

THEMATIC PROBE. Primary Education: an International Perspective

Country Description: Spain

This country description was compiled from the *INCA* Archive (www.inca.org.uk). Additional comments were received from Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado of the Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa (CIDE) in Madrid.

1. Organisation of school phases-

How are the early years and primary phases organised? (3-5yrs? 5-11yrs?)

Compulsory primary education in Spain lasts six years - catering for children aged six to 12 years - in three, two-year cycles (six- to -eight-year-olds, eight- to 10-year-olds and 10- to 12-year-olds respectively).

Prior to the primary phase, pre-compulsory infant education (*educación infantil*) is regarded as an integral part of the education system, although it remains optional for children. Infant schools may offer the first cycle (for children up to three years of age), the second cycle (three- to six-year-olds), or both cycles of pre-compulsory early years education. State-funded early years provision is available to all three-, four- and five-year-olds whose parents request it.

The 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education formalised pre-school education into the above two cycles. The first cycle (for children up to three years of age) is concerned with the education and welfare of children. The purpose of the second cycle (infant education - *educación infantil* - for three- to six-year-olds) is to care for the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral development of children. (Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado, CIDE.)

For most children, the infant school is part of the primary school they will go on to attend, which allows a smooth transition to primary education at the age of six. In addition, the vast majority of primary schools are directly, physically linked to a secondary school.

What are the points of transfer between phases?

There are four educational phases in the education system:

- Phase 1: Pre-compulsory, infant (early years) education, to six years of age.
- Phase 2: Compulsory primary education, aged six to 12 years.
- Phase 3: Compulsory lower secondary education for 12-to 16-year-olds.
- Phase 4: Upper secondary education, post-16.

Early years	Compulsory primary	Compulsory secondary
0-6 years of age	6- to 12-year-olds	12-16 years of age

2. Locus of control

<i>What degree of control over curriculum content and other aspects of primary schools exists at the national, regional, local and/or school level?</i>
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Prior to 1978, there was a tradition of centralised education provision in Spain. The 1978 Constitution introduced the devolution of responsibility to the so-called *Autonomous Communities*, along the model of an unproclaimed federalist state. In other words, Spain is decentralising its administration, by distributing powers between the State and the 17 *Autonomous Communities* which comprise the nation.

In terms of education, the Constitution identifies a series of areas over which the State has exclusive competence and others for which the *Autonomous Communities* may assume responsibility. An *Autonomous Community* assumes 'full powers' over education when it takes over all the regulatory and executive responsibilities not included within the State's exclusive area of competence. Spain has recently completed this process of decentralisation; by December 1999, all 17 *Autonomous Communities* had assumed full powers over education, under the coordination of the, then, Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) at national level. (The Ministry of Education and Culture is now the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, MECD.)

The table provides a summary of the responsibilities for education at state, *Autonomous Community* and local level.

Level	Powers/responsibilities
State/national	General regulation of the system; minimum requirements for educational establishments; international cooperation in education issues; research coordination; core curriculum decisions; regulation of academic and professional qualifications; Senior Inspection Service; study aid policy; ownership and administration of public establishments abroad; legal framework for foreign establishments in Spain; education statistics for state purposes.
<i>Autonomous Communities</i>	Administrative title in the respective territory; setting up and authorisation of establishments; personnel administration; expansion/development of education programmes; student counselling; grants and loans.
Local/municipal	Provision of land for building public establishments; conservation, maintenance and renovation of infant and primary schools; programmes of extra-curricular and complementary activities; supervision of compulsory school attendance.

Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) is "responsible for ensuring the homogeneity and basic unity of the education system, and for guaranteeing equal educational opportunities for all Spaniards as laid down in the Constitution". The MECD is headed by one Minister assisted by a Management Board.

Autonomous Communities

The *Autonomous Communities*, amongst others:

- Oversee the implementation of the national standards defined at MECD level.
- Exercise all regulatory and executive powers involved in administering the education system in their respective regions, which have been devolved to them.
- Establish, authorise and operate public and private educational establishments and administer their personnel, construction, equipment, renovation and reform.
- Further develop - at regional level - the national guidelines for curricula.
- Conduct research.
- Process and grant subsidies to private education establishments.
- Administer scholarships and study grants.

Municipal authorities

The central administration (MECD) and *Autonomous Communities* can delegate powers to municipal authorities in domains over which they have control. As a result, most town councils have a Municipal Education Department, or similar, which is usually responsible for the provision and maintenance of school buildings; the management of municipal education-related programmes; allocating land for the building of public establishments; the repair, maintenance, monitoring and upkeep of pre-compulsory and primary establishments; overseeing compulsory schooling and educational services; and providing complementary services and activities.

