Structure of the education system

The education system offers the following studies: pre-primary education, primary education, compulsory secondary education, Bachillerato, vocational training, adult education and university education.

Also Language, Artistic and Sports Education are provided, which are considered specialised education [1].

The 2006 Education Act and the 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, modifying it, are the basic rules currently governing the education system and defining its structure. In 2018, the structure of the Spanish education system is the following:

- Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (2013)

Diagram of the Spanish education system, [2]

Non-university education

Pre-primary education:

- it is not compulsory
- it is organised in two cycles:
  - the first one lasts until 3 years old
  - the second one, which is free, from 3 to 6.

Primary education and compulsory secondary education cover ten years of schooling, compulsory and cost-free for all the students.

Primary education:

- it is the first compulsory level of the education system
- it covers six academic years, between 6 and 12 years old
- the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education has introduced the individualised evaluation of students at the end of levels 3 and 6 of this educational stage.

Secondary education comprises: compulsory secondary education, the second and last compulsory stage for students aged 12-16; and Bachillerato, basic vocational training and intermediate vocational training, which are non-compulsory levels.

- compulsory secondary education:
  - it is the second and last compulsory stage, for students aged 12-16
- it lasts four academic years
- it is organised into two cycles: the first one is composed of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years. The 2nd cycle, consisting of a single year, the 4th, has a preparatory nature for post-compulsory education
- students who do not pass these studies receive an Official Certificate of Compulsory Education including the years studied and the qualifications achieved.

• **Bachillerato:**
  - it lasts two academic years, from 16 to 18 years old
  - this certificate provides access to the different higher education studies.

• **basic vocational training:**
  - students aged 15-17 who have successfully completed the first cycle of compulsory secondary education or, exceptionally, taken the 2nd year of the stage may have access
  - on completion of the new training cycles students obtain a Level 1 qualification and the Basic Vocational Training Certificate, which provides access to intermediate vocational training or to the Secondary Education Diploma if the teaching team considers the Compulsory Secondary Education objectives have been achieved and the corresponding competences have been acquired.

• **initial vocational training** covers a set of training cycles constituting intermediate and advanced vocational training:
  - to access intermediate vocational training it is necessary to hold the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate. The students having passed these studies receive the qualification of Technician, which gives them access to Bachillerato
  - to study advanced vocational training it is necessary to hold the Bachillerato certificate. It can also be necessary to have studied some subjects related to the targeted vocational studies. The students who pass these studies obtain the qualification of Advanced Technician, giving access to the university studies related to the vocational training studies previously taken
  - students holding a Technician or Advanced Technician certificate may obtain the Bachillerato Certificate if they take and pass the general subjects from the set of core subjects of the Bachillerato branch chosen
  - vocational training students who do not successfully complete their studies will receive an academic certificate for the vocational modules passed, which will have academic validity and provide partial accreditation of the professional competences acquired in relation to the National System of Qualifications and Vocational Training
  - it is possible to access any vocational training cycle without fulfilling the mentioned academic requirements, by passing a specific test. In the case of students of intermediate vocational training trying to have access to advanced vocational training, this test is replaced by a procedure for admission if the demand for places is higher than supply
  - in addition, **dual vocational training of the education system** has already been developed in basic, intermediate and advanced vocational training. It comprises a series of training actions and initiatives whose aim is that people become professionally qualified by harmonising teaching and learning processes between training institutions and workplaces. Placements with companies are supervised by the education authorities.

**University education**

In order to gain access to university education, apart from holding the Bachillerato Certificate, students have to pass a university entrance examination.

Adapted to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), university education is divided into three
cycles:

- **Bachelor**, whose aim is to provide the students with a general training, in one or several disciplines, directed to prepare them for carrying out professional activities. They lead to the obtaining of the Bachelor certificate and they consist of 240 ECTS at least. The planned duration is 4 years.
- **Master**, whose objective is the acquisition of an advanced training, aimed at academic or professional specialisation, or at starting to carry out tasks related to research. They lead to the obtaining of a university master's degree and comprise between 60 and 120 credits, which are distributed in two years of 60 ECTS credits each. Therefore, the planned duration is 1 or 2 years, respectively.

Official Bachelor and Masters' degrees are accompanied by the Diploma Supplement, according to what the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) stipulates.

- **Doctorate**, aiming at advanced training in research techniques. In order to obtain a PhD it is necessary to have passed a training period and a research period, named Doctorate Programme. This programme includes the preparation and presentation of the Doctoral Thesis, an original piece of research work.

