

SPECIALIZED VERSUS NON-SPECIALIZED PROFESSIONALS: THE PARADOX OF THE TEACHER-COUNSELLOR

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Today there is a deplorable disjunction between what the educational authorities propose and what the educational community needs. Only in the diagnosis do we find some degree of consensus: that there has been a gradual increase in school failure. As the TALIS survey concludes, from the Spanish perspective (2009): "education is still a long way from becoming an industry for generating knowledge...". Clearly, in a school system as complex as today's, efficient intervention is not possible based on pseudo-professionalization. What is truly required is a team of professionals with a body of specialist knowledge and extensive practical experience; in sum, the professionalization of teachers and non-teachers – such as psychologists – working in educational contexts. Without this, it will be impossible to achieve educational quality. It worries us that the Education Ministry is moving in the direction, not of specialization and training, but of the generalization of roles, as reflected in the recent Order EDU/849/2010, which regulates, within its area of jurisdiction, the education of pupils with a need for educational support and educational guidance services. It may be that the problem lies in a conception of Educational Guidance without a scientific basis: more than a "science of action" and a "profession", the educational authorities appear to understand it as a task that can be carried out by any teacher with the Masters in Teacher Training qualification (specifically the "Educational Guidance" specialization), regardless of their basic and specific training background.

Key words: School failure, Pseudo-professionalization, Teacher-counsellor.

En la actualidad existe un lamentable divorcio entre lo que la Administración Educativa propone y lo que la Comunidad Educativa necesita. Sólo encontramos cierta sintonía en el diagnóstico: ambas coinciden en el incremento progresivo del fracaso escolar. Como concluye el proyecto TALIS, desde la perspectiva española (2009): "... la educación está todavía lejos de convertirse en una industria del conocimiento...". Es evidente que en una escuela, tan compleja como la actual, no cabe una intervención eficiente desde la pseudo-profesionalización. Se requiere de un equipo de profesionales que posean un cuerpo de conocimiento propio y un dominio cualificado de actuaciones prácticas. En definitiva, la exigencia de la profesionalización de todos los profesionales docentes y no docentes, como el psicólogo, que intervengan en contextos educativos. Sin ella, no es posible el logro de la calidad educativa. Nos preocupa que desde el Ministerio de Educación (ME) se vaya en otra dirección y se favorezca la generalización de roles frente a la especialización y capacitación, como se pone de manifiesto en la reciente Orden EDU/849/2010 (BOE de 18 de marzo), por la que se regula la ordenación de la educación del alumnado con necesidad de apoyo educativo y los servicios de orientación educativa en su ámbito de gestión. Quizás el problema radique en una concepción no fundamentada científicamente de la Orientación Educativa: más que una "ciencia de la acción" y "una profesión", la Administración Educativa parece entenderla como una tarea que puede realizar cualquier docente que haya cursado el Máster de Formación del Profesorado, denominado "Orientación Educativa", con independencia de su formación básica, fundamental y específica.

Palabras clave: Fracaso escolar, Seudo-profesionalización, Profesor orientador.

In Spain today there is a deplorable disjunction between what is set down by legislation and what is implemented by the educational authorities; moreover, the measures taken also fall way behind both the needs of the educational community and the demands of teachers and other professionals. Only in the diagnosis do we find a consensus: all agree that there has been a

gradual increase in school failure. Indeed, according to the latest report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Spain once again has among the highest rates of school failure, with only Mexico, Malta and Portugal showing poorer figures. Thus, one of the aims of the present work is to analyze, with the help of quantitative indicators, those factors that influence such failure.

Good academic performance is often considered to be linked to greater investment in education, examples being cited of countries renowned for their successful education

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systems, such as Finland (6.1% of GDP), Sweden (6.7% of GDP), Poland (6% of GDP) or Denmark (7.2% of GDP). However, investment, though necessary, is not sufficient. It is crucial to increase the efficiency of education spending, and therefore essential to target those aspects most directly related to educational quality, such as:

- ✓ Improvement of basic and specialized training of teachers, in line with the needs of schools in the twenty-first century.
- ✓ The development of more appropriate and demanding selection processes which ensure that the most able candidates join the teaching profession.
- ✓ The promotion of policies for the early detection of problems affecting the educational community and for tackling the problem of school failure.
- ✓ Provision of the specialized support teachers need for confronting the challenges of today's complex educational context.

