qualifications in these studies– and there remains the imbalance between academic and vocational education. Therefore, the recommendation remains in force that has been reiterated in recent reports by the Council: Education Authorities must take measures to increase enrolment and qualifications in vocational studies. In this context the Council welcomes that the Ministry of Education has integrated the Strategic Plan for Vocational Training within the Territorial Cooperation Programmes because it may boost vocational information and guidance. The State School Council proposes that the Education Authorities should develop and disseminate all the vocational guidance resources available at the state level through the web *TodoFP* and launch information campaigns on the provision of training and vocational tracks and their adequacy to changes in demand of the productive system.

2nd) The State School Council appreciates that the guidance nature of the ESO final year has been reinforced as requested in last year report. For this measure to be effective, the Council urges Education Authorities to ensure the quality of the various options proposed, and to avoid any segregation of students. It is also essential that students in 3rd and 4th grade of ESO get wide information, including different vocational branches and the design of university studies under the Bologna Plan, allowing them to choose the track most suitable to their skills and interests.

Regarding *Bachillerato* the Council is extremely concerned about the high dropout rate, the excessive rate of grade retention, especially among boys, and in relation to these figures, the legislative and practical development of the University entrance examinations for its impact on secondary schools. The application, in the 2009/2010

academic year of promotion measures from the first to the second grade, adopted by the Education Conference, and the entrance examinations under the new model must be evaluated carefully. If these measures had no noticeable effect on the improvement of the above mentioned features, it would be necessary to proceed to the study and application of deeper legislative measures enabling that a larger number of students achieve the objectives of this stage.

3rd) Once again the State School Council supports all measures aimed at increasing enrolment in Intermediate Vocational Training: completing the Catalogue of Vocational Training Qualifications under the LOE, facilitating access to them from the PCPI after completing the voluntary modules which may be established, increasing the number of schools providing this education with quality assurance, strengthening the Workplace Training Module (FCT), allowing to do part of the FCT in European countries. For this the Council urges the Education Authorities not to cut the financial resources to implement all these measures and to prevent early school leaving with a plan of specific grants for students of Vocational Training and financial incentives to students and businesses in order to facilitate mixed solutions of education and employment, which allow students to combine training and part-time work.

4th) The persistence of high unemployment rates explains the recommendation of the Council to allow the return to education of adults who have not achieved the level of upper secondary education. It is also necessary to broaden the training offer so that they can obtain the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate or the *Técnico* (Technician) Certificate. 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 in the evening and also to develop e-learning and distance learning platforms. The Council welcomes the commitment by the Education Authorities to launch a distance educational platform

for Vocational Training through Internet at national and regional level and recommends the Education Conference to establish appropriate mechanisms to assess its impact and to ensure a similar supply in all the State.

5th) As recommended by the State School Council in its latest reports, the process of assessment, recognition and accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience and informal learning started in 2010. The Council considers it is very positive that the Ministry of Education has included this measure in the Strategic Plan for Vocational Training within the Territorial Cooperation Programmes. However, in order to develop it to its full extent, and ensure the mobility of workers, it is imperative that official announcements for assessment, recognition and accreditation of competences are made as soon as possible, in an identical way and coordinated state-wide, having as a reference the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications. It urges the Education Authorities to offer specific training for accredited people to align their needs with the production system and active employment policies.

4. Investment in education

1st) The State School Council believes that despite the deep economic and financial crisis which we are suffering there should not be a reduction of the investment in education made by the different Authorities. Investment in education is one of the most solid basis to stimulate economic growth, increase employment rates and encourage a way out of the crisis

As last year, the State School Council once again urges the Authorities to increase their investment in education, as this is the best means to promote economic growth and overcoming the current situation. In line with repeated assertions from education authorities within the European Union, cuts in education investment

operate in the opposite direction to the fight against school failure and early school leaving. It can be argued that current restrictions on education spending in the education sector will generate social and personal problems resulting from academic failure and early withdrawal from the system in the future, with the consequent need to spend important public resources to face the situation, being those resources higher than those that are now being restricted. Perhaps the situation would make necessary to use European structural funds as improvement of education and involvement in improving skills and employment have become a target in the European Strategy for 2020. There will also be the damage created in the growth of wealth because of the deficiencies that may arise in the training of certain sectors of the population.