**Artistic, sports and languages education**

Artistic, sports and languages education have their own organisation and they are considered as specialised education.

**Artistic education** is organised as follows:

- elementary Music and Dance education
- professional artistic education: professional education of Music and Dance and the intermediate and advanced training cycles of Plastic Arts and Design studies
- advanced artistic education: advanced Music and Dance education, Dramatic Arts education, Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Assets education, advanced Design studies and advanced Plastic Arts studies, including advanced studies of Glass and Ceramics.

**Sports education:**

- it is organised in intermediate and advanced training cycles, with different access requirements in each case
- those successfully passing intermediate vocational training obtain the qualification of Sports Technician in the corresponding modality or branch
- those passing advanced studies receive the qualification of Advanced Sports Technician
- the qualifications achieved with these studies are considered equivalent, to all purposes, to the qualifications of Technician and Advanced Technician of vocational training.

**Language education:**

- it is organised in three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced
- these levels correspond, respectively, to levels A, B and C of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and are subdivided into levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2
- being 16 years old is a prerequisite for accessing them. Exceptionally, students can be granted access at the age of 14 to study a language that is different from the one they are learning at the stage of lower compulsory secondary education.
Pupils' and families' rights and duties in compulsory education

The 1978 Spanish Constitution recognises the right to Education as one of the essential rights.

In 2007 the Constitutional Court established that the ownership of the right to Education includes the Spanish citizens and the foreign citizens living in Spain, regardless of their legal status.

In its basic level, education is compulsory and cost-free.

Pupils' basic rights and duties

Basic rights:

- receive comprehensive instruction ensuring the full development of their personality
- have their personal identity, integrity and dignity respected
- have their dedication, effort and performance objectively assessed and recognised
- have their freedom of conscience, religious and moral convictions respected, according to the Constitution
- be protected from physical or moral aggression
- participate in the running of the school and get involved in school life
- receive the necessary assistance and support to compensate for personal, family, financial and social and cultural disadvantage, particularly in the case of pupils with special educational need
- receive social protection, in the area of education, in cases of accident or family hardship.

Basic duties:

- study and make an effort to achieve the maximum development according to their skills
- participate in training activities and, particularly, in school and complementary activities
- follow teachers' guidelines
- attend lessons punctually
- participate and collaborate to improve school coexistence and achieve a suitable study environment, respecting the right of their schoolmates to education and teachers' authority and directions
- respect freedom of conscience, religious and moral beliefs, as well as the dignity, integrity and privacy of all the members of the educational community
- respect the school rules on organisation, coexistence and discipline
- take care and make good use of school facilities and learning materials.

Families' rights and duties

Rights:

- receive a quality education in accordance with the purposes established in the Constitution, the corresponding Statute of Autonomy and education laws
- choose an educational institution, either public or different from those created by public authorities
- ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions
- be informed about their children’s progress in learning and social and educational integration
- participate in their children’s teaching and learning process
- participate in the organisation, running, governance and evaluation of the school. For more information, see Administration and governance at local and/or institutional level. [5]
- be heard in decisions that affect their children’s academic and professional guidance.
Duties:

- adopt the necessary measures, or ask for help in the event of difficulty, so that their children or wards study compulsory education and attend classes regularly
- provide them, in accordance with their means, with the necessary resources and conditions so that they can progress academically
- stimulate them so that they carry out the study activities assigned to them
- actively participate in the activities established under the educational commitments established between educational institutions and families in order to improve their children’s performance
- learn about, participate and support the evolution of their educational process, in collaboration with teachers and schools
- respect and enforce the rules established by the school, and respect teachers’ authority, guidance and instructions
- promote respect for all the members of the educational community.

Pupils’ and families’ rights and duties are also regulated within the State education authorities. In the Cities of Ceuta and Melilla it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Vocational training, whereas in the Autonomous Communities they are regulated by the Departments for Education.

Their definition and implementation is established within the [framework of school autonomy through the school rules](#), which are part of the school development plan. For more information, see [Administration and governance at local and/or institutional level](#).

**Educational institutions**

Individuals and legal entities are free to create educational institutions, subject to observance of the constitutional principles.

**Types of non-university educational institutions according to their ownership and source of funding:**

- **public schools:** they are owned by the education authority and publicly-funded
- **private schools:** they are privately owned and privately-funded
- **publicly-funded private schools:** ownership is private but they can be publicly-funded through a regime of agreements.