As far as investment is concerned, the results obtained by Spain in education are much poorer than would be expected according to the resources applied (4.95% of GDP). In terms of investment, Spain occupies an intermediate position among European Union (EU) countries, but obtains the poorest results, even behind those of Bulgaria (Table 1). If we analyze the relation between resources invested and performance, or the *performance coefficient*, Spain's is the lowest in the European Union (6.66), far below those of leading countries in this respect, namely, Slovenia (1.66) and Poland (2.00) (Institut d'Estudis del Capital Social – INCAS –, May 2010).

Likewise, mean expenditure per pupil in Spain is 5,800.5 euros, slightly higher than the EU mean of 5,562.5, while the mean pupil-to-teacher ratio is 11.8, below that of Austria (12.1) and slightly above that of Poland (11.2). According to these quantitative indicators, neither the pupil/teacher ratio nor government expenditure on education can explain Spain's poor results in performance.

In this same line, as regards Spanish pupils' performance in mathematics, reading comprehension and sciences (according to PISA), the average is 476 points, below the EU average (490), and quite a long way short of the 500 points considered acceptable as a target figure (Fig. 1).

But what is really a matter for concern is the percentage of pupils who leave school early, the figure currently standing at 31.9 % (Fig. 2), The Spanish government

considers this level of school dropout excessive, and has set a target of 15%, as an upper limit, by 2020 (Action Plan 2010-2011, Council of Ministers, June 2010). In our view, however, this objective is somewhat modest, especially if we take into account what has been achieved on average in other EU countries, the mean figure for

TABLE 1
RELATION BETWEEN INDEX OF RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE ATTAINED

	Performance coefficient
EU - 27	5.33
Spain	6.66
Slovenia	1.66
Poland	2.00
Austria	3.00
Germany	4.33
Bulgaria	5.50

FIGURE 1
PISA REPORT: AVERAGE IN READING COMPREHENSION, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

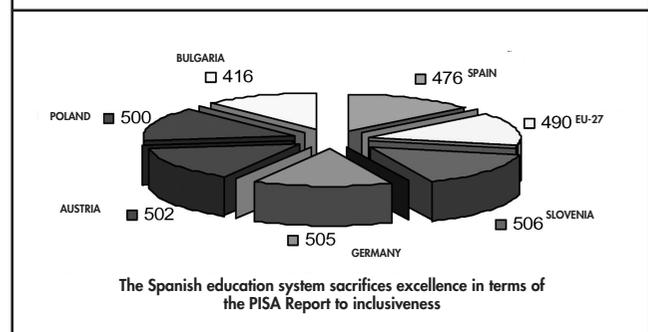
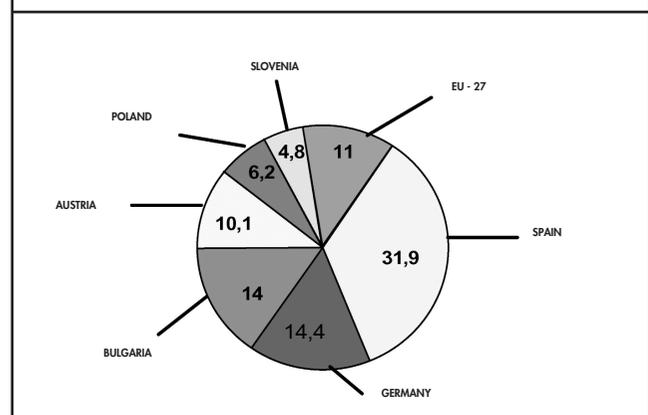


FIGURE 2
EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS, %



school dropout being 11%. Furthermore, 49% of Spaniards have only completed mandatory education, and just 22% have completed Secondary Education; this compares with figures of 47% for the EU as a whole and 44% for the OECD (ME, 2010).

In any case, the educational authorities have spent decades attempting to blame the failure of our education system on inclusiveness, but in reality the Spanish education system is one of the most exclusive in Europe, since it condemns over a third of pupils – perfectly capable of continued learning – to leaving school early, and hence to educational failure, by failing to encourage or incentivize them to stay on. At the recent meeting of European education ministers, during the Spanish presidency of the Council, it was agreed that all European education systems should guarantee social equality and academic excellence, since these two aspects are complementary (Action Plan 2010-2011, Council of Ministers, 25 June 2010).

