The 1978 Spanish Constitution established a decentralised and symmetrical model of State:

- by which educational powers are shared between all levels of government
- where the educational powers exercised by the Autonomous Communities are basically the same.

The competences in terms of education are shared between the State General Authority (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training) and the Autonomous Communities (Regional Ministries or Departments for Education). In the Cities of Ceuta and Melilla these competences are assumed by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training itself.

The role of local authorities is focused on educational management through the Education Departments or Municipal Education Institutes. The education authorities delegate the exercise of their functions to the municipalities in aspects having a direct impact on them.

The educational institutions also collaborate in the management of education thanks to their autonomy, adapting their resources and pedagogic action to the specific needs of their students and the characteristics of the school environment.

Within this decentralised model, the curriculum is formulated in a set of levels of curricular development [1].

**Administration and governance at local level**

The Autonomous Communities can agree on the delegation of management competences for certain education services in the municipalities or groups of municipalities, in order to favour a greater effectiveness, coordination and social control in the use of the resources.

There is not a common structure for all the local authorities responsible for carrying out their education functions. In most of them there is a Regional Ministry of Education, and some of them have created Municipal Institutes of Education.

Municipalities assume the competences related to:

- creation, building, maintenance and monitoring of those buildings for public institutions of pre-primary, primary and special education
- collaboration with the corresponding education authorities in obtaining the necessary site to build the new educational institutions
- ensuring compliance with compulsory schooling and provision of the education service.

Local corporations:
are empowered to set up municipal school councils
their participation in education also entails representation in the school councils of the Autonomous Communities and the school councils of non-university educational institutions.

Municipal authorities:

- may use the educational institutions dependent on the Autonomous Communities for educational, cultural, sport or social activities outside school hours
- such use is subject to the needs derived from the planning of the activities of these schools.

Agreements of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces [2]:

- in 2004, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training signed the first framework agreement for collaboration with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, whose main purpose was to achieve the full integration of educational action into local life
- in 2010, a second agreement emphasised the numerous educational programmes that go beyond these legal requirements and show the local commitment with education
- in 2017, an agreement with the aim of developing the 2017-2020 Plan for the Promotion of Reading was signed. The Plan had six main strategic lines:
  - promotion of reading habits
  - promotion of reading in the area of education
  - reinforcement of the role of libraries in giving access to reading
  - strengthening of the book sector
  - promotion of respect for intellectual property
  - improvement of analysis tools.

**Administration at institutional level**

**Non-university institutions**

The process of decentralisation of educational powers has extended to non-university educational institutions.

The **principle of school autonomy**:

- recognises the freedom to create educational institutions and provide them with their own school development plan as well as academic freedom
- the aim of the autonomy they currently enjoy is to ensure a better adaptation and use of the resources assigned, and to adapt the pedagogic action to the specific needs of students and the features of the school environment.

Educational institutions have autonomy for preparing, passing and executing:

- a school development plan
- a management plan
- the rules for organising and running the school, within the framework established by the State and regional regulations.

The education authorities thus favour that their economic, material and human resources are adapted to their working and organisation plans, once they have been duly evaluated and assessed.

**Autonomy in management**: 
allows the inclusion of experimentations, working plans, organisation forms, rules of coexistence and the extension of the school timetable or the school hours for the different areas or subjects, without imposing contributions to families or demands to the education authorities only if this greater autonomy has an impact on the obtaining of academic or professional certificates, they must be specifically authorised by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

It is possible to distinguish four areas where educational institutions enjoy a wide degree of autonomy:

- pedagogical and curricular
- organisational
- management of resources
- organisation of actions aimed at promoting quality.

**Pedagogical and curricular organisation**

Educational institutions have competences in the design of the basic curriculum for primary education, compulsory secondary education and Bachillerato:

- complement the contents of all the subjects on the basis of educational provision
- design and implement their own teaching and learning methods
- establish the number of teaching hours for the different subjects.