**Names of non-university educational institutions according to the education provided:**

- pre-primary schools:
  - for pre-primary education pupils
  - they can provide the whole level (0-6 years old) or just the first cycle (0-3 years old).
- primary schools:
  - for primary education pupils.
- pre-primary and primary schools:
  - for pre-primary and primary education pupils
- secondary schools:
  - compulsory secondary education and/or Bachillerato
  - vocational training cycles
- special education institutions:
  - for students with special educational needs which cannot be attended in ordinary institutions
- adult education institutions:
  - they offer adult education
• adult education classrooms:
  ▪ Integrated within primary schools and/or secondary schools, although they can also belong to city councils and local corporations
  ▪ they provide adult education
• gathered rural schools:
  ▪ group of several schools gathered in a single school working jointly
  ▪ they are located in rural areas needing this kind of school group due to their socio-demographic characteristics.

Other types of institutions:

• Rural Centres for Educational Innovation, developing and complementing the educational action carried out in schools in rural areas. For more information, see Organisational variations and alternative structures in early childhood education and care [7] and Primary Education [8]

• Centre for the Innovation and Development of Distance Education [9] (CIDEAD), aimed at adult learners who, due to different circumstances, cannot attend mainstream education requiring attendance. For more information, see Main providers [10].

Vocational training is provided both in public and private educational institutions, authorised by the concerning Education Authority, and in institutions specifically regulated:

• vocational training integrated institutions: they include vocational training provision, integration and reintegration actions of workers into employment, continuing training aimed at employed workers, vocational information and guidance services and the evaluation of professional competences acquired through other non-formal studies and the working experience, within the framework of the National System for Qualifications and Vocational Training. Their provision is modular and flexible and they cover the two subsystems of Vocational Training, Vocational Training of the Education System and Vocational Training for employment (depending on the Ministry of Employment and Social Security)

• national reference institutions: public centres specialised in the different productive sectors, carrying out innovation and experimentation action in terms of vocational training.

Universities, providing university education, can be classified, depending on their ownership, into public or private. They all comprise:

• university schools
• faculties
• research university institutes
• other centres or structures which might be necessary in order to perform their duties, such as the higher education centres attached through agreements.

Finally, the Education Act also establishes the name of the institutions providing specialised education:

Names of educational institutions providing specialised education:

• Artistic Education:
  ▪ Conservatories of Music and Dance: elementary and professional Music and Dance education
  ▪ Higher conservatories or higher schools of Music and Dance: advanced Music and Dance education
  ▪ Art schools: professional Plastic Arts and Design education
  ▪ Higher schools of Dramatic Arts: advanced Dramatic Arts education
Higher schools for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Assets: advanced Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Assets education
Higher schools of Design: advanced Design education
Higher schools of Plastic Arts: advanced Plastic Arts education.

- Language education:
  - Official Language Schools: elementary, intermediate and advanced language education
  - the education authorities can authorise these schools to impart distance language education and updating and specialisation courses.

- Sports education:
  - they do not have a specific name: public or private schools authorised by the corresponding education authority, included in vocational training institutions or in authorised institutions of the different sport federations.

**Home education**

According to national legislation full-time compulsory education cannot be provided at home.

Home education is authorized only in exceptional circumstances for health reasons. It concerns only pupils who cannot attend school due to a prolonged stay at home by medical prescription. It can be carried out at home or at the hospital.

- **Hospital teaching:**
  - **purpose:** provide pupils who do not attend school regularly with educational attention, and coordinate home teaching programmes through the competent services
  - **target groups:** pupils at compulsory schooling age hospitalised for a long period of time
  - **organisation:** during the hospitalisation period, they are enrolled in the ordinary school where their education process is developed. Supporting school units are created in hospitals, as well as the corresponding mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating them.

- **Home teaching programmes:**
  - **purpose:** provide pupils who do not attend school regularly with educational attention, and coordinate home teaching programmes through the competent services
  - **target groups:** pupils at compulsory schooling age who cannot attend school due to a prolonged stay at home by medical prescription
  - **organisation:** these pupils can enrol in the modality of distance education and keep this situation while the condition that created it remains.

These pupils can keep such distance education while the health condition remains. In this specific situation, legal regulation of home education depends on the Autonomous Communities. The criteria for application and authorization vary between Autonomous Communities. Generally, the authorization must be given by top level authorities and educators are qualified teachers. Taking into account their health circumstances, they pass exams at home or at the hospital.