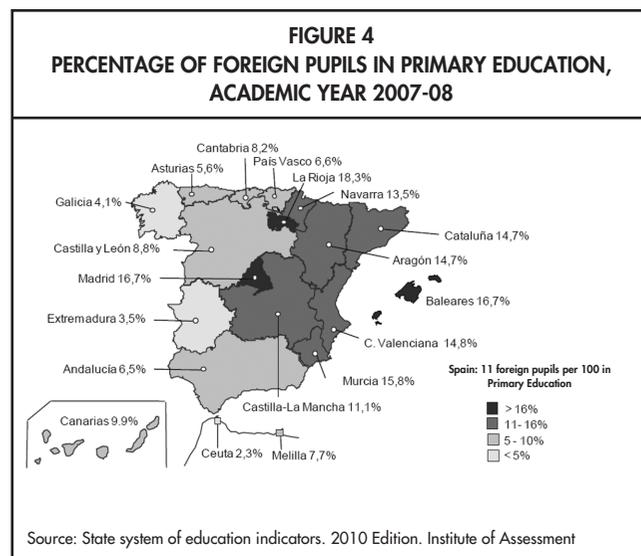
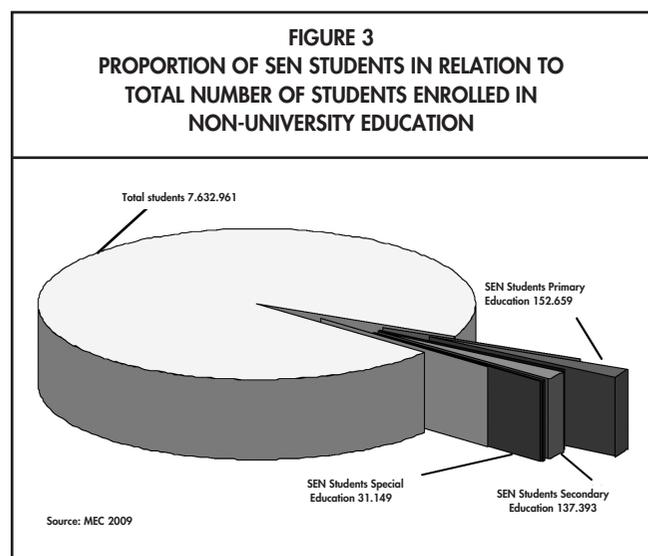
Having reached this point, it seems reasonable to ask: how can this steady increase in school failure be explained? There is a high degree of consensus among researchers on the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon. Clearly, it is influenced by factors external to the education system: individual, sociocultural, family-related and economic, but also by internal factors, such as an inadequate regulatory framework and poorly-organized higher education system, a lack or ineffectiveness of methods for the early detection of different problems, a scarcity of educational support resources and insufficient training of teaching staff,

among other elements. Let us analyze the most relevant, through their influence on school failure.

The educational authorities, as mentioned above, tend to justify this high level of school failure in terms of inclusive education and of initiatives for diversity and multiculturalism. However, the quantitative indicators do not endorse such justification.

In the academic year 2009/2010, the total number of students enrolled in non-university education was 7,632,961, and of these, 321,201 were individuals with special educational needs (SEN), distributed across the different educational stages and categories in the following way: 152,659 in Primary Education, 137,393 in Compulsory Secondary Education and 31,149 in Special Education institutions (ME, 2010). In sum, the proportion of students with special educational needs is 4.7%, far removed from the 31.9% of school failures. Moreover, it is important to mention that many of these SEN students cannot be included in the category of school failure (Fig. 3).

Nor can we attribute this level of school failure to mainly socioeconomic and multiculturalism-related factors, such as the high proportion of immigrants (of low socioeconomic and academic status in their majority) at schools in Spain's various autonomous regions. The General Diagnostic Assessment (*Evaluación General de Diagnóstico*; EGD) carried out by the ME in 2009 with students in the 4th grade of Primary Education and by autonomous region (Figures 4 and 5) revealed no equivalence between school performance and percentages of immigrant students in this educational



stage; indeed, regions with high numbers of immigrants obtained better academic results than those with smaller percentages.

As we can see, in the Rioja region (*Comunidad de la Rioja*), students perform best (542 points) according to the EGD, despite its being, percentage-wise, the region with the most immigrant students in this educational stage (18.3%). The opposite is true for Extremadura (3.5%), for Ceuta (2.3%) and for Melilla (7.7%), as far as the ME's figures are concerned. Also, in regions with quite different percentages, such as Madrid, with 16.7%, and Catalonia, with 14.7%, performance differs considerably: Madrid, with 530 points, is better than Catalonia (497 points), the average for Spain being 500 points. Therefore, while it is clear that multiculturalism can be a risk factor, it need not contribute to school failure if offset by effective compensatory education initiatives.

