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Educational Policies During the Lockdown: Measures in Spain after Covid-19

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∞ The pandemic has disrupted students' lives, learning, and well-being worldwide and exacerbated existing disparities in education. Countries have unevenly followed policy recommendations to ensure education by non-governmental agencies, and in some cases, political and economic ideology has directly influenced the decisions taken, Spain being a case in point. The instructions and regulations published in April 2020 in Spain are analysed and compared in order to regulate the end of the school year, its evaluation, and the start of the new year, given the situation of suspension of classes during and the confinement of the Spanish population decreed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The 20 documents published by the Autonomous Communities of Spain are subjected to critical discourse analysis. Their approaches and the aspects they highlight or ignore are examined to identify the different models of education that each region defends in times of crisis. There are significant differences between conservative and progressive regions, the latter being more inclined to implement the recommendations of non-governmental organisations.

Keywords: educational policy, Covid-19, evaluation, curriculum, social justice

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Izobraževalne politike med zaprtjem: ukrepi v Španiji po covidu-19

ENRIQUE-JAVIER DÍEZ-GUTIÉRREZ IN KATHERINE GAJARDO ESPINOZA

∞ Pandemija je po vsem svetu prekinila življenje, učenje in dobro počutje učencev ter povečala obstoječe razlike v izobraževanju. Države niso enako upoštevale priporočil nevladnih agencij glede izvajanja politik za zagotavljanje izobraževanja, v nekaterih primerih pa je politična in gospodarska ideologija neposredno vplivala na sprejete odločitve, kar velja za Španijo. Analizirali in primerjali smo navodila in predpise, objavljene aprila 2020, v Španiji, ki urejajo konec šolskega leta, njegovo evalvacijo in začetek novega šolskega leta glede na razmere prekinitve pouka med zaprtjem španskega prebivalstva zaradi pandemije covid-19. S kritično analizo diskurza smo preučili dvajset dokumentov, ki so jih objavile španske avtonomne skupnosti. Preučeni so pristopi in vidiki, ki jih poudarjajo ali zanemarjajo, da bi tako prepoznali različne modele izobraževanja, ki jih zagovarjajo različne španske regije v času krize. Med konservativnimi in naprednimi regijami so velike razlike, pri čemer so zadnje bolj naklonjene izvajanju priporočil nevladnih organizacij.

Ključne besede: izobraževalne politike, covid-19, evalvacija, kurikulum, socialna pravičnost

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a global crisis that has significantly impacted educational systems (Chen et al., 2020; Geldsetzer, 2020). Since March 2020, most countries have implemented rigorous measures of social confinement or distancing to protect the population from the greatest pandemic of the contemporary era. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) data (2020), students and pupils in more than 194 countries stopped attending their schools, meaning that approximately 1500 million children, adolescents, and young adults globally were directly affected by the sudden closure of schools and universities.

Globally, the current pandemic has disrupted children and young people's lives, learning, and well-being and exacerbated the already existing disparities in education. According to a United Nations (UN) statement (2020), the pandemic is expected to reverse the gains of the last two decades of equality directly, particularly in girls' and women's education. In addition, projections indicate that almost 24 million students from primary school to university could abandon their studies due to the health crisis's economic impact.

Faced with this tragic scenario, non-governmental organisations (UN, 2020; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2020; World Bank, 2020) have launched awareness campaigns to motivate countries to implement new policies capable of dealing with the expected consequences. First, recommending that governments, once they have controlled the local transmission of Covid-19, focus on reopening schools in a safe manner, consulting and taking into account all the actors involved. Second, requesting the prioritisation of education in budgetary decisions. At this point, the UN (2020) noted that even before the pandemic, low- and middle-income countries had a \$1.5 trillion annual deficit in the education sector. Third, governments should encourage education initiatives that target those at high risk of being left behind (people in emergency situations, minority groups, displaced persons, and people with disabilities). Finally, governments leap into progressive systems that see education as a means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Countries have followed the policy recommendations' implementation to a greater or lesser extent (UNICEF, 2020). According to Delgado et al. (2020), the determining factors were the number of resources available to each nation and the forms of educational administration that prevailed. Thus, political and economic ideology directly impacted the decisions made in each region. Here, more progressive administrations were more likely to make the recommended changes than more conservative administrations.

While there is a gap in publications describing how educational policies against Covid-19 were developed globally, published experiences explain the situation. For example, Reimers and Schleicher (2020) surveyed professionals and experts from 98 countries on nations' emerging responses to the pandemic. According to the survey results, in the vast majority of nations, 'there is a government directive that establishes the suppression of face-to-face educational activity' (p. 20). When asked what the government or administrations have done to support students' continuous academic instruction, a significant percentage indicates 'nothing'. However, this choice was followed by encouraging schools to use online resources, which have resulted in the distribution of educational materials in some countries (Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Spain, The Netherlands, Germany, Finland, France, Japan, among others).

