



Decentralizing Education in Spain and Catalonia: opportunities and challenges

"A strategy for modernizing education"

Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies Fundació Rafael Campalans
lecture

May 14th, 2009

London, UK
(LSE)



1. Títol:	Decentralizing Education in Spain and Catalonia: opportunities and challenges "A strategy for modernizing education"
2. Resum:	This lecture will explain how simultaneous changes in the Spanish and Catalan legal framework will drive Catalonia not only to a profound educational reform, but also to a greater level of self-government.
3. Ernest Maragall:	Ernest Maragall is the Minister of Education of the Government of Catalonia. He is an economist, a Public Administration officer and IT analyst. He was a founder of the PSC (Catalan Socialist Party) in 1976 and he is currently a member of PSC's Executive Board.

INDEX:

1. Acknowledgements and preliminary reflections

2. The conference: A strategy for modernizing education

A) Diagnostic

- ⇒ The legal framework.
- ⇒ Economic and social change.
- ⇒ Immigration trends.

B) Objectives

C) Criteria

D) Tools of development

- ⇒ LOE.
- ⇒ Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia.

E) Specific education policies

- ⇒ Evaluation (transversal).
- ⇒ Professional Training.
- ⇒ Multilingualism.
- ⇒ The first stage of pre-primary education.
- ⇒ Innovation.
- ⇒ Teacher Training.

3. Final:

- ⇒ Structural reform.
- ⇒ Contribution to European heritage.



In brief:

This lecture will explain how simultaneous changes in the Spanish and Catalan legal framework will drive Catalonia not only to a profound educational reform, but also to a greater level of self-government.

1. Acknowledgements and preliminary reflections

⇒ Professor Preston;

⇒ Mr Aixalà, director of the Fundació Campalans;

⇒ Mr Ambassador of Spain to the United Kingdom;

⇒ Mr. Solano, The Head of the Delegation of the Catalan Government to the United Kingdom;

⇒ Mrs. de Miguel, of the Cañada Blanch Centre;

Dear friends. Good evening everyone.

Amigues, amics. Bona tarda a tothom.

Our thanks to the **London School of Economics for hosting this conference**, this being part of a series of lectures with Catalan political speakers, **organized by Cañada Blanch Center for Contemporary Spanish Studies (at the LSE) and Fundació Rafael Campalans.**



I would like to welcome **Professor Preston** and thank him for his inestimable and valuable contribution to helping the world understand Catalan and Spanish reality. We sincerely thank you for your important historical work and your commitment.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank **Mister Toni Cruanyes** for his kind words of introduction and for accepting to be here with me today.

I will try to honor that introduction by reflecting on the current state of education in Catalonia, in a clear and simple manner, so as to share with you our vision of the future and how we would like to see that future unfold.

It is a pleasure for me to tackle the issue of Decentralization (in Spain and, especially, in Catalonia) as **a way to speaking about reforms, as a strategy for modernizing primary and secondary education** (non-university education system) in Catalonia.

(I know you might be thinking that Education reform is top of the agenda of almost every country in the world, however in Catalonia it is the first time for us. We have, for the very first time, a legal framework that allows us to do so, and it is the very first time that it will be materialized in a law, it will be the first education law in Catalonia ever. But “I do not want to jump the gun”).



* * * * *

2. The conference: A strategy for modernizing education

We, the Government of Catalonia, have placed a high priority on education, and consider it a matter of utmost national importance for Catalonia. Education plays a vital role in Catalan Society, and the Catalan Government **is promoting its strategy to reform the education system in a way that will create an impact on our entire society**, not just the education community.

Our vision employs a strategy designed to upgrade education standards to a higher level, measured by these standards of quality in every area of our education system: academic results, teacher performance, head teacher management, etc. It is a long-term strategy, not only for day-to-day administrative matters, and it has a clear plan with:

- **Diagnostic**
- **Objectives**
- **Criteria**
- **And tools of development.**

Other elements of this strategy are also in play, such as the design and development of **specific educational policies**



(programs), which I will refer to later. These are set within the context of the economic, social and political situations in Catalonia and in Spain.