Educational establishments/School Councils

At the school level, the School Council, comprising representatives of the teaching staff, one Municipal Council member, parents and students, is responsible for electing the headteacher, and for school discipline, student admission, financial management, and assessment of the establishment's general programme and extracurricular activities.

Inspection

There are two forms of inspection in Spain.

'Higher inspection', carried out by the MECD, includes:

- ensuring that the plans, curricula, educational guidelines and teaching materials are in line with the provisions laid down by the central administration;
- checking that national requirements for the general structure and organisation of the respective levels, cycles, duration of studies, admission requirements, etc are fulfilled;
- verifying that courses offered comply with national requirements with respect to the awarding of qualifications;
- ensuring that basic conditions to guarantee equality for all Spaniards with regard to linguistic duties and rights are observed; and
- ensuring that the awarding of study grants and subsidies is appropriate.

In addition, ‘technical inspections’, carried out by specialist agencies from each of the *Autonomous Communities*:

- provide guidance and support for educational establishments; and
- monitor and evaluate the education system to ensure that educational objectives are satisfactorily met.

The National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (INCE) also conducts national surveys, based on assessment of attainment, and collects background data from principals (headteachers), teachers, children and families on a sample basis, usually at the end of educational phases, to evaluate the standard of education being provided. INCE has, for example, recently completed a national evaluation of the final year of primary education (children aged 11-12) as part of a rolling programme of evaluating education in Spain. The aim of the process was not solely to assess children's knowledge, but to compare the abilities of children in different areas of Spain and in different types of school.

Under legislation passed on 23 December 2002, see below, INCE is shortly to become the National Institute for Evaluation and Quality of the Education System, INECSE. The role of this reorganised body will include the general evaluation of the education system, the evaluation of specific areas, the production of education statistics, the preparation of the National Education System Indicators, and participation in international evaluation programmes. INECSE will also be responsible for the system of diagnostic assessment to be implemented in primary and compulsory secondary education, the outcomes of which will be published regularly with a view to ensuring public awareness of the development and achievements of the education system. See section 5. Assessment in addition. (Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado, CIDE.)

Curriculum

There are three levels of control of the curriculum, as follows:

1. The official curriculum (or basic curricular design), determined both at the national and the *Autonomous Community* level. This includes the nationally (MECD) determined minimum core curriculum, accounting for 65 per cent of teaching time in most schools; 55 per cent in those areas of Spain where children study another official language in addition to Spanish, plus the official curriculum of the *Autonomous Community*. This accounts for the remaining 35 or 45 per cent of curriculum time. The official curriculum sets out objectives in terms of skills, methodological principles, content and assessment criteria.
2. Curricular plans, for each specific stage or level in schools. These are devised by the team of teachers responsible for each cycle/level in each specific school, approved by the School Council and monitored by the Inspectorate. They aim to ensure continuity and coherence between the official curriculum (see above) and classroom teaching activities, and to promote a specific school identity and ethos. Curricular plans define the actual curriculum which is delivered in school. They must state the educational aims for each of the different stages and levels, the content to be taught in each of them, as well as the methodological and assessment criteria.

3. Class programmes, in which the individual teacher adapts the school's curricular plan (see above) to meet the needs of the children in his/her class. Every teacher has some discretion for setting concrete standards for his/her class.

Are there any shifts in the distribution of control between these different levels? (Is it possible to assign percentages to each level, to reflect circumstances in each country?)

Reforms of primary and secondary education were presented to the Spanish Parliament in March/April 2002 and were passed on 23 December 2002 as the Organic Act on the Quality of Education. The reforms to be introduced under the Act are intended to reduce school failure, raise standards of education and promote a culture of effort and will begin to come into effect in the 2004/05 academic year. With regard to the distribution of control over education, the plans include proposals to:

- Increase school autonomy with regard to the selection of teaching materials and financial management and organisation. Such changes could allow schools to specialise in certain areas of the curriculum.
- Change the way headteachers are appointed and increase their powers with regard to discipline, the school management team and internal monitoring and evaluation.
- Reinforce inspection as the key to raising standards in education.
- End textbook authorisation, although textbooks would continue to respect the principles of the Spanish Constitution and the core curriculum requirements.

At what intervals is the curriculum reviewed? (eg are there established review cycles?)