However, despite the perceptions of the population surveyed, there are proposals for laws and public policies generated in most countries (Gortazar, 2020). On this point, Reimers and Schleicher (2020) specify that the nations have made an effort to generate recommendations to guide the educational processes. Nevertheless, a general review of some of the proposals (Díez-Gutiérrez & Gajardo, 2020) shows that emphasis has solely been placed on generating regulations or recommendations regarding the forms of student qualification and approval during and after the pandemic. Here, the discussion has focused exclusively on the need (or not) to give grades during the pandemic period or if students who do not respond well to educational processes during the pandemic should be approved (Trujillo, 2020).

As a result of this lack – and in the search for a more in-depth analysis of the regulations decreed – we set out to analyse the regulations decreed in Spain during the onset of the covid-19 pandemic. Our objective focuses on the analysis of the ideological and political discourse behind the educational ordinances decreed in the Autonomous Communities, on how the school year should end, how education and evaluation should be carried out during the crisis, and how a new school year should begin in a context of uncertainty.

Spanish educational context

The Spanish Educational System is regulated by the Organic Law of Education (LOE), with modifications included in the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE). It is structured in general education: infant education, primary education, compulsory secondary education, high school, and professional training.

Infant education covers from three to six years of age. At this time,

children are incorporated into compulsory education. However, it is voluntary, and its purpose is to contribute to children's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.

Primary education is compulsory and free of charge. It comprises six school years (courses) that make up a gradual progression in the teaching-learning process, usually carried out between the ages of six and twelve. Its purpose is to provide all children with a common education that acquires basic cultural elements: Spanish history, calculus, arithmetic, communication in Spanish and foreign languages, elementary sciences, civics and democracy, teamwork, abstract thinking, and similar.

The Obligatory Secondary Education stage (ESO) comprises four school years (courses), which are usually followed between the ages of twelve and sixteen. It is organised into subjects and consists of two cycles; the first comprises three school years and one for the second. The second cycle (also known as the fourth course) has a fundamentally propaedeutic character – one can choose between academic teachings to initiate baccalaureate or applied teachings for the initiation to the Professional Formation/University (which are not obligatory).

According to data from EDUCABase (2020), compulsory education in Spain is mainly conducted in person. In 2019, more than 8 million people were enrolled: 63% were studying at public institutions, and 37% were at private institutions. For all of these, the education and curriculum laws are determined by the state; although, their administration and application depend on the administrative units of each territorial unit, which in this case are called Autonomous Communities.

Spain has 17 Autonomous Communities, which, according to their territorial extension, have differing population levels. For example, Andalusia is the most populated, with nearly 8 million inhabitants, while La Rioja is the least populated, with approximately 300,000 inhabitants. Each Autonomous Community is run by an administration elected by popular vote; thus, the type of administration depends on the orientation of the governing political parties.

Currently, there is political polarisation in the forms of governing, since the orientations of the political parties arise from a historical tradition marked by power struggles between those (with a more traditional and religious-political ideology) who defend the monarchical tradition and those (recognised for their progressiveness) who prefer the republican forms of government.

The differences between the two political conceptions currently in power in Spain are complex and stem from a long-standing historical heritage. Conservatives have taken advantage of the last years of constant austerity and

economic recession to defend neoliberal, nationalist, individualistic, privatising positions with a strong meritocratic symbolism that have gained many followers in those Autonomous Communities with greater inequality in income distribution (Andalusia or Madrid). While progressives, who currently enjoy greater sympathy in less unequal regions (Catalonia or Valencia), are closer to a more austere, cooperation-oriented, secular stance that defends public ideals and the common good (Díez-Gutiérrez & Guamán, 2013).

This polarisation has been shown in the Spanish political system since the 19th century (Enguita, 2008), which had its most evident educational expression in the division between public and private schools: the private school is dedicated to the conservative elite, while the public school is dedicated to the popular sectors.

During the 20th century, a short republican parenthesis strengthened the public school, having the universality of education as its main objective. However, this objective was truncated by the military dictatorship of 1939, which prolonged the polarisation of the school until the promulgation of the General Law of Education in 1970. The first socialist legislature (1982-1986) appealed to a weakened public education and favoured an effective universality of education. Since that period, significant changes have taken place in private and public education. The private sector has undergone a certain process of state regularisation (Enguita, 2008): subjection to the standards of the Constitution, the laws and educational reforms; conditioning the state subsidy to a set of requirements comparable to those of the public school (imposing the implementation of the national curriculum, for example); greater weight of teachers and parents in its management and the development of a growing sector of non-religious centres of different profiles (elitist, liberal, renewal, etc.). For its part, public schools have experienced a particular deterioration process: stagnant processes of improvement in teachers' working conditions, growing inefficiency in school organisation and the mechanisms of participation and generalised discrediting of private schools.

At present, by maintaining a specific social order, the conservative political parties that have come to power tended to legitimise free competition in education. However, a more significant number of progressive political parties in power currently seek to establish policies that benefit the legitimacy of universal public school and, at the same time, fight the culture already in place (Díez-Gutiérrez & Guamán, 2013).