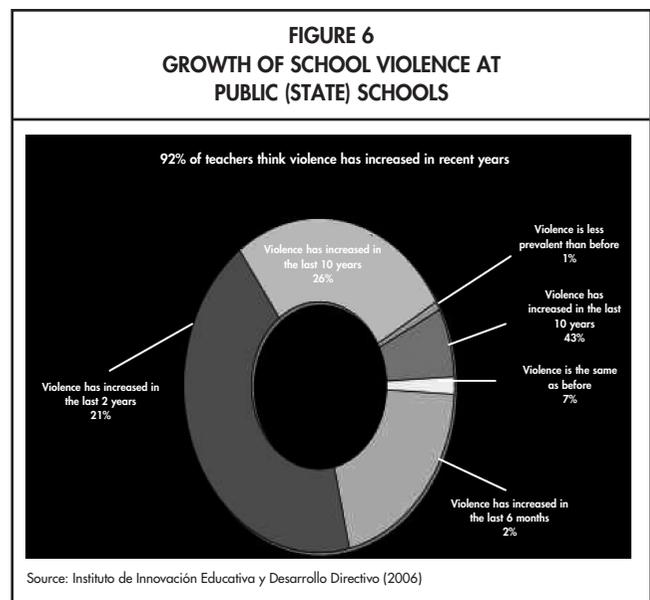
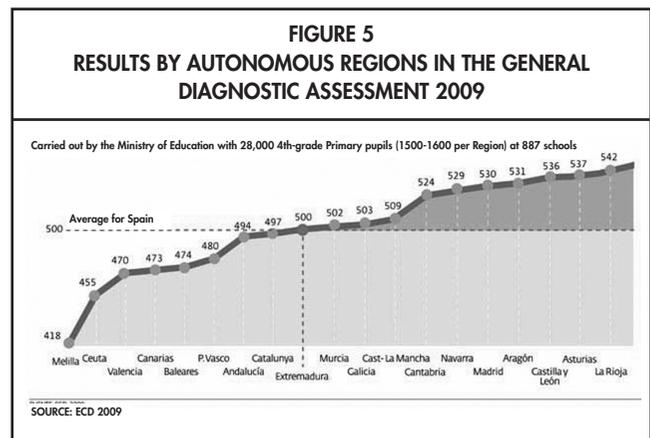
Furthermore, there are external factors that may be both causes and consequences of school failure, such as social maladjustment and the use of addictive substances. School failure is linked to negative emotional experiences and to interpersonal conflicts that are expressed in diverse forms of problematic and violent behaviours (indiscipline, vandalism, bullying, etc.). Of these, indiscipline and inadequate school climate are, in the opinion of teachers, among the most destabilizing and negative in Spain, according to the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (OECD, 2009), in which 24 countries (17 from the EU) participated. Such problems evidently have an emotional background, and for both their prevention and treatment it is important to be able to rely on the advice and technical support of an educational psychologist. Indeed, emotional education is in our view an area in which our education system falls well short of what is required.

Particularly worrying is the increase in violent behaviours and bullying among pupils and against teaching staff. Violence has existed for years in our classrooms, but the educational authorities have attempted to minimize it or conceal it from the public. Nevertheless, as long ago as 2004 the Health Behaviour in School Aged Children (HBSC) study, carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 35 countries including Spain, reported a figure of 24% for bullying in our schools.

Today, no-one questions the fact of the increase in violence in classrooms and the difficulties encountered by teaching staff, especially in Secondary Education, for doing their job, as revealed in two studies, the Cisneros

VIII study on violence against teachers and the Cisneros X study on violence among pupils. As can be seen in Figure 6, teachers' perception of the way school violence has grown is extremely negative, which is not surprising considering that the last 5 years have seen an increase of 43% (Instituto de Innovación Educativa y Desarrollo Directivo) (IIEDDI, 2006).

As regards bullying (Figure 7), the Cisneros X study reports that more than 500,000 pupils (23.3%) are victims of it, and that regions such as Andalusia (with 27.79%) and the Basque Country (25.60%) are not only those with the highest rates of bullying, but also among those with the poorest academic performance records, as reflected in the above-mentioned General Diagnostic Assessment (EGD) carried out by the Education Ministry in 2009 (Figure 7).



Finally, bullying today often occurs outside of school. There has been a significant increase in the incidence of cyberbullying, that is, bullying via the Internet and text messages (SMS), whether during school time or outside of it.

But together with bullying and other forms of violence that occur in educational contexts, there are other problems associated with school failure, prominent among which is the early use of drugs. The current situation with regard to drug use in young Europeans is quite similar to the situation in young Ibero-Americans, the most widely used legal substances being alcohol and tobacco, and illegal drugs, cannabis and cocaine.