Major legislative reform in 1990 introduced the concept of the nationally determined minimum core curriculum (see above) for development and adaptation at the local level. Prior to this reform, the curriculum dated from 1970. In December 2000, some minor modifications were introduced to the requirements of the minimum core curriculum, to ensure that content remained relevant. Reform proposals passed on 23 December 2002, under the Organic Act on the Quality of Education, may also result in additional changes to the curriculum from the 2004/05 school year (see below).

There are no established cycles for curriculum review. Indeed, it is expected that, as the regional *Autonomous Communities* develop the curriculum at regional level and individual educational establishments adapt the regional curriculum to their specific requirements, changes to/review of local curricula may happen on a more regular basis.

3. Curriculum content

What does the statutory curriculum consist of?

The statutory minimum core curriculum requirements specify that the following 'areas of knowledge' must be studied at compulsory primary level (children aged six to 12 years):

- Spanish language and literature (and, in cases where this exists, the co-official language and literature of the *Autonomous Community*).
- Mathematics.
- Knowledge of the natural, social and cultural environment (changes to be introduced under the recently passed 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education will change this subject area to science, geography and history).
- Artistic education (plastic arts, music, dance, and drama).
- Physical education.
- Foreign languages (from the start of the second cycle of primary education, aged eight onwards).
- Religion (changes to be introduced under the recently passed 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education will change this subject area to society, culture and religion) or study activities *.

* Although schools must offer religious education to children, children may opt not to follow this course. Alternative study activities are provided. These may include periods of private study, or specific activities targeted at ensuring that children consider and analyse different aspects of social and cultural life.

The above minimum core curriculum requirement is expected to account for 65 per cent of curriculum time in schools in those *Autonomous Communities* with Spanish (Castilian) as their official language; 55 per cent of time in those *Autonomous Communities* with another official language in addition.

What other aspects of the curriculum/teaching in schools are statutory? Are time allocations for subjects statutory?

Cross-curricular themes

In addition to the 'areas of knowledge' of the statutory minimum core curriculum, the cross-curricular themes of moral education, education for peace, for health, for the equality of the sexes, environment education and consumer education are also introduced during this phase. Some of the themes such as education for peace and education for gender equality are fully introduced during primary level education. Others, such as sex education and consumer education, are introduced simply as a foundation for future study. Individual institutions are able to give priority to those cross-curricular themes, which most promote the values which are of relevance in their own context.

Time allocation

In the remaining 35 per cent of curriculum time not covered by the compulsory minimum core curriculum (45 per cent in those *Autonomous Communities* with a second official language), the curriculum is locally determined. The 10 per cent difference for those *Autonomous Communities* where the regional language is also taught does not necessarily mean that this 10 per cent is time used for the regional language. Once schools meet the minimum core curriculum requirements they are free to distribute the remaining time as they consider most appropriate.

An example school timetable has been established by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD). This establishes a time allocation for the minimum core curriculum requirements only (65 per cent of the school curriculum) for the three two-year cycles of primary education.

Guideline timetable for the compulsory core curriculum during primary education

	First Cycle Aged 6-8	Second Cycle Aged 8-10	Third Cycle Aged 10-12
Spanish language and literature *	350 hours	275 hours	275 hours
Mathematics	175 hours	170 hours	170 hours
Knowledge of the natural, social and cultural environment	175 hours	170 hours	170 hours
Artistic education	140 hours	105 hours	105 hours
Physical education	140 hours	105 hours	105 hours
Foreign languages **	-	170 hours	170 hours
Religion or study activities (children exercise choice)	105 hours	105 hours	105 hours

* *Autonomous Communities* with two official languages (Spanish and their own language), may devote 10 per cent of the total timetable to the teaching of their own language within the time allocated to languages.

** Foreign language learning is compulsory from the first year of the second cycle.

Are there statutory timings for the length of the school day/week?

On average, the total number of school days is 180, distributed over 36 weeks. These figures may vary slightly between *Autonomous Communities*.

Primary education is full-time, comprising 25 one-hour periods in a five-hour day, five-day week, Monday to Friday. The school day is usually divided into morning and afternoon sessions of three and two hours respectively, with a two-hour recreational interval between the two (9.00/10.00 am to 12.00 pm/1.00 pm and 2.30/3.00 pm to 4.30/5.00 pm).

The minimum number of annual teaching hours is 810 at primary level.

What changes have there been to the statutory/non-statutory elements of the curriculum?