A) Diagnostic

Diagnosis is the starting point for our strategic reform, one that takes into account three major factors:

- ⇒ **One, the legal framework.**
- ⇒ **Two, economic and social change.**
- ⇒ **Three, immigration trends.**

⇒ **Firstly, the legal framework:**

The legal framework that supports the **reform is centered on the Ley Organica de Educación¹ (a Spanish law)**, the cornerstone

¹ The 2006 Ley Orgánica de Educación, LOE (Act on Education) simplified the legal scene by repealing the acts making up the legal framework of the Spanish non-university education system. Three basic principles govern the LOE: 1) The need to provide all citizens with quality education, at all levels of the education system. Since all citizens should achieve the maximum development of all their intellectual, cultural, emotional and social capacities, they need to receive quality education adapted to their needs. At the same time, effective equal opportunities must be guaranteed, by providing the necessary support to both pupils and educational institutions. Therefore, the aim is to improve the educational standards of all pupils, by finding a balance between the quality of education and equity in its distribution. 2) The need to get all sectors of the educational community to collaborate in order to achieve such an ambitious objective. The combination of quality and equity of the previous principle demands a joint effort. Therefore, the responsibility of school success does not only fall on the individual pupil, but also on families, teachers, schools, education authorities and society as a whole, which is ultimately responsible for the quality of the education system. 3) A determined commitment to the educational objectives set out by the European Union for the next few years.



upon which we based our reform strategy and **the new Statute of Catalonia (the new Catalan constitution)**. The first one provides us with the stability in pedagogical and basic rules and concepts that we did not have before. The second one opens new and greater possibilities in self-government. These are indisputable assets and have constituted a positive starting point for our reforms, as we will later see.

Now, we can define, build and establish real a new education model, our own Catalan system. Curiously, one could think we are the “Scottish” difference, but from a conceptual point of view, our strategy is probably more linked with the English strategy reform.

⇒ **Secondly, economic and social change:**

Secondly, results presented by international studies that have been carried out on the Catalan education system cannot take into account the tremendous economic and social changes that Spain has undergone during the past 30 years and have not been given their due consideration. Therefore, little reference is made to these important changes that have taken place in this short period of time, including educational reforms –before the 90’s we had 8 years of compulsory and universal education, from the age of 6 to the age of 14; nowadays, it is compulsory until the age of



16, but practically all children go to school at the age of 3, or even before—. Also missing from the analysis is the effect that cultural level of one generation has on subsequent generations. **The truth be told, our education system is returning to being a service to the community, one that attends to the needs of society and is much more comprehensive than international studies might suggest.** These are all important factors to consider when viewing the distance between studies and reality.