The school development plan of the educational institution includes the values, objectives and priority actions established by the School Board. It must also observe the principles of non-discrimination and educational inclusion as fundamental values. Publicly-funded private schools have to make it public. The school development plan includes:

- the curricula, as defined by the education authorities and specified and approved by the Teachers Assembly
- the cross-curricular approach to values-based education in areas, subjects or modules
- the way in which attention to students’ diversity, tutorial action and the coexistence plan are addressed, taking into account the characteristics of the social and cultural environment of the school.

The education authorities:

- are responsible for facilitating coordination between the school development plans of primary education and compulsory secondary education institutions in order to favour the gradual and positive inclusion of students in the new education level
- encourage the quality of education, by strengthening and increasing school autonomy
- promote the curricular specialisation of publicly-funded secondary schools, so that they may offer educational provision which is adapted to their needs. Their school development plan must include the specific aspects defining the school’s uniqueness.

**Organisational management**

The role of the education authorities is to facilitate that, within the framework of autonomy, schools prepare their own organisation and running rules.

At the beginning of every academic year, schools set their **Yearly General Programme**:
• it includes the said rules and projects, the curriculum and all the action plans agreed and passed
• yearly, a report is elaborated at the end of the academic year, which includes and evaluates the activities and running of the educational institution.

The education authorities regulate the chance for the educational institutions to define all their organisational aspects in the school rules document [3], which is part of the school development plan. The management team is usually responsible for preparing it. The school rules include:

- the basic coexistence rules
- the means for the students participation in the School Council
- the organisation and procedures for the appropriate use of buildings, resources and facilities
- the channels for establishing communication between the school governing and coordination bodies
- students' rights and duties.

Management of resources

The financial management made by public educational institutions is in line with the exercise of their own autonomy, but must always comply with what is established by the Education Act, the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education and the specific regulations of every education authority or of their governing bodies. Thus, educational institutions can:

- acquire goods and contract works, services and supplies
- formulate the academic and professional qualification requirements regarding certain school positions
- prepare their management project, which includes the organisation and use of their resources, both material and human
- manage the staff. School heads as responsible for managing the resources.

The management of school resources must also contribute to the promotion of the quality of education, as well as to equal opportunities regarding access to education. The funding of the education authorities may thus be bigger in the case of public educational institutions or publicly-funded private schools:

- whose projects might require so
- whose population has specific needs
- this allocation is subject to accountability and proof that the resources have been properly used.

The education authorities set some limits so that educational institutions can obtain additional resources, subsequent to approval by the headteacher. These additional resources cannot come from activities organised by parents’ associations, in compliance with their purposes, and must be used to cover the school’s expenses

Organisation of actions aimed at promoting quality (2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education)

These actions aimed at promoting quality include:

- honorary measures for the recognition of institutions
- actions for the development and promotion of quality
- they are based on an integrated consideration of the institution, must contain all the necessary
tools to implement a **quality school development plan**

- result in a direct increase in their autonomy in terms of pedagogical and curricular organisation, organisational management and management of resources.

The implementation of a quality school development plan is characterised by the following:

- the school’s specialisation, which might include, among others, actions aimed at curricular specialisation, excellence, teacher training, the improvement of school performance, support for students with special educational needs or making educational resources available to shared digital platforms
- during the period these actions are being implemented, the school headteacher has autonomy to adapt human resources to the new needs. His/her powers are extended, so he/she can:
  - establish the specific requirements and merits for the positions offered for the teaching staff in the civil service, as well as for temporary staff
  - reject, by means of a reasoned decision, the hiring of temporary teaching staff from centralised lists. The relevant education authority will have to endorse this decision
  - if there is a vacancy as well as adequate and sufficient funding, propose, after a reasoned request, the appointment of teachers who, having worked in quality projects, seem necessary for their continuity.
- educational institutions must present a strategic plan with objectives, the results to be obtained, the management to be implemented with the corresponding measures to achieve the expected results, as well as the time frame and the programming of activities.

The implementation of quality actions is subject to accountability and results are measured in terms of improvements in relation to the initial situation.