Reform proposals passed in December 2002 will come into effect in the 2004/05 academic year, and include proposals to revise the statutory core curriculum at primary level, placing greater emphasis on language, mathematics and the promotion of reading. The reforms also make provision for the compulsory introduction of a modern foreign language at the beginning of primary education (children aged six years) instead of during the third year of primary education as at present (aged eight onwards).

What government/other initiatives have been introduced? What has been their impact?

National plan for reading

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) has launched a *National Plan to Promote Reading and Literacy*. The three-year plan (2001-2004), which brings together schools, libraries and publishers, aims specifically to encourage reading, especially in children and young people; to improve state and school libraries; to coordinate and support the activities of independent foundations in promoting reading and writing; and to strengthen the momentum of literacy campaigns.

What other trends are emerging in curriculum development? (eg new subjects/areas of learning being introduced)

Foreign languages

Although the statutory study of modern foreign languages does not commence until the beginning of the second cycle of primary education, children aged eight onwards, many pre-primary and primary schools have begun to introduce the study of a modern foreign language from three years of age (the beginning of the second cycle of pre-compulsory early years education). Additionally, under current reform proposals, (see above) the study of a foreign language looks set to become compulsory nationwide from age six from the start of the 2004/05 school year.

Indeed, all *Autonomous Communities* currently have some schools in which a foreign language is taught in the first cycle (age six onwards) and where an optional second foreign language is taught from age eight. (Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado, CIDE.)

In addition to foreign languages, special emphasis is also being placed on the command of ICTs. (Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado, CIDE.)

What other levers may be having an impact on curriculum content? (eg international studies: PIRLS, IEA, PISA, TIMSS)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

4. Organisation of the curriculum

What are the common features of curriculum organisation in the primary phase? (single subjects? planning subjects as 'topics'?)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

How are subjects labelled?

The subjects of the statutory minimum core curriculum are generally known as 'areas of knowledge'.

What examples are there of 'areas' rather than subjects?

What examples are there of clusters of subjects (eg Humanities, made up of geography and history) being brought together?

Some of the 'areas of knowledge' of the statutory minimum core curriculum are clusters of subjects or subject areas rather than individual subjects. Spanish, or the regional language, for example, includes language *and* literature; knowledge of the natural, social and cultural environment forms another subject area; and artistic education includes plastic arts, music, dance, and drama.

What are the common features of timetabling? (eg weekly lessons in each subject, English and mathematics taught daily)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

5. Assessment

What is the purpose, nature and scale of assessment? (eg end of phase assessment, statutory, published test results, optional, national, local, timed tests, teacher-assessment)

Ongoing assessment

Generally, all children are continually assessed during compulsory primary education, by school-based classroom assessment, and the individual institution, whether it is state or private sector, is responsible for assessment, and for awarding any relevant certification.

The minimum core curriculum includes basic guidelines for assessment, which is regarded as an integral part of the curriculum. Assessment is expected to be:

- Global: covering the entire range of abilities set out in the general objectives for primary education and in the assessment criteria for the various 'areas of knowledge'.
- Continuous: class teachers constantly gather information about the learning process of children.

- Formative: designed to regulate and guide the education process by providing a continual flow of information that enables improvements to be made both in the educational process and its results.

Schools are not obliged to follow a uniform model for assessing and marking children's progress. They use guidelines included for that purpose in the core curriculum. In other words, teacher bodies in each school determine the assessment criteria, its methods and tools and, most importantly, they also set the criteria for progression.

1. The official curriculum sets minimum goals for the child defined as a series of abilities (locomotive, cognitive, affective or emotional balance; interpersonal relationships; and social action and integration).
2. The local curricular plans reflect assessment strategies and procedures:
 - what to assess (reviewing and adapting the official attainment targets as necessary and setting attainment targets for each cycle);
 - how to assess - situations, strategies and procedures;
 - when to assess - initial, formative and summative points;
 - how the results of assessment will be recorded and to whom they will be reported;
 - criteria for: progression to the next year/cycle; supporting children who receive a negative assessment; and (if applicable) determining whether a child will receive the final qualification.
3. Class programmes, in which the individual teacher uses his/her discretion to adapt the school's curricular plan and assessment to meet the needs of the children in his/her class.

Satisfactory progress is usually required to grant access to the next class or cycle.

When providing assessment information as a child progresses to the next cycle, teachers generally use the following two grades for each of the subjects in the curriculum:

- PA - progressing adequately;
- NM - needing improvement.

These grades are often also used by teachers when reporting during the course of a cycle. (There are three two-year cycles during the six years of primary education.)