Education in Spain during the pandemic

In Spain, the total lockdown of the population (excluding those providing essential services: nurses, doctors, farmers, food traders, etc.) was in place from March 14th, 2020, until the end of the 'State of Alarm' decreed by the government in June 2020. The decision was made because the lockdown of people was considered the most effective non-clinical measure to curb the spread of the pandemic (Choe & Choi, 2020; Kim et al., 2020).

The lockdown of the population resulted in the suspension of classes and the closure of educational institutions; however, the government established that 'educational activities would continue whenever possible through remote and virtual methods' (BOE, 2020a; 2020b).

Schools and universities had to improvise within a short time frame, using the tools they had at their disposal (Trujillo, 2020a; Vallespín, 2020). This meant switching from in-person teaching to remote learning (Gewin, 2020; Gonzales-Zamora et al., 2020) without a planned operation and in a very short time frame (Álvarez, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020).

The situation raised different problems that gradually emerged and affected Spanish society in various ways: First, the students and their families, who, confined to their homes, had to replace classroom work with homework and tasks at home, which generated an atmosphere of overworking (CEAPA, 2020). Additionally, the lack of access to internet resources and fast connections for some families and students was compounded by the distribution of telephone cards with data and computers to some students, but this was not enough for all students without internet resources (Torices, 2020).

The situation worsened for many families who lived in overcrowded and substandard housing (Makarov & Lacort, 2020), which did not represent the best environment to encourage the teaching-learning process. This was exacerbated by unemployment or even Covid-19 infection: parents accompanied their children in their homework and school monitoring when they could (Alonso, 2019), but in many cases, they lacked the material conditions, cultural tools, or time and emotional stability to assist the educational process (Díez-Gutiérrez & Gajardo, 2020; Dusi, 2012; Martín, 2019).

Secondly, teachers had to urgently move all of their classroom planning to the online format (Trujillo, 2020a). They were forced to use their personal resources, using applications that were often not meeting the necessary standards (Trujillo, 2020b). In the digital platforms, they tried to replicate a teaching model similar to the face-to-face one (Jorrín, 2020). In this context, those teaching were overwhelmed, having to respond to hundreds of questions

from their students and families while attempting to contact those who had ‘disconnected’ (Pérez, 2020).

As the lockdown was extended until June 2020, and it became clear that they would not return to the classroom until the next school year, new problems, doubts, and concerns were raised in the educational community. How was the school year going to end? During the lockdown period, would there be any progress when some students did not have access to the necessary resources? Would a school term be evaluated and graded in a situation in which there was no guarantee that all the students would have had the same conditions and opportunities? What would happen to the ‘disconnected’ students?

Multiple problems and difficulties led the educational community to ask the administrations to provide resources and guidance with instructions on how to approach the educational process in this exceptional situation. To summarise, some of the questions that were asked concerned how to approach educational assistance during the lockdown, how to finish the school year and evaluate it, and how to approach the beginning of the next one.

The Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) met with the Education Councillors of the various Autonomous Communities, where it established a general framework of action to guide the activities of the educational community and schools aimed at completing the 2019/2020 school year and its overall evaluation. The framework was officially published in the Official State Gazette of Spain on Friday, April 24th, Order EFP/365/2020 (BOE, 2020b), adjusting to the end of the school year and making the criteria for evaluation and advancement more flexible.

This coordination meeting was essential, given that in Spain, educational jurisdiction had been transferred and, therefore, most of the legislation fell to the regional administrations. In Spain, a ministry can establish a general framework, but the Autonomous Communities are ultimately responsible for its implementation and adaptation in each region. Therefore, based on this general framework established by the Ministry of Education, each Autonomous Community had to establish regulations and guidelines within its territorial scope, indicating to educational institutions, families, and students the specific guidelines on how to end the school year without in-person instruction, how to evaluate and grade the learning process; decide what criteria to use so that students could be awarded and advance, and how to tackle the start of the new school year in September 2020.

Method

This research aims to make a descriptive analysis of the different regulations, guidelines, and instructions published by the Spanish administrations during the lockdown period, both at the state and regional levels. In addition, the goal is to investigate and examine the approach, the pedagogical and ideological orientations that have been adopted, and the priorities that have been established in educational policy documents to address the process of continuing distance education; educational policies to end the school year; educational policies to evaluate during the lockdown, and educational policies to begin a new school year.

To reach these objectives, we pose the following research questions: What are the administrations' ideological orientations in the published regulations? What do the orientations of each autonomous community agree on, and with what do they disagree?

All legislative documents issued by the central and autonomous powers in Spain during this period have been considered. They correspond to Royal Decrees, instructions, and guidelines from all these Spanish administrations during the lockdown period, from March 14th 2020 to April 30th 2020. Thus, an analysis has been drawn up from 20 documents, one issued by the national government and the other 19 by the regional governments, responsible for education in Spain and are consequently authorised to adopt measures within their sphere of jurisdiction. A total of 369 pages of legislative documents have been examined.