Let us consider briefly some data on the use of legal drugs from a recent study (Pérez Solís, Garrido, Stancato, Bispo, & Licco, 2009) funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation on Development (*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo*, AECID), which saw the participation of 720 Spanish (390 boys and 330 girls) and 292 Brazilian school pupils (128 boys and 164 girls) aged 11 and 12, all from families of middle socioeconomic class. The data provided by this research indicate that the majority of the Spanish participants (74.4%) and a considerable percentage of the Brazilians (43.8%) have tried alcohol. On the other hand, 78.1% of the Spaniards and 87.3% of the Brazilians have never tried smoking tobacco. This

reflects greater social tolerance to the use of alcohol than to smoking.

Of considerable interest are the research results on the links and inter-relation of risk factors and protective factors in the school context with regard to the use of alcohol. As far as Spanish participants are concerned, the data partially confirm a lack of gender differences in the link between risk factors and alcohol use. Boys consider, to a greater extent than girls, that “poor performance” and “low expectations of success” are related to drinking. Likewise, the fact of our finding that schoolchildren of such young ages (11-12 years) are much more likely to drink alcohol than to smoke seems to suggest a perception that alcohol is less dangerous than tobacco, and to indicate greater social tolerance towards drinking.

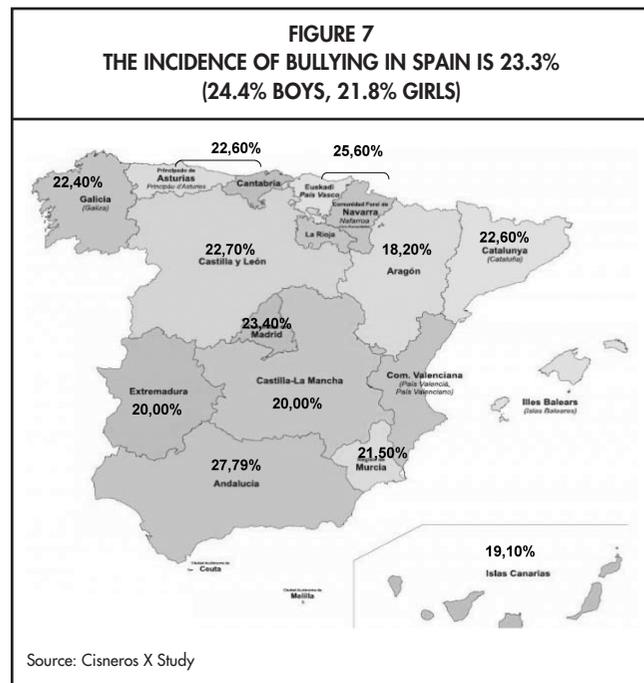
This research is based on *Social Learning Theory* (Abrams & Niaura, 1987; Marlatt & Gordon, 1985), according to which in the initiation process of alcohol use there are three types of important direct influence:

- ✓ The influence of family and peers.
- ✓ The influence of models.
- ✓ Experiences related to alcohol.

Furthermore, it is underpinned by the traditional *Stages in Adolescent Involvement in Drug Use* model (Kandel, 1975), since we understand that the use of these substances and the step to the use of illegal drugs do not appear suddenly, but rather develop in a gradual process. From this model it is understood that each stage of use is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for advancing to more problematic use, all stages being considered as risk factors that can result in progress to the next stage, but not inevitably so. Obviously, the earlier the onset of use of a substance, the more likely the progression to later stages.

Consequently, the aim of preventive initiatives must be to delay the age of onset of use, and in this regard the school (together with the family), as a socialization agent, is the ideal space for teachers working in the different educational stages – with the advice and technical support of educational psychologists and in line with the Tutorial Action Plan – to act as preventive agents, identifying those pupils in whom risk factors may play a significant role in promoting the use of legal drugs.

Likewise, there is sufficient empirical evidence that the use of drugs occurs in conjunction with antisocial and violent behaviours in adolescence, in response to the same set of risk factors. Thus, the prevention of drug-dependence can contribute to the prevention of classroom violence.



Finally, in relation to the use of illegal drugs, the report by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2009) shows that in the majority of European countries, with the exception of Belgium, Cyprus and Portugal, the most widely consumed illegal drug among young people aged 15 to 24 is cannabis, the European mean for regular use of this drug being 30.7%. Spain, with its figure of 38.6%, is among the countries with the highest prevalence of use of this drug in the 15 to 34 age range. In Ibero-America, reports show that 42% have tried it before the age of fifteen (International Narcotics Control Board, INCB, 2009).

