Curriculum, subjects, number of hours

Vocational training is the type of provision which is closer to the labour market. Its wide range of training programmes, modular nature and flexibility, including distance provision through Internet [1], make it a highly attractive training option.

The academic organisation of vocational training provision has a common structure:

- the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP), after consultation with the Autonomous Communities, establishes vocational training qualifications and their related core curricula for the whole State. Since May 2014, different basic vocational training qualifications and their curricula for the whole State have been approved.

More information at TodoFP.es [2].

- the Autonomous Communities have completed these basic regulations, by establishing, for their respective territories, the curricula of the training cycles [3] corresponding to each qualification.
- educational institutions develop such curricula by drawing up their yearly general programme, whose objectives, contents, evaluation criteria, sequencing and methodology must respond to the characteristics of the student body as well as the training possibilities which are available in the surrounding area.

Intermediate vocational training cycles respond to a professional profile and help to improve vocational qualifications as well as to prepare students for exercising other professions.

Structure

Currently, there are 34 basic vocational training qualifications belonging to 19 occupational families and 54 intermediate vocational training qualifications belonging to 25 occupational families (click on image below).

A. Basic vocational training qualifications (Ciclos formativos de FP Básica [4])
B. Intermediate vocational training qualifications (Ciclos formativos de grado medio [5]).

- these qualifications correspond to the training cycles established by the Education Act 2/2006, of 3 May (LOE). There are qualifications of the 1990 Act on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE) which are currently being updated and will be replaced by the cycles of the LOE with a similar or identical name.
- each family comprises different basic, intermediate or advanced training cycles.

More information at Organisation of vocational lower secondary education [6] and Short-cycle
higher education: Advanced Vocational Training, [7]

- it is organised into different training cycles, which are made up of vocational modules, vary in length, include theoretical and practical contents corresponding to the different professional fields, and help people combine learning with social, work or family responsibilities.
- training cycles refer to the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications [8].

The MEFP and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, after consultation with the General Council for Vocational Training [9]:

- approve the vocational qualifications and competence units [10] of this Catalogue
- adapt vocational modules to the qualifications and competence units.

The revision or updating of vocational qualifications or the creation of new ones, in order to offer a provision that responds to skills needs and the prospects for economic and social development, is the responsibility of the MEFP at its own initiative or at the request of the education and employment authorities, the General Council for Vocational Training or social and economic agents.

Curriculum

Basic Vocational Training

Basic Vocational Training Certificates have the same structure as the rest of vocational training provision of the education system, and also include lifelong learning skills.

The vocational modules [11] of each qualification must be expressed in terms of contents, evaluation criteria and learning outcomes, also considering the professional, personal, social and lifelong learning skills to be developed.

Basic vocational training cycles include the following vocational modules:

1. modules linked to competence units [10] of the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications
2. modules linked to the common blocks established by the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, which ensure the acquisition of lifelong learning skills:
   - Communication and Society I and II module:
     - Spanish Language
     - Foreign Language
     - Social Sciences
     - Co-Official Language, in those Autonomous Communities with a co-official language.
   - Applied Sciences I and II module:
     - Mathematics Applied to the Personal and Learning Context in a Professional Field
     - Science Applied to the Personal and Learning Context in a Professional Field.
3. work placement module.

These modules are compulsory in the 1st and 2nd year and they are defined in relation to the professional field of the qualification concerned.

The vocational modules of Communication and Society and Applied Sciences:

- are based on the curriculum of the subjects of compulsory secondary education included in the modules, as well as on the professional profile of the relevant vocational training qualification
- the number of hours for these modules together generally represents between 35% and 40% of the total duration of the cycle, including an hour of tutoring per week.
The **work placement module**:

- it corresponds to what is established for these modules in the rest of vocational training of the education system
- the education authorities decide at which point of the programme students can take this module, depending on the specific characteristics of the programme and the availability of placement positions in companies
- its duration must represent at least 12% of the total duration of the training cycle.

All basic vocational training cycles include, as cross-curricular themes, the following aspects:

- teamwork, health and safety at work, entrepreneurship, business and career counselling
- respect for the environment and promotion of physical activity and a healthy diet
- skills related to reading comprehension, oral and written expression, audiovisual communication, information and communication technologies and civic and constitutional education.

The education authorities have to ensure the certification of training in health and safety at work when the productive sector corresponding to the professional profile of the relevant qualification so requires. This training can be provided as a specific training unit within the work placement module.

As all these contents are cross-curricular, the skills and contents involved must be clearly specified within the different learning and evaluation activities.