Table 1

Documents selected for analysis

Autonomous Communities	Date	Title
MEFP	22/04/2020	<i>Order EFP/365/2020</i>
Andalusia	24/04/2020	<i>Instruction for April 23rd 2020, regarding educational measures to be adopted in the third quarter of the 2019/2020 school year.</i>
Aragon	29/04/2020	<i>Order ECD/357/2020.</i>
Asturias	27/04/2020	<i>Resolution of the Counsellor of Education ordering the continuation of procedures for the end of the school year.</i>
Balearic Islands	16/04/2020	<i>Resolution of the Minister of Education, University and Research of April 16th 2020, by which the supplementary instructions are approved as extraordinary due to the Covid-19 epidemic</i>

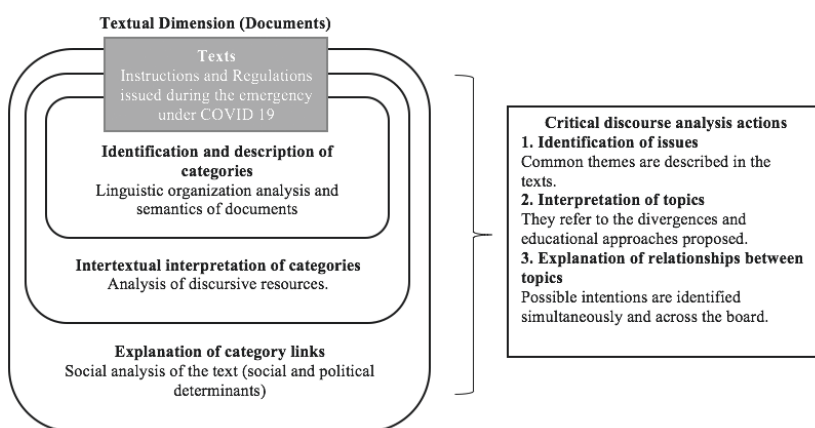
Autonomous Communities	Date	Title
Canary Islands	25/04/2020	<i>Resolution of the general direction of planning, innovation, and quality, by which instructions are given to complete the school year in the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands.</i>
Cantabria	19/04/2020	<i>Instructions for the third quarter and the end of the school year in infant and primary education for the 2019/20 school year.</i>
	19/04/2020	
Castile-La Mancha	13/04/2020	<i>Instructions for the third quarter, final evaluation, promotion, and qualification in secondary education.</i>
Castile and León	17/04/2020	<i>Instructions from the Department of Education, Culture and Sports on educational measures for the third quarter of the 2019-2020 academic year.</i>
Catalonia	30/03/2020	<i>Criteria for the development of educational activities and the evaluation of students in schools where the second cycle of infant, primary, secondary, high school, and adult education is being taught in order to extend the period of confinement due to Covid-19.</i>
	20/04/2020	<i>Instruction for April 17th 2020, regarding educational activity development during the third quarter and the final evaluation of the 2019/20 academic year.</i>
Extremadura	18/04/2020	<i>Instructions for the development of educational activities and students' evaluation in the third quarter in centres where education is provided, given the extension of the confinement period due to Covid-19.</i>
Galicia	17/04/2020	<i>Instruction no. 4/2020 of the general secretary of education.</i>
La Rioja	16/04/2020	<i>Instructions from the General Directorate of Education, Vocational Training and Educational Innovation, for the third quarter development of the 2019/20 academic year, in the Autonomous Community of Galicia</i>
Madrid	21/04/2020	<i>La Rioja Distance Education Continuity Plan (26/03/2020). The Regional Minister for Education declares that La Rioja adheres to the agreements of the Ministry of Education (16/04/2020).</i>
Murcia	20/04/2020	<i>Resolution of the Deputy Regional Minister of Education Policy issuing instructions for the development of the third quarter and end of the 2019-2020 academic year in the Community of Madrid due to the state of alarm caused by the coronavirus.</i>
Navarra	22/04/2020	<i>Instructions from the Ministry of Education and Culture on third-quarter educational measures for the 2019/20 academic year due to the impact of Covid-19 on schools in the region of Murcia.</i>
Basque Country	22/04/2020	<i>Instructions on the educational activity, given the suspension of the present activity in Navarra's educational centres.</i>
Valencia	03/04/2020	<i>Final Educational Plan for the School Year 2019-2020.</i>

We selected Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model to conduct an analysis consistent with the qualitative approaches (Fairclough, 2008). With which: 1) we identify and describe emerging issues and group them into categories to analyse the meanings that are derived from the discourses in the regulations (linguistic analysis); 2) we generate an intertextual interpretation of the selected categories from the discursive resources, highlighting the

representations of the educational models they reflect (intertextual analysis), and 3) we explain how the text is conditioned by the social situation, the institution that has produced it, and the social structure in which it is inscribed, investigating how it contributes to produce or maintain a certain social order (social analysis). In this research, we would like to emphasise that we only present the findings made at level 3, that is, the social and political explanations identified, since these are directly related to the objectives and research questions posed.