Cocaine continues to be the second most widely used illegal drug in Europe, after cannabis, and this applies not only to experimental use, but also to occasional use and habitual use. Mean proportion of use in Europe is 5.4%, and in countries such as Spain, the United Kingdom, Ireland and France its use is on the increase. In Ibero-America mean level of use is 2.2% (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UN, 2010).

In sum, the use of legal and illegal drugs constitutes one of the most significant problems of public health and social harm in developed countries. In Spain, especially worrying is the increase in polydrug use and in the frequency of episodes of intense consumption over short periods (such as weekends); in terms of mortality, alcohol is responsible for 10% in young females and 25% in young males.

Up to now we have analyzed a series of factors external to our education system, which more than explaining the high rate of school failure reflect the needs of today's complex and plural school context and justify the demands for specialized support from the educational community, as reflected in the TALIS project (OECD, 2009). The question we ask ourselves now is to what extent the responsibility for this level of school failure can be attributed to the shortcomings of our education system and authorities and to their inefficacy for adapting the normative and organizational framework to the demands of society.

In Spain, since the arrival of democracy in the 1970s, there have been eleven legislative initiatives for regulating the education system, which have led to a constant need for adaptation to new educational models on the part of teachers, parents and students. But these continual changes of legislative framework appear to be more of a response to political than educational interests, and may have been counterproductive for the dynamic and

practice of teaching activity. What is most worrying, though, is the discrepancy between these legislative measures and the demands of teacher trainers, professionals and users.

The society of knowledge demands high levels of training and qualification, but as the TALIS survey concludes, from the Spanish perspective (2009): *"... education is still a long way from becoming a knowledge-generating industry requiring managers and teachers working as part of a professional community, with the authority to act, the information necessary to make the right decisions, and access to effective support systems that help them to meet the relevant challenges"*.

In this same line, the new curriculum proposed within the framework of the European Higher Education Area has the stated aim of *"converting universities into the motor of the knowledge-based society"* (Council of Ministers, 25 June 2010). However, it does not seem as though things are moving in this direction with rulings such as those set down in Royal Decree 860/2010 of 2 July, which establishes the requirements for working in the field of educational guidance in private institutions, stating that such work can be carried out by *"all those teachers who, having obtained the relevant degree or diploma, show proof of the complementary training stipulated by the educational authorities"* (art. 5.2 of RD 860/2010). Clearly, in a school system as complex as today's, efficient intervention is not possible based on pseudo-professionalization. What is truly required is a team of professionals with a body of specialist knowledge and extensive practical experience; in sum, the professionalization of teachers and non-teachers – such as psychologists – who work in educational contexts. Without this, it will be impossible to achieve educational quality.

Consequently, specialization has to be based on a solid basic initial training, whose content is in accordance with the relevant scientific and professional context, as apparently stipulated in Royal Decree 861/2010, of 2 July (amending Royal Decree 1393/2007, of 29 October), for the regulation of official university courses, in its paragraph four, 3:

"The official Masters Degree courses may incorporate specializations in their programmes corresponding to the relevant scientific, human, technological or professional framework. In any case, the Public Authorities will ensure that the name of the qualification is in accordance with its content, and where applicable, with the corresponding

specific regulations, and that it does not induce error in relation to its level or academic purpose, or confusion about its content or professional applicability”.

Moreover, it adds in paragraph five, 9. “In the case of qualifications that entitle the holder to exercise professional activities regulated in Spain, the government shall set the relevant curricula, which should also be in line with the corresponding European regulations...”

In accordance with this Royal Decree, the Ministry of Education must take into account the European Standards for Education and Training, which recognize psychologists as competent for working independently, and which were ratified unanimously in 2005 by the European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations (EFPA), in the context of the European Union directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (COM, 2002, 119), and approved by the European Parliament (2005).

However, we are extremely concerned about the gap between the European Standards and the current regulatory framework in Spain. The “Educational Guidance” specialization within the Masters in Teacher Training (a specialization previously referred to as Psychology and Pedagogy/Educational Psychology) has emerged as a clear example of the training of pseudo-professionals, given that this specialization course is open to graduates of any kind, even if their initial basic training has nothing to do with the scientific or professional context of the Psychology and Pedagogy/Educational Psychology specialities. And if this were not enough, it actually constitutes the basic requirement for access to public and private positions corresponding to these professional profiles.

Finally, as we remarked at the beginning of this article, there is a deplorable disjunction between what is set down in the legislation and what is implemented by the educational authorities, a good example of this being the stipulations of the 2006 Education Bill (*Ley Orgánica de Educación*, 2006), in section VIII, article 157h on “the existence of specialist services or professionals in educational, psychopedagogical and professional guidance”, as resources for improving teachers’ learning, for their support and for their subsequent development.