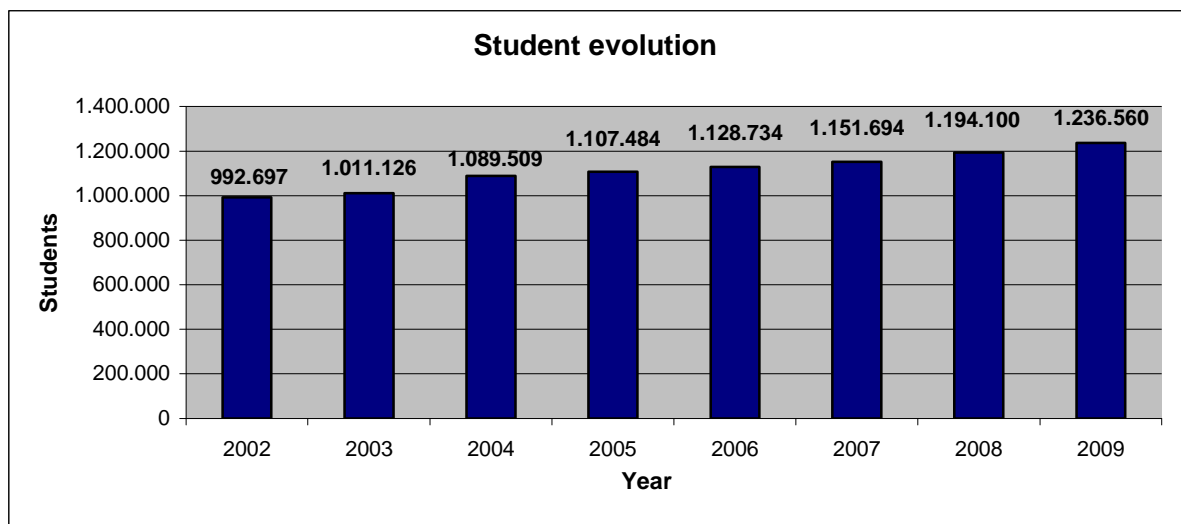
⇒ **Lastly, immigration trends:**

Lastly, in addition to the social changes previously mentioned, **the influx of new immigrants during the past ten years has required a response in terms of providing educational services for social inclusion.** The main question is not about the absolute quantity or % of new immigrants (what you call minority ethnic groups). The question is about rhythm of arrival, diversity of origins and concentration in some areas and towns. These new immigration patterns have had a greater impact in Catalonia than in other places in Spain, requiring a management tool that in the short term is difficult and complex, but may give us a competitive advantage in the long term. We have implemented an integration education policy based on the reception of young immigrants with specific resources, principally focused on language, to make integration possible, easy and fast. We call



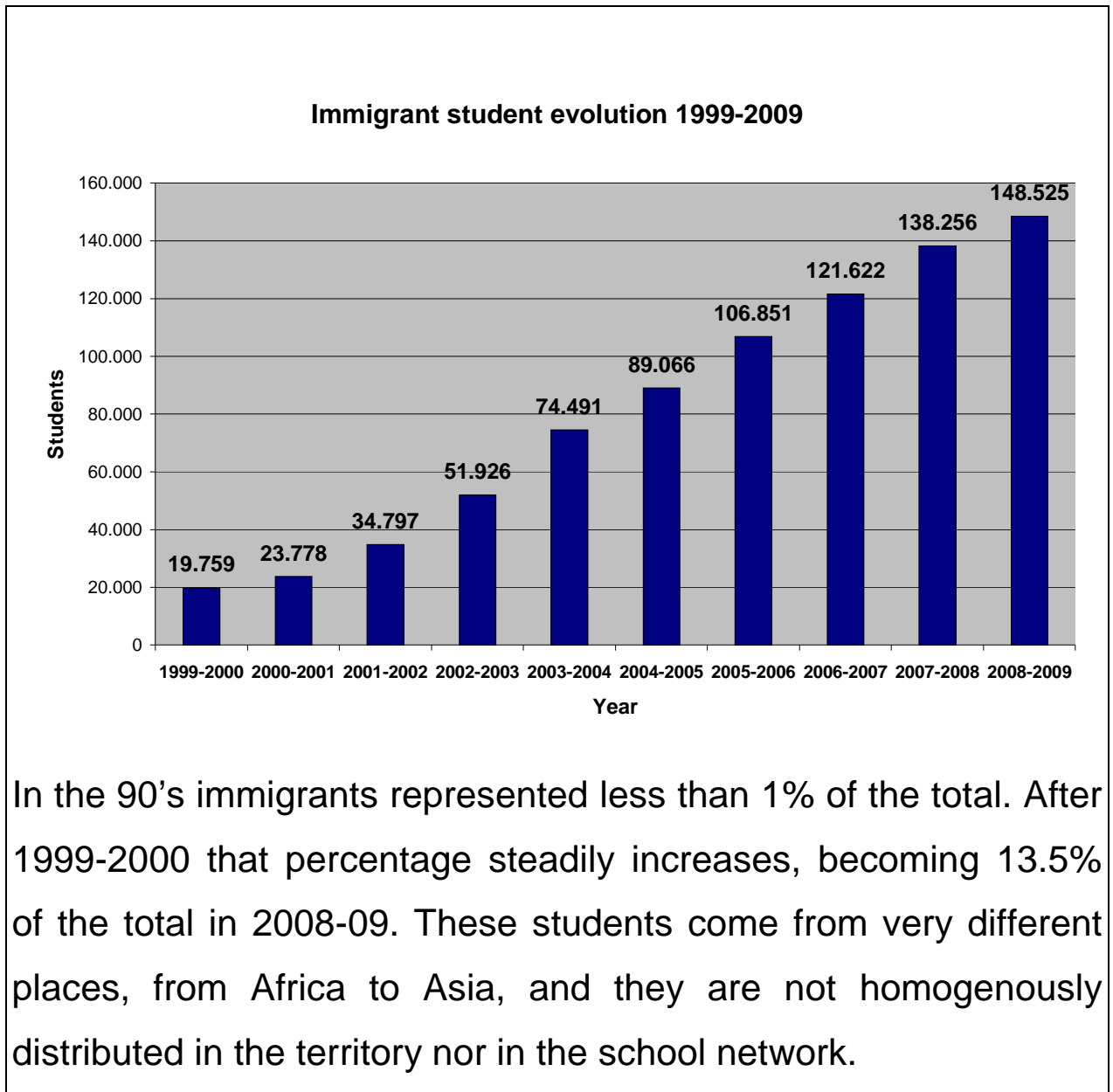
them “reception classrooms” (aules d’acollida) or “welcoming centres” (espais de benvinguda) and we have more than a thousand distributed throughout the territory, especially in primary schools where there are now a greater concentration of immigrants.