Assessment at this level should also serve to determine any special needs attention required by children. The identification of any difficulties through assessment could result in the introduction of Individual Curricular Adaptations (ACIs) for some.

The 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education establishes a system of diagnostic assessment to evaluate the knowledge acquired by children in primary (and compulsory secondary) education. The tests, which will be curriculum based, aim to be formative for teachers, families and children. (Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado, CIDE.)

INCE assessment

INCE assessment (named after the body which sets and administers the assessment tests - the National Institute for Quality and Evaluation) takes place on completion of compulsory primary education, and involves a sample of children. Its main purpose is to contribute to the general evaluation of the education system. Spain being a state made up of autonomous regions, national assessment studies such as INCE can provide a broad, comparative picture of educational progress both at national and regional levels. Consequently, national INCE assessment has both diagnostic and informative purposes. It intends to provide policy-makers, schools, families and the public in general with sound, reliable information about the health and state of the education system.

At the end of primary education, INCE assessment is intended to cover all subjects of the statutory minimum core curriculum. However, some areas have proved difficult to test by means of written, standardised instruments. Areas effectively covered to date are mathematics, Spanish and regional languages, natural and social sciences, foreign languages and physical education.

INCE assessment tests include multiple choice items, open-ended questions and, occasionally, free response items, depending on the subject, the competencies to be assessed and the test objectives. Most INCE tests are in written form, but in some cases (for example, physical education or foreign languages) may include observation, listening or conversation. Assessment usually takes place during the later months of the school year (usually April or May), in one, two or three two-hour sessions. (The school year starts in September and ends in late June.) Children included in the sample are tested in their own schools and classrooms.

INCE assessment is based not only on children's attainment, but also on background data collected from principals (headteachers), teachers, children and families. Every year, not more than 700 schools (providing both compulsory primary and secondary level education) take part in the different INCE assessment surveys. This means that an individual school will probably only be asked to take part in some of the surveys once every five or six years.

The outcomes of testing and assessment undertaken as part of INCE national testing are expressed in different ways: percentage of success, failure and non-response for each test item; a global score for each dimension or group of items; a global score for each exercise; a global score for each child (anonymous); aggregated scores for each school (anonymous); and aggregated scores for each region. **(Under the 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education, the duties of INCE are to be taken over by the INECSE, see above.)**

Reporting

Teachers produce an initial report when a child first arrives in school, and there are legal requirements for teachers to produce summary assessment reports on completion of each of the three cycles of compulsory primary education (ages eight, 10 and 12 years respectively). These reports must follow a required format. Teachers also provide families with written reports of achievement at the end of each term (usually every three months). These are designed by the school and include a description of the

child's attainments, as well as providing details of specific measures the school intends to take to improve the child's achievement. All of the above documents are added to the child's personal file.

When children move to another school, a special report is produced, in addition, which summarises the child's level of attainment with regard to each of the subject areas, and includes comments on the child's knowledge acquisition skills, as well as any recommended measures for improvement.

The outcomes of national INCE assessment are reported in several ways. First, there is a general, informative report, which presents the main results of the assessment programme. Second, there is a technical report. This aims to inform experts and academics, support the validity and reliability of the results, describe the technical procedures involved, and analyse and interpret the results. Finally, there are short summary reports, which disseminate the results of INCE assessment programmes to the public at large. Policy-makers receive all three of the above types of report, but the first is the one most oriented towards them. They also receive a series of proposals and recommendations which result from INCE's analysis of the assessment programme. Regional authorities also receive a full set of results data for the INCE testing programme for their region. This is for the purposes of self-analysis. Schools do not receive individual results from INCE testing. Both participating and non-participating schools receive the general reports, however, and have access to the testing instruments for their own further use, analysis and self-evaluation.

(Under the 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education, the duties of INCE are to be taken on by the INECSE, see above.)

Progression

Children in primary education generally progress from one cycle or one year to the next providing they have achieved the appropriate curricular objectives. A child who has not achieved the objectives may be held back for a year only once during primary education, and this is relatively rare. The class teacher is responsible for making the decision on the basis of the ongoing assessment process, reports from the child's other teachers, and consultation with the child's parents or guardians. Indeed, any decision to hold a child back must first receive the approval of a child's parents before it can be implemented. A decision to hold a child back for a year is accompanied, as necessary, by complementary educational measures to help him/her achieve the objectives.