**University institutions**

Spanish universities have autonomy in the following areas:

- academic
- governance
- financial
- resource administration
- staff management, as they can select and promote their teaching staff.

They also have competences related to:

- the setting up of distance educational institutions and structures
- the implementation of student admission procedures
- the setting up of foundations and other legal bodies in order to achieve their goals
- the collaboration with other entities for the mobility of their staff
- the design and proposal of the syllabuses they consider most attractive and appropriate for their resources and interests.

**Governance at institutional level**

**Non-university institutions**

The governance of **public educational institutions**:

- is the responsibility of:
  - mixed-membership bodies:
- School Council
- Teachers' Assembly.

- individual bodies:
  - school head
  - head of studies
  - secretary.

- the education authorities may also authorise the establishment of other governing bodies they might consider necessary
- in the case of certain public educational institutions: special education, adult education or Spanish educational institutions abroad, their composition and functions are to be modified so as to be appropriate to each particular case.

**Publicly-funded private schools** must have, at least, the school head and the mixed-membership bodies mentioned.

**Private schools** enjoy autonomy to structure their organisation and as such may establish the governing and participatory bodies which they deem fit, in accordance with the law.

**The Management Team**

It is the executive governing body of public educational institutions and it is made up of the school head, the head of studies, the secretary and any other figure established by the education authorities:

- in primary schools with nine or more units, there will be a school head, a secretary and a head of studies
- in primary schools with six or more units, and less than nine, there will be a school head and a secretary. The school head will take over the functions of the head of studies
- in primary schools with less than six units, the school head will take over the functions of the head of studies and the secretary. The functions of the secretary in the School Council will be taken over by the teacher, who is a member of the Council, appointed by the school head
- in secondary schools with a large amount of students or a certain organisational complexity, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training may establish assistant heads of studies for compulsory secondary education, Bachillerato and vocational training, that will report directly to the head of studies.

They carry out their duties in a coordinated manner, according to the instructions of the school head. For more information, see [Management staff for early childhood and school education](#).

**Mixed-membership governing bodies**

Educational institutions count, at least, with the School Council and the Teachers' Assembly.

**School Council**

It is the governing body of the educational institution where the education community participates.

It comprises:

- the Management Team
- a representative of the school management and services staff
- a city councillor or representative of the City Council
- teachers, parents and students representatives.
The education authorities establish the total number of members and regulate the election processes of the representatives of the different groups.

The School Council has similar functions in the different Autonomous Communities:

- pass and evaluate the school development plan, the financial plan, the school organisation and running rules, without prejudice of the competences of the Teachers' Assembly, as regards the organisation and planning of teaching
- be informed of the list of candidates for the post of school head and the projects they submit. Participate in the said process and, subsequent to agreement between the members adopted by majority of two thirds, propose the revocation of his/her appointment and, as a consequence, be notified of the appointment and dismissal of other members of the Management Team
- decide upon students' admission in accordance with the corresponding regulations
- analyse and evaluate the general running of the educational institution and elaborate proposals and reports, at its own initiative or upon request of the competent education authority, on the institution running and the improvement of the quality of its administration
- propose measures and initiatives favouring coexistence in the school, equality between men and women and the peaceful resolution of conflicts in all areas of personal, family and social life and, if appropriate, be informed about the resolution of disciplinary conflicts and ensure that they comply with the regulations in force
- appoint a person in charge of encouraging educational measures promoting real and effective equality between men and women
- promote the maintenance and renovation of both school facilities and equipment, and approve the acquisition of additional resources
- determine the guidelines for the collaboration, for education and cultural purposes, with local authorities and other schools, entities and bodies
- analyse and assess the evolution of the academic performance and the results of the internal and external evaluations in which the school takes part.

In publicly-funded private schools, the competences of the School Council are similar, although it is also involved in appointing and dismissing teachers and it is empowered to apply to the education authority for permission to establish complementary payments from parents to run extracurricular education activities.