As for the **duration** of basic vocational training cycles [3]:

- 2 000 hours, the equivalent to two full-time academic years
- if the training cycles are included in dual vocational training programmes, this duration can be increased to three academic years. More information on Dual Vocational Training [12]
- students may take the same cycle up to a maximum of 4 years.

**Intermediate Vocational Training**

The curricula of the different training cycles adapts to the requirements of the National System of Qualifications and Vocational Training [13].

The curricular contents of the training cycles are organised into different types of **vocational modules** [11]:

- vocational modules which are specific to each training cycle
- work placement vocational module
- one or more vocational modules related to employment guidance and labour relations and the development of the entrepreneurial spirit.

The education authorities of the Autonomous Communities may organise the teaching of the vocational modules into training units of a shorter duration in order to promote lifelong learning.

**vocational modules of each training cycle:**

- composed of theoretical-practical knowledge areas, according to the professional competences, which must include those defined in the competence units and the social and personal skills aimed to be achieved
- will, or will not, be adapted to the competence units of the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications, depending on their nature
include priority areas: information and communication technologies, the languages of the countries of the European Union (EU), teamwork, prevention of occupational risks, and those included in the EU guidelines and, in particular, those related to the development and strengthening of basic skills
- where the professional profile of the training cycle so requires, training must be included in specific vocational modules. In the rest, it must be included as a cross-curricular topic or in accordance with other solutions the education authorities may provide as regards languages.

- **work placement vocational module:**
  - non-employment nature
  - students evidencing work experience relating to the respective professional studies may be exempt from this module
  - the Royal Decrees establishing the different vocational training qualifications must determine the vocational modules which must have been completed in order to take the work placement. In general, all the modules studied in the educational institution must have been successfully completed
  - depending on the type of provision, the specific characteristics of each training cycle and the availability of places in companies, the education authorities may fix another temporality for this module
  - this module currently represents a 20%.

- **vocational modules related to employment guidance and labour relations and the development of the entrepreneurial spirit:**
  - training on:
    - employment opportunities
    - setting up and management of companies and self-employment
    - job organisation and relations at work
    - basic legislation on labour regarding equal opportunities and non-discrimination of disabled people
    - rights and duties derived from relations at work, in order to facilitate access to employment or reintegration into the labour market.
  - this training can be provided in one or several specific vocational modules, which may also be included as a cross-curricular topic, according to the professional profile. It must address the characteristics of each occupational family or the relevant productive sector(s).

The education authorities might establish that educational institutions offer intermediate vocational training students the following **voluntary subjects**, in order to facilitate their transition to other types of provision:

- Comunication in Spanish Language
- Communication in Foreign Language
- Applied Mathematics
- Communication in Co-Official Language, where appropriate
- any subject related to the advanced vocational training cycle the student wishes to have access to.

The **duration** of the training cycle is as follows:

- 2 000 hours, divided into one and a half or two academic years, although its organisation into a year and a half is more frequent
- the regulations for each training cycle specify the total length of the training cycle, as well as the minimum number of hours required under each vocational module
this timetable, which is set for the whole State, accounts for 55% -in the Autonomous Communities with two co-official languages- and 65% -in those where Spanish is the only official language- of the total timetable established for the training cycle in question.

Vocational training provision can be rendered more flexible by being offered as follows:

- full-time or part-time
- classroom-based, distance or part-attendance
- for a specific period of time during the year, so that students can combine education and training with work as well as with any other personal circumstance which may render it difficult to combine studying and training in a classroom-based setting.

**Teaching methods and materials**

**Teaching methods**

The MEFP recognises the freedom that educational institutions have to draw up their own methodological proposals, which must observe the following **general principles**:

- attention to diversity
- students’ access to common education
- the promotion of the necessary measures in order to develop academic supervision, the development of guidance and the regulation of specific measures to cater for pupils with special learning difficulties and highly-gifted students.

**Characteristics** of teaching methods in intermediate vocational training:

- they must integrate the relevant scientific, technological and organisational aspects in order to provide students with a global overview of the productive processes of the professional activity in question
- the Autonomous Communities, in the exercise of their power to draw up the syllabuses and define the vocational training qualifications of the different specialisations, establish the lines of action of the teaching/learning process in order to achieve the objectives of the different modules each qualification comprises, which describe the necessary teaching methods and materials
- educational institutions have pedagogical autonomy to define and develop the curriculum established by the relevant Autonomous Community. In their school development plan, they define the specific teaching/learning methodology they consider most appropriate to meet the characteristics and needs of their students
- the Teachers’ Assembly is the body responsible for planning, coordinating and deciding on teaching aspects
- at classroom level, teachers, in accordance with what has previously been mentioned and in the exercise of their academic freedom, are free to choose the methodology, materials and didactic resources they deem most suitable to ensure the development of their students.

