Steering documents and types of activities

The two cycles of pre-primary education have an educational nature, so it is necessary to develop a pedagogical proposal.

**Curriculum** is defined as the regulation of the elements influencing the teaching and learning processes for each type of provision:

- curriculum of the first cycle: it is determined by the Autonomous Communities for their respective regions
- curriculum of the second cycle: the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training sets the core curricula and defines the objectives, skills, contents and evaluation criteria for the whole State, subsequently completed by the education authorities.

There are differences between the Autonomous Communities when it comes to establishing the contents of the first cycle and completing the contents of the second cycle [1]:

- some establish the same contents for both cycles
- some formulate specific contents for each cycle
- some only specify the contents of the second cycle, based on the contents of the core curricula.

For more information, see Administration and governance at central and/or regional level [2].

The curriculum is organised into different levels of definition, progressively adapting to the special characteristics of the context, the school and its pupils.

Schools play an active role in the development of the curriculum. In order to adapt it to the needs of their pupils and their environment, they draw up a series of documents where they formulate their pedagogical and curricular organisation:

- the school development plan [3], which includes the curricular definition of the education authority
- the yearly general programme [4]: it covers all aspects concerning the organisation and running of the school for the school year, including the projects, the curriculum and all action plans as agreed and approved
- the final report: it includes and evaluates the activities and running of the school.

Both the school development plan and the yearly general programme are prepared by the management team, in accordance with the criteria and proposals of the mixed-membership governing bodies of the school.
The curricular project is normally drawn up by those responsible for pedagogical coordination, who submit their proposal to the Teachers’ Assembly.

The educational community participates in the drawing up of these documents through the relevant governing and educational coordination bodies of the school. For more information, see Administration and governance at local and/or institutional level [5].

**Educational contents in pre-primary education**

They are organised into three curricular areas:

- **self-knowledge and personal autonomy**: it promotes the gradual building of self-identity, emotional maturity, the establishment of emotional relationships with others and personal autonomy
- **knowledge of the environment**: it helps discovering the contexts of the child’s environment, favouring its integration in a reflective and participative way
- **languages, communication and representation**: it aims at achieving knowledge of the different forms of communication and representation of reality, as well as the expression of feelings, thoughts, experiences and interactions with others.

1. they correspond to areas relating to children’s experience and development
2. they are considered from a global and integrated perspective
3. they are developed by carrying out meaningful experiences for pupils
4. they comprise different blocks of curricular content that are complementary to one another:

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Source: Drawn up by Eurydice Spain-Spanish Network for Information on Education (National Centre for Educational Innovation and Research, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training) on the basis of current regulations.

The education authorities introduce:

- a first foreign language, especially in the last year of the 2nd cycle (5-6 years of age)
- reading and writing, basic numeracy, information and communication technologies, as well as visual and musical expression during the second cycle.

In the second cycle of the stage, all schools have to offer Religion, although pupils are free to choose it, guaranteeing parents’ or guardians’ right to a religious education for their children. The curriculum is established by the relevant religious authorities and schools organise an alternative subject for those pupils who do not take it. For more information, see Population: Demographic situation, languages and religions [6].
Teaching methods and materials

Teaching methods

The teaching methodology used is based on games, in the context of an atmosphere of trust and affection which promotes children’s self-esteem and social integration.

The education authorities establish a series of methodological principles:

- global perspective of learning
- children’s physical and mental activity, and importance of play
- priority is given to emotional and relationship aspects
- peer to peer interaction
- coordination with families
- preventive and compensatory nature
- attention to diversity, adapting educational provision to children’s specific characteristics, interests, cognitive styles and maturing processes.

Each school teacher is free to choose the methodology used in the classroom, which must comply with what has been agreed at institutional level and established by the relevant education authority.

Curricular materials and didactic resources

In accordance with the methodological principles and in the exercise of their teaching autonomy, schools define the curricular materials and didactic resources that can be used:

- activity books
- printed material
- self-produced materials
- reference books from the school or classroom library
- press
- tales
- IT resources and audiovisual aids.

Didactic guides are also used as didactic basis of the curricular material employed and guidelines for content sequencing and adaptation. The use of resources related to plastic and musical expression is particularly important in pre-primary education.

The publication and adoption of curricular materials and didactic resources:

- do not require prior authorisation from the education authority
- must have the appropriate level of scientific rigor, be adapted to the age of pupils and the curriculum approved by each Autonomous Community
- must reflect and encourage respect for the constitutional principles, values, liberties, rights and duties, as well as for the principles and values included in both the Education Act and the Act on Comprehensive Protection Measures Against Gender Violence (2004).

The textbook selection process follows some guidelines in all educational institutions:

- Pedagogical Coordination Commission of the school: it prepares a report on the textbooks that are considered most appropriate, under the supervision of the School Council and the Teachers’ Assembly
• teachers: they are responsible for the final decision
• School Council: if it does not agree with the final decision, suggestions can be made for the Teachers’ Assembly to consider them.

The educational inspection of the Autonomous Community supervises textbooks and other curricular materials, as integral elements of the teaching and learning process.

Regarding grants for the purchase of textbooks and school materials, although they are aimed at primary education and compulsory secondary education students, there are also local and/or regional grants for the acquisition of school materials in the second cycle of pre-primary education. For more information, see Early childhood and school education funding [8].

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