Teachers' Assembly

It is teachers' participatory body in the school government:

- it is responsible for planning, coordinating, informing and making decisions on all educational aspects
- it is chaired by the school head and it is made up of all the teachers of the school.

It has the following functions:

- formulate proposals to the Management Team and the School Council for drawing up the school projects and the Yearly General Programme
- pass and assess the definition of the curriculum and all the educational aspects of the school projects and the Yearly General Programme
- establish criteria regarding students’ guidance, tutorship, evaluation and retake
- promote initiatives in the field of pedagogic experimentation and research and in the training of the teachers of the school
- choose their representatives in the School Council, be informed of the list of candidates for the
post of school head and participate in the selection

- analyse and assess the general running of the school, the evolution of the academic performance and the results of the internal and external evaluations in which the school takes part
- inform about the rules for the organisation and running of the school
- suggest measures and initiatives favouring coexistence and be informed about the resolution of disciplinary conflicts and the imposition of sanctions, as well as ensure that they comply with the regulations in force.

Teaching coordination bodies

They aim to promote teamwork among teachers and guarantee coordinated and systematic action on the part of those responsible for the teaching/learning process.

The denomination, composition and specific duties are different in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and they also vary from one Autonomous Community to another. The education authorities may include other figures or teams.

Teaching coordination bodies in pre-primary and primary schools

- Teams for each education cycle: they include all the teachers organising and teaching in the same cycle, under the supervision of the head of studies and the leadership of a coordinator, belonging to the Pedagogical Coordination Commission
- Pedagogical Coordination Commission: it usually comprises the school head, the head of studies, the coordinators for each cycle, the person responsible for counselling at the school and, in some Autonomous Communities, the support teacher. The functions of the Pedagogical Coordination Commission include, among others:
  - promote the evaluation of all the activities and projects carried out in the school
  - set the criteria and procedures as provided to make any necessary curricular adaptations for students with special educational needs
  - formulate the proposals related to the organisation of the education counselling, the tutorial action plan and teacher training
  - establish the general guidelines for preparing and checking the curricular projects, as well as coordinate such preparation.
- Coordinators for each cycle: they are elected as representatives of the teams for each cycle, they coordinate and represent the latter in the Pedagogical Coordination Commission
- Class teachers: they are in charge of pupils' guidance and counselling.

Teaching coordination bodies in secondary schools

- Counselling Department: it organises the educational, psychopedagogical and professional guidance and the tutorial action plan for students
- Extracurricular and Complementary Activities Department or its coordinator: it promotes, organises and facilitates this kind of activities
- Educational Departments (subject or vocational area): they organise and implement instruction in their respective disciplines, subjects or modules. There might be departments of other foreign languages, other than English or French, provided they are taught as first foreign language with reflection on the staff of the school, as well as to teach the language of the Autonomous Community in question, and as many as the regulations may establish
- Departments of occupational family: in secondary schools offering specific vocational training. They comprise teachers of specific vocational training in training cycles of the same occupational family and who are not members of any other department
- Pedagogical Coordination Commission, with similar functions to those described for pre-primary and primary education
- Team of teachers: their duties are, essentially:
  - coordinate teaching and learning activities
  - deal with any kind of conflict
  - carry out the assessment and follow-up of the students in their group.
- Form teachers, with similar functions to those described for pre-primary and primary education.

Participation bodies

In order to fully implement the principle of active participation and democratic management of non-university educational institutions, other channels have being developed through which parents and students can take part in a collegiate manner in the control and management of education. For more information, see Organisation of the education system and of its structure [6].

Students' participation

- Class representative, elected among the students of the group. He/she has to:
  - promote coexistence among the students of the group
  - act as their representative, look after the materials and facilities, and perform any other tasks established by the school rules.
- Second class representative, who supports the class representative in his/her functions and replaces him/her in their absence.
- Board of class representatives in secondary schools: it is made up of the representatives of the class representatives and of the students representatives in the School Council. Its functions are the following:
  - inform students of the school problems
  - formulate proposals to amend the school rules, as well as timetables for curricular and extracurricular teaching activities.
- Students associations: students have the right of association from the last years of primary education. They have a series of governing bodies established by their statutes and which vary depending on the Autonomous Community.