Teacher bodies in each school set the assessment criteria, assessment methods and tools and the linked progression criteria. Children may not skip a year, that is, even the most able may not, for example, progress from Year 1 of primary education to Year 3.

Children usually transfer automatically from primary to compulsory secondary education.

How far is the curriculum driven by assessments? (eg evidence of teacher preparation for testing, 'booster' or 'catch-up' classes in schools)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

6. Teaching profession/training

What changes can be identified in initial teacher training programmes?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

However, Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado of CIDE comments that the University Coordination Council establishes university certificates which are valid nationwide. It is also responsible for general regulations with regard to the teacher training curriculum. Initial teacher training consists of a first cycle, which lasts for three years, leading to the certificate of “Maestro” in one of seven different specialisms. The 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education makes some provisions for the reinforcement of initial teacher training (taking account, for example, of the scientific-pedagogical dimension of the teaching-learning process).

What kinds of continuing professional development/on-going training are provided?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

However, Javier Alfaya Hurtado of CIDE comments that the 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education makes some provisions for the reorganisation of in-service teacher training. At present, in-service training is a decentralised responsibility and, as such, the public institutions responsible for continuing professional development can vary from *Autonomous Community* to *Autonomous Community*. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) may implement some (overarching) national in-service training programmes. Under the provisions of the new Act, those in-service training activities organised by individual *Autonomous Communities* which meet standards determined by the (national) MECD, will be valid nationwide. This is with a view to improving national mobility and transfers for teachers.

To what degree are teachers'/schools' planning subject to scrutiny?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

To what degree are teachers using electronic formats to plan?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

7. Pedagogy

Which teaching approaches are dominant or developing a higher profile, and which are receding? (eg collaborative work, whole-class instruction)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

What is the impact of ICT in teaching practice? (eg use of electronic whiteboards, intranets, managed learning environments/local grids)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

However, Javier Alfaya Hurtado of CIDE comments that the Organic Act on the Quality of Education aims to encourage the use of ICT as a learning tool for children. He further confirms that, at present, 46 per cent of primary school teachers use computers with children in the classroom and 19 per cent make use of the Internet. The average period of use is just over three hours each week.

To what degree are teaching approaches focusing on developing thinking skills, creativity and building on children's learning styles?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

Javier Alfaya Hurtado of CIDE comments that, at present, teaching methodology concentrates on the well-rounded development of children, integrating their different experiences and learning. The teaching process is based on children's constructive activity, guided by learning functionality, relying essentially on the 'learning to learn' principle and ensuring that what is learned will be of actual use to children under normal circumstances. Teaching is personalised and adapted to the various learning rhythms of each child.

The 2002 Organic Act on the Quality of Education states that one of the aims of primary education is to foster children's self-confidence, critical sense, creativity and personal initiative. (Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado, CIDE.)

8. Resourcing

How far are resources to support teaching made available via government/central/local agencies?

Although compulsory primary level education in publicly-funded schools is free of charge, parents are usually expected to buy textbooks. Some means-tested grants are available to assist those in need. Indeed, in May 2002, it was announced that additional grants were being made available for the purchase of books and teaching materials for some children in compulsory education. These grants were targeted towards children in families with low incomes, large families, single-parent families, orphans, and children with special educational needs.

How far, and in which subjects, are resources statutory/ recommended/ subsidised? (eg textbooks, courses, lesson plans for teachers, web-based materials)

Legislation exists to regulate the supervision and provision of textbooks and other curricular material for general education and their use in teaching establishments.

Curricular material must:

- indicate the level, stage, cycle or school year for which it is intended;
- include support and extension activities to cater for varying ability levels; and
- be consistent with the aims, content, teaching methods and assessment criteria provided for in any legislation on the curriculum.

Individual schools select textbooks for each cycle in accordance with the above legislative guidance and with regional criteria. Textbooks cannot generally be replaced until the children for whom they were chosen have completed the relevant cycle. Textbooks selected for a specific subject area, course or cycle cannot normally be replaced within four years unless the Education Authorities decide otherwise.

The Centre for Educational Research and Documentation (CIDE), set up by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD), assists in the development, drawing up and dissemination of curriculum materials and in the preparation of guidance materials for teachers.

Proposed reforms of primary and secondary education, passed in December 2002, (under the new Organic Act on the Quality of Education) will mean that educational establishments will no longer have to select textbooks from those which have previously been authorised by the Education Authorities. Textbooks will, however, have to continue to respect the principles of the Spanish Constitution and the core curriculum requirements. (Sr Javier Alfaya Hurtado, CIDE.)