The organisation of basic vocational training is flexible in order to adapt to the different situations of students. Teaching methods in this type of provision have an overall nature and tend to lead to the integration of skills and contents within the different vocational modules. In addition, they adapt to students’ needs and the gradual acquisition of lifelong learning skills, in order to facilitate the transition to working and civil life and continuity throughout the education system.
Curricular materials and teaching resources

Textbooks and teaching materials do not require previous authorisation from the education authority. In any case, they must:

- be adapted to the scientific rigour adequate for the pupils’ age group and to the approved curriculum set by each education authority
- reflect and encourage respect for the constitutional principles, values, liberties, rights and duties, as well as for the principles and values included in current educational legislation and the Act on comprehensive protection measures against gender violence, to which all educational activity must adapt.

The supervision of textbooks and other curricular materials is part of the regular process of inspection carried out by the education authority of all the elements included in the teaching/learning process.

The textbook selection process follows the following guidelines in all educational institutions:

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

Intermediate vocational training students’ may receive financial assistance towards the costs of textbooks and other school materials. For more information, see Early childhood and school education funding [14].

Pupils’ homework outside school hours is not regulated in any official document; it is each teacher who organises it.

Information and Communication Technologies

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT):

- must play a fundamental role in producing the methodological change required in order to improve educational quality
- the education authorities are in charge of providing public schools with all the necessary IT infrastructure with the goal of assuring its incorporation into the educational processes, emphasising the need to integrate ICT into the classroom through every curricular area.

Within the framework of the Plan for Digital Culture in School of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, the Espacio Procomún Educativo [15] is developed, intended for educational and learning purposes, mainly by the teaching community and students, but also by the general public.

Espacio Procomún Educativo:

- facilitates access to the repository of open educational resources (OER) of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Autonomous Communities
- gathers teaching materials classified through metadata (LOM-ES) in order to ensure standardisation, in line with the curriculum for non-university education
- materials are ready to be used directly in the classroom or to be modified and adapted to different contexts or needs
- download formats favour integration into Learning Management System (LMS) platforms.
These OER are under open license (Creative Commons España), which allows free access, as well as their use, modification and redistribution by others without any restriction or with limited restrictions.

The most significant element of ‘Procomún’ is faceted search, which is characterised by the following:

- information retrieval systems that enable searches based on natural or iterated reasoning
- the possibility of searching in context, since, when selecting an educational content, information on related contents coming from other sources to which they are linked is shown.

Regarding digital educational materials, the authoring tool ‘eXelearning’ is available for teachers:

- it facilitates interested teachers the creation of their own materials according to their needs
- it is an easy-to-use and open-source authoring tool that enables the adaptation of materials to teachers’ and students’ needs.

Regarding the promotion of the quality and innovation in Vocational Training, the collaboration of all the members of the educational community is a fundamental principle of the education system with the aim of achieving quality in education, paying particular attention to the factors that foster quality and innovation in teaching. Such factors are framed within the scope of action of the educational institutions through the experimentation, team work, educational updating and educational and professional guidance.

More information in Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education [16].

**Dual vocational training**

Dual vocational training comprises a series of mixed, employment and training, actions and initiatives for workers to become professionally qualified through work-linked training schemes which combine work with training within the framework of vocational training for employment or vocational training of the education system.

The training activity of the training and learning contract is also considered as dual vocational training.

**Characteristics** of the training programme:

- the education administration authorises the dual vocational training project, establishes the conditions of the agreement between the educational institution and the collaborating company and authorises it. This agreement specifies the programme for each vocational module, the activities to be carried out both at the institution and the company, their length and the criteria for their evaluation and grading. If more than one Autonomous Community is involved in the implementation of a project, it is the MEFP which authorises it
- the company participates in a minimum of 33% of the training hours established in the qualification. This percentage may be increased
- the duration of the training cycle can be extended to 3 years
- before carrying out their training at the company, students have to receive the training required
- the training activity of the company and the educational institution is coordinated and controlled on a monthly basis, with both the institution and the company monitoring and tutoring students
- student evaluation is the responsibility of the teachers of the educational institution, taking into account the contributions of the trainers of the company and the results of the placement activity.

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