The Ministry of Education interprets, in our opinion mistakenly, what is understood in the context of scientific quality by “specialized professional services”, and it worries us that the educational authorities are moving in the direction, not of specialization and training, but of the

generalization of roles, as reflected in the recent Order EDU/849/2010, which regulates, within its area of jurisdiction, the education of pupils with a need for educational support and educational guidance services.

This new regulatory framework for Educational Guidance lacks an organizational approach that permits the structuring of guidance in the different educational stages; moreover, its format and functions do not guarantee the advice and technical support required by the educational community. Nor is it underpinned by a model that lends coherence to its implementation and ensures the achievement of its objectives. It may be that the problem lies in a conception of Educational Guidance without a scientific basis: the educational authorities appear to understand it as a task that can be carried out by any teacher, rather than as a “profession” for an expert and as a “science of action” based on the joint consideration of the principles of diagnosis and assessment, of development, prevention and social intervention.

The diagnostic–assessment principle. All guidance and advice is based on the diagnosis of the person and an assessment of the context in which he or she is situated. Quality intervention is not possible without prior extensive knowledge of the determining factors of the situation that is the object of intervention or treatment.

The development principle. Guidance, taking into account this principle, would be a process of help for promoting the comprehensive development of each person’s potential. The educational psychologist intervenes by proposing modifications to the educational and social environment that alleviate the alterations or optimize the person’s maturational, educational and social development.

The prevention principle. Prevention means anticipating or taking the necessary measures for avoiding the emergence of conflictive situations; the educational psychologist acts as a mediator for modifying those circumstances of the context that generate problems, as well as providing individuals with the appropriate competences to be able to deal successfully with problematic situations.

The social intervention principle. From the interactionist perspective it is assumed that variations in human behaviour can be explained by the interaction between environmental and personal variables. Problems must be tackled not only from the person they directly affect, but also through examination of how they are influenced by

the involvement of elements of the socio-family and school contexts.

This modern conception of Educational Guidance has implications not only for the professional role of the counsellor (psychologists and educators), but also for the approach to the training of educational psychologists in the future.

The relevance of the educational psychologist's role becomes clear, as we have seen previously, given the ever greater presence in our schools of problems such as school failure, violence and drug addiction, problems which are closely inter-related and affect children and young people of all socio-economic and cultural/educational backgrounds alike. We accept the complexity and multi-causality in their determination, but at the same time we do not believe they can be dealt with successfully if the professionals responsible for tackling them (in close cooperation with teachers and parents) lack the necessary training and professional competence. Therefore, it is not a task that can be carried out by just any teacher who has completed the Masters in Teacher Training (specifically the "Educational Guidance" specialization), regardless of their basic and specific training background. Indeed, this way of conceiving the profession of counsellor takes us back to the 1960s, when such guidance placed the emphasis on professional information, more than on the individual, and was the responsibility of vocational studies teachers.

On the basis of these considerations, it is clear that the new figure of "teacher-counsellor" recently created by the Ministry of Education (Order EDU/849/2010) cannot satisfy the guidance and technical support requirements of the educational community. We agree that all tutors or class teachers, apart from their role as teachers, are to some extent also counsellors. However, precisely to be able to fulfil this guidance-related role it is often necessary to enlist the help of an expert, such as a psychologist in this case, rather than simply another teacher with similar competence and professional qualifications to those of the teacher or tutor in question.

Before concluding this article I would like to reflect briefly on the ongoing debate, at an international level, in relation to the differences between the educational psychologist and the school psychologist with regard to their competences in terms of disciplinary fields and of their professional roles. For Division 15 of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2005), Educational

Psychology involves research, teaching or practice at the different educational levels or stages, and is related to the theory, methodology and application of psychology to diverse problems of teaching-learning and training within the educational context. At the same time, Division 16 of the APA considers School Psychology from an applied perspective and within a systemic framework. It is practiced by psychologists exercising their profession in the educational context and providing a comprehensive service for children, adolescents and young people, as well as for their families and teachers.