2nd) In the direction marked by the Organic Law of Education, the State and the Autonomous Communities should agree on a plan for increasing public investment in education for ten years following the entry into force of the law in order to reach progressively the same educational investment as the average of European Union countries. The current decline in educational investment in all communities, that in a lot of them covers more than one financial year, calls into question the achievement of this goal.

The State School Council proposes that the Education Authorities should increase their efforts to reach an agreement on the plan mentioned by the Law. Matching our investment in education to that of the average of European Union countries should not be suspended in any case due the effects of economic and financial crisis we are facing at present, since that would mean a negative condition for our economic growth in future times.

3rd) Along the same lines marked on the proposals made to the Education Authorities by this State School Council in its recent reports, increased public

spending on education must fill the historical deficit that our country has kept compared to the resources for education in the surrounding countries.

For this we propose that public investment in education should be gradually increased to reach 7% of GDP

4th) It is noted that educational investment made by the different Education Authorities show great heterogeneity, which can directly impact the quality of the education offered, the results obtained by the students and the social cohesion of all regions in the State.

The State School Council notes with concern the situation and recommends the Education Conference to consider if it is necessary to reach an agreement to set at least a minimum level of educational investment that should always be maintained, as providing a quality educational service in all public and state-funded private schools would be difficult below that level.

5th) We should keep in mind that the often mentioned financial and economic crisis we are facing requires new approaches to public investment in education and to the plans, programs and actions which implement that investment. Consequently, the State School Council urges all the Education Authorities with responsibility for education to make every effort in tracking expenditures on educational services, optimizing the resources used. Similarly, maximum effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery involves extreme coordination and collaboration among Regional Authorities with responsibility for education.

The Council also requests the development of a Law on Financing the Education System, supported by the Autonomous Communities, to ensure in a short time that there are enough system resources, to ensure the implementation of measures for

improvement contained both in the LOE as in its recent legal amendments and for the promotion of Vocational Training. A Law that considers the costs to achieve the educational targets of the European Union for 2020 and allows measures so that the lowest regional averages of educational investment can reach the state average and compensate for existing inequalities, among other issues.

5. Equality, coexistence and participation in schools

1st) The State School Council appreciates the work done by the Education Authorities and the Observatory for Coexistence in updating legislation, disseminating the recommendations contained in the specific studies on coexistence and school climate and, especially, recognizing and disseminating good practices. But further progress is necessary to foster a school climate based on respect that is the best platform to achieve adequate school performance. To achieve this, the Council proposes to develop indicators on school climate and coexistence in schools to assess the improvement impact of the measures adopted regarding the assumption of civic values and habits. It is also recommended that specific, basic regulations should be introduced to ensure that all schools have the necessary human and material resources to implement their Educational Project and Coexistence Plan

2nd) The State School Council is aware that to improve the school climate Authorities, schools and families should encourage studying, the prestige of teaching should be reinforced, the media should disseminate an image of schools as cultural and formative environments and the educational community, in the case of public and state-funded private schools, should agree on the rules of coexistence and relation of the different groups within it. Further progress is needed to promote the recognition of moral and professional authority of teachers and some basic regulations should be developed state-wide for all teachers without forgetting

measures such as the incorporation of new professional profiles in schools to supplement the educational work and guidance network and the improvement of teacher training in conflict resolution, among others.

3rd) The actions to achieve effective equality between men and women in the education system, established by the Law 1/2004 of 28 December on comprehensive protection against gender violence and contained in the LOE, and the Organic Law 3/2007 for the effective equality of women and men, have begun to be implemented at different rates in the Autonomous Communities. To assess the degree of compliance of these measures, the State School Council recommends Education Authorities to establish appropriate indicators in order to proceed to the disaggregation by sex of those statistics in education which do not do it yet, to establish protocols to facilitate suitable actions in cases of students affected by gender violence and to provide specific training to the inspection services or to the persons designated within the school councils in order to ensure real equality in all spheres of school life, assessing the implementation and effectiveness of this measure annually.

Also, the State School Council believes, in order to promote coeducation and the acquisition of the values in the school curriculum, that educational economic agreements should not be established with those private schools that choose single-sex education.