Figure 1

Fairclough's Critical Discourse (Analysis developed).



The perspective of critical discourse analysis was selected for its usefulness in the chosen discursive context, given that legislative documents are exponents and expressions of the policies and actions that regulate educational administrations, and as such, are texts that constitute a political discourse (Fairclough, 2008). Thus, the developed critical discourse analysis in this study enabled us to reveal how the administrations' decisions operate and its ideologies. In this case, references are made to the educational and assessment model in an adverse context, such as the one generated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The critical discourse analysis in this research focused on the analysis of four categories, which are grouped into topics addressing decisions made at the end of one school year and the beginning of the next, in the context of a pandemic: (a) development of the teaching-learning process during the third term; (b) end of the third term and the school year; (c) assessment of the third term and the entire school year 19/20; (d) beginning of the school year 20/21.

Results

Some of the key aspects of the analysis are presented, taking into account the current topical understanding and further analysis of ideological and discursive relationships.

Educational policies to address the continuing remote education process

Due to the pandemic, all Autonomous Communities consider the lockdown period an 'extraordinary situation'. They believe that the continuation of the remote education process requires 'extraordinary measures', given the anomaly of the absence of face-to-face classes during this period, sharing the philosophy of being sympathetic to the difficulties that a significant number of students have to face to continue with remote learning.

The use of the adjective 'extraordinary' in documents is generally accompanied by the noun 'need' while the noun 'law' is always accompanied by the adjective 'urgent'. This semantic relationship indicates a contextual background similar in all documents: socially, it is important to address a problem that had not been addressed, which should be done as quickly as possible. This discourse, shared by all the administrations, is intended to offer comfort in the face of a generalised clamour from the educational communities amid the Spanish confinement. After all, many of the documents were published a month after the state of alarm declaration. That is, for a span of two weeks to a month, the population had to wait to find out what would happen with the educational processes while Spain joins the top five countries with the most deaths and hospitalisations and its inhabitants had to cope with one of the most restricted confinements in Europe.

The above context, however, motivates a common policy that shares these expressions: 'to take care of people', 'giving priority to their integral well-being over purely curricular aspects, taking into consideration the exceptionality of the state of alarm', giving extreme importance to complying with the rights included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; to develop activities that help students to 'keep themselves incorporated into continuous learning and to encourage their interest in learning'; with 'specific plans for recovering the school link and reinforcing it' aimed at 'disconnected or unreachable students'; 'adapting the tutorial model to the new situation, with the aim of helping students to organise their school activities, self-regulate their learning, and maintain a good emotional state [...] and academic and

professional orientation'; 'attention to students with special educational needs.'

As shown in the selected excerpts, the regulations generally avoid the discourses of social exclusion based on what is outlined in international agreements. This intertextual resource is evident in all the proposals, so it can be indicated that extreme care was taken at the time of designing the laws, not to generate confusion between the country's internal indications and the international agreements signed. This point is essential since, formally, people are already being deprived of their right to free movement, so the loss of other rights, such as access to education, might lead to a much greater social crisis.

In a different line, all the Autonomous Communities share the need to 'make the curriculum and educational programs more flexible', focusing on 'the teaching activities of the previous term on the essential learning and skills that students should develop, according to their stage, course, area, or subject, renouncing an exhaustive fulfilment of the initial purposes, making their work plans more flexible and taking care not to penalise or harm the welfare of their students or overload them with excessive tasks'.

However, the autonomous communities are beginning to differ in the importance (or not) of continuing to work on curricular content during the last trimester. Some (Andalusia, Castile and León, Extremadura, Galicia, Madrid) placed more emphasis on 'advancing in content planned for the third term', clarifying some that 'when possible' (Andalusia), others in Secondary, especially in 4th of ESO and 2nd years of baccalaureate, courses that lead to a degree (Asturias, Cantabria, Castile and León), or, as the Communities of Murcia and Extremadura that assign responsibility for advancing to the teaching teams: 'advance of new content that the teaching team has considered essential' (Murcia) or 'The faculty, as the maximum responsible for the curricular implementation, shall, through the pedagogical coordination committee or body that assumes its functions, reduce and condense as much as possible the curriculum to be developed in the third term, without pressure to have to finish the curriculum or programs, whose exhaustive fulfilment must logically be renounced, but also without detriment to a minimum educational quality and sufficient treatment of those learning contents and skills that are essential, depending on the stage, course, area, or subject, especially in the final courses leading to a degree' (Extremadura).

However, others (Aragon, Asturias, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Catalonia, Navarra, Basque Country, Valencia) establish that 'during the third term, in general, no progress should be made on new content'. They advocate more for 'reviewing', 'reinforcing', and 'consolidating' the 'learning done in the first two terms of the course, seeking to encourage work routines,

study habits: The reinforcement, review and deepening of what has already been worked on in the first two terms will be the priority activities' (Canary Islands).

Although, some Autonomous Communities, of one or another tendency, also introduce the possibility of 'if necessary, extending the previous learning that is necessary for all or part of their students' (Navarra, Galicia) or 'selecting exclusively the material that is considered most relevant' of the educational programs (Valencia).