In this line, other associations, such as the Canadian Association of School Psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association, CPA, 2001), consider it necessary to overcome the distinction between Educational Psychology and School Psychology, and that the best approach would be to set down different levels of intervention for psychologists, such as:

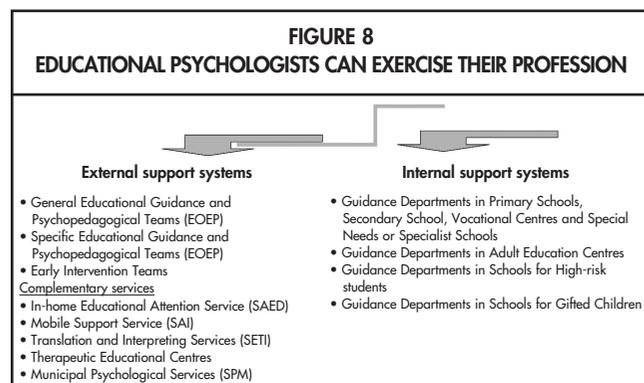
- ✓ Direct intervention focused on one student or on a group.
- ✓ Indirect intervention focused on one student or on a group.
- ✓ Broad intervention in the school context.
- ✓ Intervention in the provincial or regional education system.
- ✓ Research.

For many others, the terms "Educational Psychology" and "School Psychology" are frequently used as synonyms, though theorists and researchers prefer to call themselves "Educational Psychologists", whilst professionals working in schools or in specifically school-related contexts prefer to be identified as "School Psychologists".

Concentrating on the Spanish situation, several years ago now, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (*Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación*, 2005), on assessing the basic knowledge and the competences (both specific and shared) of the different professional profiles, referred to the educational psychologist rather than to the school psychologist. Likewise, the professional associations understand the term "educational" in the broad sense of personal and collective training and development. Thus, the educational psychologist is defined as "*the psychology professional whose work objective is to reflect on and intervene in human behaviour, in educational contexts, through the development of the capacities of people, groups and institutions*".

In our view, the distinction drawn by the APA between Educational Psychology and School Psychology is unjustified: it would be sufficient, as maintained by the Canadian Association of School Psychologists, to consider different levels of intervention. Clearly, educational psychologists can carry out their work as academics or researchers or as hands-on professionals in educational institutions or sectors/districts. These distinctions between fields of action would correspond to different competences that can be acquired through the current model of cycle-based training introduced in the wake of Spain's educational reforms.

Likewise, as we mentioned in our appraisal of the Masters in Educational Psychology (2011) professional qualification, the term "professional competences" is applied to the educational psychologist who intervenes in all the psychological processes that affect normal and abnormal development and learning, within the framework of regulated, non-regulated, formal and informal socio-educational systems and throughout the human life cycle. These competences, in the end, provide a description of the different roles fulfilled by the educational psychologist in relation to the principal areas of intervention: attention to diversity, prevention, development, the teaching-learning process, and personal, academic and professional guidance and counselling. Nevertheless, these functions are exercised differently by educational psychologists who form part of a Counselling Department and by those who are members of a so-called Educational Guidance and Psychopedagogical Team (EOEP, in its Spanish acronym), since the latter, in addition to their functions within schools, are also required to do work in the educational sector or district for which they are responsible. Thus, their functions are broader than those of professionals working in a single institution, regardless of their qualifications.



Therefore, to the question "is the role of the educational psychologist at odds with that of the psychologist-counsellor?" the answer is a resounding "no". Both are educational psychologists, even if they carry out their work in different specific contexts, one in systems of external support for schools and the other in a single school or internal system. Moreover, a degree in Psychology and a Masters in Educational Psychology are required in either case, though we consider it necessary, in order to accede to positions in EOEP teams (for us, Technical Services for Psychological and Pedagogical Support) – as we indicated in 2010 – to have at least five years' service in Guidance Departments and to pass a competitive examination.

In Spain, since the Autonomous Regions acquired full responsibility for educational policy in 1998, there has been no single institutional model of guidance and counselling services. Nevertheless, the majority of Regions have maintained the organizational and functional model proposed by the Ministry of Education in the context of the 1990 educational reform legislation (LOGSE). Generally, educational psychologists exercise their profession in the different educational support systems outlined in Figure 8.

Finally, the fundamental controversy in our country emerges in attempts to delimit the professional field of educational psychologists in relation to those of other teaching professionals, who, though they lack the necessary general and specific training in psychology, are permitted to accede to positions designed for psychologists. The changing names of such professionals are significant. Initially, in their designation by the authorities, they were listed as "psychologists"; later, both psychologists and educators/educational psychologists (*psicopedagogos*) came to be called, interchangeably, "educational psychologists", then "counsellors"; soon, we shall be referring to "teacher-counsellors". The objective is clear: to facilitate access to these positions for professionals from other scientific fields for whom there is little or no demand from the educational community and increase the patronage and cronyism found in relation to other professionals like teachers, offering them a broader spectrum of opportunities. In any case, deceiving the user in this way is detrimental not only to the interests of a whole profession, but also to the quality of service provided to our society.

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