4th) Participation of social sectors in education, not always measured accurately, is a basic constitutional principle. The State School Council considers it essential to know the status of such participation accurately, and therefore it is recommended that the Education Authorities should increase those indicators related to the participation of students and families in schools and in the process for the election of representatives in school councils and include them into the State System of

Education Indicators. It is also recommended that the Statistical Committee of the Education Conference should explore the possibility to include aspects related to the students and parents' associations in non-university education in Statistics of Education in Spain in order to harmonize and standardize the various criteria used in the census and records of the different regions as regards the above mentioned associations to facilitate the aggregation of data at state-level.

Family involvement in education is significantly influenced by their work and professional responsibilities, often incompatible with their presence at the school, not only to develop participatory activities but also for a correct and adequate monitoring of their own children's education. It is necessary to think about the fact that the responsibilities that families should take in education require radical changes in lifestyles, in the political projects of cities, the distribution of work and family time. Therefore, the State School Council urges the Education Authorities to promote measures to reconcile parents' work with children's school.

5th) The State School Council reiterates the request made in previous reports to the effect that the Ministry of Education, guaranteeing the jurisdictional areas of the Autonomous Communities, should develop rules on participation to regulate and guarantee the material and economic resources for its implementation by parents and students, both directly and through their associations. Similarly, the State School Council urges Education Authorities to update and increase the amount of public subsidies to the associative network of students and parents in schools.

6. Inclusion of students with special educational needs arising from disabilities

1st) The State School Council urges the Education Authorities to adopt and develop a specific plan for inclusive education of students with special educational needs

arising from disability. The measures provided for in that plan, necessarily have a cross-curricular nature, and must be included in the Territorial Cooperation Programmes. The Council also proposes cooperation between Authorities, institutions and entities to launch public awareness campaigns and dissemination of good practices and to ensure the comprehensive education of students with special educational needs.

2nd) To ensure that all students reach academic and personal success, it is essential the early detection of educational needs of specific support arising from disabilities and their proper care along the schooling years. Therefore, the State School Council urges the Education Authorities to ensure that schools develop educational projects and plans which reflect comprehensive care to the diverse needs of students, that diagnostic assessments consider this school population as a priority with the provision of support resources for immediate intervention after detection and to encourage that the initial and permanent training of teachers include resources related to the comprehensive care of students with special educational needs, using the different teaching and technological resources which allow to care these students with equal opportunities and in terms of quality and equity.

In particular, universal access to digital environments should be guaranteed, both in terms of browsing and access to content, as well as to all the information in them, so that students with disabilities are not excluded from the digitization of the educational environment. The accessibility requirements should also be extended to the training of teachers and other staff involved in handling these devices in “design for all”, as well as in the production of digital content to be used as training material.

3rd) In order to ensure not only access (to schools and their premises, to communication and information, teaching resources and materials, to technical help and the ICT, to adapted school buses) but also the retention and promotion of

students with disabilities within the education system, Education Authorities should strengthen support and guidance measures, adequate availability of resources to support each student with disabilities over all stages. Therefore, the State School Council urges the Ministry of Education and the Education Authorities to provide public and state-funded private 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. It also recommends the incorporation to an Initial Vocational Qualification Programme (PCPI) of those students for whom it is considered the best option to achieve the objectives of compulsory secondary education, as well as facilitating the partial certification of learning to students with special educational needs.

4th) Transitions between the various stages of education often constitute an additional difficulty for students with special educational needs arising from disabilities. The State School Council proposes the development of coordination programmes between the different levels and adequate counselling of these students, providing information and advice to students and their families about educational and employment options that best suit their skills and attitudes, guiding them in the training process and, facilitating this way their subsequent insertion into the labour force. This requires cooperation between professionals, schools and Authorities to devise ways of educational support as needed.

5th) The involvement of families in school life has special relevance in this case. The Education Authorities, besides ensuring that schools provide adequate means of collaboration, should take steps to guarantee that these students' parents receive appropriate individualized guidance and also the necessary information to help in their children's education. Accordingly, this Council urges the Authorities to give effect to the participation of families in decisions that affect schooling and

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educational processes of their children with specific educational needs arising from disabilities.