The political polarisation of the discourses begins to be evident when the curricular indications are exposed. In general, the discourses on the curriculum in the documents analysed tend towards two alternatives: continuing with the proposed curricular objectives (common discourse of the autonomous communities led by conservatives) and not continuing and focusing on reinforcing what has already been taught and learned (which is evident in those communities led by progressives). There are no proposals that imply a curricular change beyond what is already imposed, and this means that the logic of urgency indicated in the previous semantic analysis does not present changes to an imperative logic of the curriculum.

At this point, when carrying out a social-linguistic analysis, we find a phenomenon that Fairclough (2008) calls 'discursive colonisation', which corresponds to the construction of common meanings from the logic of power and sustains certain practices over other possible alternatives. The logic of change and adaptation of the curriculum in a context of crisis always revolves around the application to a greater or lesser extent of what already exists and is obligatory. It never focuses on the creation of new alternatives, new ways of making the curriculum.

Educational policies for ending the school year

Although some Autonomous Communities defended the opening of educational institutions before the end of the 2019/2020 school year, as was done in other countries such as France, the Central Administration finally established that classes would not resume until September in general, with the start of the next school year. After that, however, the schools would be opened in mid-May for disinfection, preparation, administrative work, and teachers and auxiliary staff. Moreover, at the end of May, they would be opened for minors whose parents had to work outside the home, students in courses that required a degree, but voluntarily, and in groups of 15 at most, as well as students in need of educational reinforcement.

Practically all the Autonomous Communities agreed on establishing the end of the school year in June, as has been the custom throughout the school year. The only exceptions were some unique processes such as university entrance exams or access to vocational training courses.

There was also consensus among the Autonomous Communities regarding the summer period, in which, for the most part, the following was established ‘the carrying out of reinforcement activities in the summer period (such as individual classes, one-on-one tutoring or homework assignments), in diverse forms and combined with recreational activities (such as sports workshops, art workshops or summer camps)’ (MEFP). Although few reflected this in the guidelines analysed; however, some Autonomous Communities such as Murcia were different from this general approach, focusing these reinforcement programs during the summer period with a more school-based nature, with the aim of ‘reinforcing those contents that may have been affected by the non-attendance educational activity’. Basque Country, in this sense, limited itself to ‘advising’ that ‘reinforcement or recovery tasks be assigned during the summer vacations’.

In analysing these laws, we observe that the proposals tend to maintain certain practices (such as reinforcement activities) focused on maintaining an imperative curriculum discourse developed before the pandemic in the Organic Law on Education. In the context of political polarisation, maintaining the completion of the course in schools in June and the beginning of the new course in September is approached from diverse discursive meanings: the autonomous communities led by ‘conservatives’ expose, as we saw before, a discourse far from the spirit of reform, the linguistic marks of this attitude are exposed in phrases such as ‘it will maintain the characteristics proposed by the legislation’ or ‘it will maintain what is exposed in Article 3 of the Organic Law [...] during the third quarter of the 2019-2020 school year, independently of the suspension of educational activity’ in the speeches of the texts of Castile and León, Madrid, and Andalusia. In these texts, the constant presence of the verb ‘to maintain’, a linguistic mark present at least three times in each document, is striking. On the other hand, more profound indications on how to deal with this indication are lacking.

As for the autonomous communities led by ‘progressives’, the discourse is closer to reform, although, like the conservative indications, there are still some linguistic barriers oriented to the fulfilment of the law. However, the texts usually include more detailed indications about the new way of operating the closing of the course and the beginning of the new one in schools, giving more prominence to the educational teams of the centres: ‘The management team

of each centre will design a work plan until the end of the course, which will include the elaboration of individual reports to evaluate the students, and the reinforcement and recovery plans' (Asturias).

An excellent example of the above can be seen in the community of Navarra, which reveals a change in the plan imposed by the law from a discursive spirit oriented to the reform: 'During the course, plans for the recovery and adaptation of education will be organised [...] these plans will be based on the individualised reports that will be issued at the end of this course by the educational institutions.' Here, the conceptual individualisation of the learning subjects is transformed into a discursive norm with five mentions in the instruction, that is, a high semantic load that weeks the importance of individualising the processes of closing courses and beginning a new one.

Educational policies to evaluate during the lockdown

Perhaps this dimension is the most divergent regarding proposing the appropriate measures in the different Autonomous Communities guidelines.

In principle, in the block of agreements, it is noted that all the guidelines ensure the evaluation must be 'continuous, formative, and integrative' and that the teaching team must ultimately take the decision on promotion and qualification.

All the Autonomous Communities also declare that it is necessary to 'relax' the criteria of the current education law, the LOMCE, which establishes that it is possible to pass from one course to another with two failed subjects (up to three, exceptionally), if they are not Mathematics and Language (although even for this there are exceptions, depending on the final decision of the teaching team). In addition, the law establishes that to obtain the title of ESO or baccalaureate, all the subjects must be approved. However, the Community of Madrid developed the law to allow students to advance to the next course with up to five failed subjects (Gutiérrez, 2016).