Parents' participation through parents' associations

- assist parents or guardians in all matters concerning their childrens' education
- collaborate in the education activities of the school
- facilitate the representation and participation of families in the School Councils, as well as in other mixed-membership bodies.

University institutions

Administration, financial management and teaching organisation bodies

The different governing bodies of the university are responsible for exercising these functions.

Their basic principle is the participation of all the sectors involved. This principle has on the one hand, an internal aspect, since they include the different sectors of the university community through mixed-membership bodies: lecturers, students and administration and services staff; and, on the other hand, an external aspect related to their social interests, mainly through the Social Council.
Public universities

The Statutes establish the following individual governing and representation bodies:

- Chancellor
- Vice-Chancellor
- General Secretary
- Managing Director
- Faculty Deans, Directors of higher technical schools or higher polytechnic schools, of university schools or polytechnic university schools, of departments and of research university institutes.

For more information, see Management staff for higher education [7].

In addition, they have the following mixed-membership bodies:

- Social Council:
  - it supervises the activities of higher education institutions and acts as a link with the social and economic environment
  - it is normally composed of personalities from local, provincial and regional politics, representatives of private entities with special links with university, the governing team of the university, student representatives and relevant actors for the interests of universities and the academic community.

- Governing Council:
  - it establishes the strategic and programmatical lines of the university, as well as the guidelines and procedures for their implementation in the fields of teaching organisation, research, human and economic resources and preparation of the budgets
  - it is made up by the Chancellor, who chairs it, the general secretary, the managing director and a maximum of 50 members (vice-chancellors, a representation of deans and heads, as well as a representation of the university community, as established by the university statutes).

- University Assembly:
  - it elaborates the university statutes and, on an extraordinary basis, it can hold elections to choose a Chancellor at the initiative of a third of their members and with the approval of two thirds
  - the approval of this initiative entails their dissolution and the Chancellor dismissal
  - the university statutes regulate their makeup ant the duration of their term
  - it is the highest representation body in the university community.

- Board of Faculty, of University School:
  - it is the governing body
  - it has competences in the election and renewal of the Dean or Head, the approval of the general action guidelines and the annual report, the budget proposal submitted by the Dean or Head and the accountability of its implementation
  - it also participates in the elaboration of proposals for creating new qualifications or the elimination of formal studies, as well as in the drawing-up and change of the syllabuses, submitting these proposals to the Governing Council for them to be approved
  - most of the members are professors permanently linked to university
  - the students of the faculty are also represented, both through associations and delegations.

- Department Councils:
  - they are made up of the doctors members of the Department, as well as of a representation of the other teaching and research staff not holding a doctoral degree, students and administration and services staff.
the Departments are the research and teaching units responsible for coordinating the studies of one or several knowledge fields, according to the university teaching programme
they are also assigned some administration tasks resulting from the obligation of affiliation of the university teaching staff, of accountability and hiring of works with public entities or other departments
they are made up of all the teachers or researchers whose specialisation corresponds to a specific knowledge field
their creation, change or withdrawal is decided by universities.

Private universities

They establish their own governing and representation bodies in their organisation and running rules. Individual governing bodies have the same names as those in public universities.

The university ombudsperson:

- ensures the rights and freedoms of lecturers, students and administration and services staff in connection with the different bodies and university services
- his/her actions, always aimed at improving quality in every field, do not depend on any other university body and they are regulated by the principles of independence and autonomy.

Student participation bodies

The University Student Statute establishes diverse mechanisms for increasing the students' involvement in university life and their participation and management in university services. It acknowledges and assesses cultural, sport and solidarity activities as part of university life and establishes a commitment to modify the legal framework regulating coexistence at university.

The State University Council for Students:

- is the highest body for deliberation, consultation and representation of university students before the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
- channels their opinions and complaints, and it is a consultative body for discussing issues affecting students.

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