What is understood in each case by 'flexibility' is what confronts the positions of the different Autonomous Communities, some of which are more aligned with what could be called the 'hard' or 'closed' position (centred on the number of failed subjects that should be allowed to advance or to be held back) and the 'comprehensive' or 'open' position (centred on an approach of 'general promotion' of the entire student body and that 'the degree should be the usual practice for students in the 4th year of ESO and 2nd year of baccalaureate').

Another of the discrepancies is at the time of grading. Some bet on considering only the grades obtained in the first two terms of attendance, where teaching and learning were developed regularly. Others opt for grading with

new grades during the crisis, integrating ones that could be negative in the records of students with greater problems.

The third focus of the split is repetition. Although all the Autonomous Communities declared that course repetition should be an 'exceptional' measure, as it is in the current education law, even though it is too frequent in Spain, they did not coincide with making this 'exceptionality' a reality. Furthermore, it was added that the teaching teams would need the authorisation of the government to make a student repeat a course

Another controversial issue is that each student must have a personalised report detailing the difficulties they encountered so that their teachers can be aware of these in the following year. These reports are made every year, but they do not include, as they do now, personalised and comprehensive information for each student. Although their purpose is to facilitate the student's transition to other grades and prepare the necessary support or reinforcement, if required, the guidelines do not seem to consider the effort and time required by them.

When performing linguistic and semantic analyses of the texts in their sections on evaluation in a pandemic context exposed, they are deictic³ (e.g., that, this), accompanied by phrases such as 'various forms to evaluate' and explicit clarifications such as 'it will encourage a continuous evaluation, diagnostic, formative, and integrative in all stages, cycles, and teachings' (Navarra). Thus, this reveals a plurality of discourses in conflict with the traditional forms of evaluation (single-selection exams, for example) that, during the last decades, have been strongly questioned in the face of assessing a more progressive, formative and qualitative evaluation approach. At this point, the law becomes an agent that motivates change.

However, there are sharp discrepancies on the importance of the mark as the only way to promote (move from one course to another) students. For example, in Autonomous Communities that are more conservative, marking with grades has more value than the report, while the more progressive communities value the report more. Furthermore, it is observed that discursively, those identified as conservative tend to be more akin to concepts related to learning quantification, and those with more progressive discourses tend to have more affinity for the qualitative evaluation of learning.

Educational policies to start the new school year

This aspect is the least developed in the guidelines and regulations issued by all educational administrations. Nevertheless, it appears, in one form or another, in all of them.

Practically, in all of the regulations analysed, the majority agreement is the organisation of different programs or activities to recover and adapt the curriculum for the beginning of the new school year. These plans must be based on the individual reports made in the evaluation of the previous school year to adapt them to the students' needs 'with the aim of acquiring the basic competencies that have not been achieved in the present school year' (Galicia).

Some Autonomous Communities define or specify more precisely the process of starting the school year, with direct aid 'for the provision of resources for educational inclusion and combating dropout' to assist students with significant learning difficulties by intensifying reinforcement activities (Valencia). Moreover, in these specific Autonomous Communities, schools must focus 'their action plan for enhancement (PAM) in the design and organisation of consolidation activities and recovery of learning that is essential for students to successfully continue in the coming year' and establish a measure, to a degree of extent novel, which consists in the fact that 'the students of 1st ESO work by areas' organised in a curricular way 'similar to the existing (PMAR) of 3rd ESO and in the reinforcement programs of 4th ESO (PR4), which group most of the knowledge subjects: linguistic and social, scientific, mathematical and technological'. Although the Autonomous Community of Aragon also points out, in this sense, that it proposes to make a general schedule by cycles, authorising 'an exceptional curricular organisation'.

Discussion

The educational policies proposed by the Ministry of Education in Spain to end the 2019/20 school year, marked by the coronavirus pandemic and stay at home orders, and to begin the next 2020/21 school year, were presented on April 15th, 2020, at the Education Sector Conference. However, the agreements reached at that meeting with the Education Councillors of the various Autonomous Communities and subsequently embodied in Order EFP/365/2020, of April 22nd, began to be challenged very soon by some regional education officials.

Five Autonomous Communities (Madrid, Andalusia, Castile and León, Murcia, and Basque Country) disassociated themselves from the agreement initially reached after a week. The analysis of the guidelines issued by the different Autonomous Communities indicates that the discrepancies between these regions have more to do with ideological biases and political confrontations than with educational or pedagogical approaches. This is the view of the representatives of the public school system's families, who stated that behind the dropout

and the confrontation with the government, what ‘was hidden was a political struggle’ (Torres & Zafra, 2020).

These Autonomous Communities that have been more clearly demarcated are led by conservative governments, some even with the support of neoliberal and ultra-right-wing political groups, while a progressive coalition leads the state government. The ‘conservative’ communities publicly claimed that they did not support the ‘general approval’, although it was not included, as such, in the agreement. They claimed that they were concerned that students would be promoted to the next course or be promoted to high school with failed subjects, although this is already the case with the current education legislation.

They also questioned the possible territorial difference between communities regarding the requirement to pass a course or the demotivation of students to make an effort if they knew that what they did during the third term would not be evaluated (Sánchez et al., 2020). Madrid and Murcia, which are governed by the harshest conservative sector, demanded that the ministry set the number of failed subjects that can be promoted and the number of students who can advance so that there would be no difference between communities: ‘There may be communities where our children pass the school year with five failed subjects, and others, such as Madrid, where they will not pass with failed subjects’ (Sánchez, 2020).

As we have seen in the results, behind the different approaches to education policy that appear in the Autonomous Communities’ guidelines and the inevitable clash or confrontation of the block of conservative regional governments with the more progressive state government, there are substantial pedagogical questions that affect education policy. Questions such as what importance is given to a school year amid a global pandemic; whether learning about school content is a priority in this situation of extraordinary exceptionality; whether it would be severe if students ‘lost’ a year; or whether it would affect them in the immediate future to advance without having studied a term. At the same time, it can also lead us to ask ourselves if we can afford to leave children and adolescents with hardly any educational stimuli for three months. Plus, another three months of vacation and how harmful this can be for students from more disadvantaged backgrounds, who are usually those who can most benefit from the compensatory effect of the school in the face of deprived family situations (Sánchez & Rodríguez, 2020).

Conclusions

The analysis of the guidelines of the Autonomous Communities, based on the results described above, allows us to affirm that the different variants of the regulations could be framed within a range between two major approaches, where each Autonomous Community positions itself towards one side or the other according to its orientation and political and ideological affinity, which is logically reflected in its educational policy.

The progressive vision and the conservative vision in Spanish education laws demonstrate a confrontation between opposing camps: 1) curricular flexibility versus an inflexible curriculum; 2) an evaluation centred on the assessment of difficulties versus an evaluation that verifies the learning acquired; 3) the promotion of all students from one year to the next versus promotion based on the number of marks and the number of failed subjects.

To summarise, one is an approach that conceives education as a global development of the person, taking into account the vital and emotional situation of the students, their families, and the teaching staff in this exceptional time, while the other revolves almost exclusively around progress in the curriculum and contents and their evaluation. Emphasising individual effort acquiring a specific corrective character over those who do not achieve the expected results, even in these circumstances.

In this approach, which could be called more 'progressive', the Autonomous Communities of Aragon, Asturias, the Balearic Islands, Catalonia, and the Community of Valencia are certainly included. A more focused approach fundamentally in settling the essential and relevant lessons, 'avoiding the need and pressure to finish the curriculum' with tutorial follow-up, emotional support, and a formative evaluation tailored to the formative and personal limitations of each student, establishing that the assignments and activities completed remotely in the third evaluation should be esteemed only for 'added value', because this remote period was considered 'not teaching or qualifying'. Therefore, in their guidelines and regulations, they joined the central government's proposal that advocated 'evaluating the student in their entirety, in their capacity to develop as a human being'.

The perspective, which we can call more 'conservative', is mainly led by the Communities of Andalusia, Galicia, Madrid, and Murcia. This perspective focuses much more on continuing to advance content, choosing to address the situation by adapting the 'established temporality' and 'telematic mechanisms' to 'guarantee the continuity of the teaching-learning processes'. As for evaluation, although it is recalled that this must be continuous, formative,

and integrative, promote measures that do not penalise students by making the regulations more flexible, as is the case with the rest of the Autonomous Communities. However, the reality is that they establish the third school term as evaluable and gradable and not to pass from one year to the next or from a certain number of failed subjects. This shows that they link evaluation above all with grading, where it seems that ‘passing still has more weight than learning’ (Zubillaga & Gortazar, 2020).

The rest of the autonomous communities (Canarias, Cantabria, Castile and León, Castile-La Mancha, Extremadura, La Rioja, Navarra, and Basque Country) are distributed positioned between these two positions, with guidelines tending more towards one approach or the other.

Nevertheless, as we have shown, there are a series of proposals and measures that are shared by the majority of the educational administrations – both the government and the Autonomous Communities – and which should be highlighted since they have generated a pedagogical consensus that is positive for future educational policies in this country. Specifically, these policies will: promote discourse on ‘Leave no one behind’ as an ultimate approach to all educational policy proposals; make the teaching methodology and grading system more flexible during a period of crisis, taking into account the exceptional nature of the situation; motivate a discourse of trust with education professionals; assume a discourse that is attentive to the care and welfare of children as an essential reference for the educational work.

The strength of this study is the novelty of the proposal and the type of analysis developed. However, it also has weaknesses, which include the specificity of its study context.

With this study, we seek to motivate new, more in-depth, comprehensive, and diverse research on education policy in the times of Covid-19, taking into account the need for new legislative proposals that seek to protect people’s rights, especially children and adolescents.

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