Here are some graphs to demonstrate the influx we are talking about:



As you can see in the graph, in 2002 we had less than one million students. This year, we have more than one million two hundred thousand students. The two reasons behind such an increase are:

- an upturn of birth and fertility rate (1.46 children for women);
- and, the arrival of immigrants.



Let's not fool ourselves. The sum of these three factors – legal framework, economic and social change, and new immigration patterns – contributes to a relatively unstable education system, very often too far from what the economic and job market require or should require.



Our country has changed, social structures and habits have changed, economy has produced enormous change on cultural, productive and consumption patterns. Meanwhile, education has produced pedagogical reform, but is basically the same concept, the same model as 50 years ago.

During this period, the **fundamental function of education was to provide social cohesion and guarantee equality, access, and the best opportunities possible for our citizens.** These are rights that have been maybe exercised to the detriment of progress in educational excellence a modern society should be making, causing an increasing gap between education and society.

B) Objectives

Our strategy to modernize the educational system includes the following objectives:

- a. Strengthen primary and secondary schools (especially the state ones) into becoming individually and as a network more prestigious and keystones for social cohesion.
- b. Renew the level of trust between the school system and the community, and vice-versa.



- c. Secure an indispensable level of respect and prestige for teachers.
- d. Improve student test results and professional development outcomes.
- e. Work toward achieving the needed equilibrium, locally and in national terms, between publicly funded schools and private schools receiving government subsidies.

C) Criteria

If these are our objectives, it is my opinion that we must move under the following criteria:

1. From a model of regulations (“jacobin” model) to a model of liberal openness.
2. From a normative framework that restricts and diminishes possibilities to one that opens up to possibilities in their broadest form.
3. From controlling and placing emphasis on the process to evaluating results and outcomes. Rather than fixing procedures and methods, we must establish quality standards in order to evaluate our success in achieving them.
4. From a false perspective of uniformity (like homogeneous student populations, schools, and territories) to adaptive



solutions, for example, addressing the needs of a heterogeneous student population.

5. From a centralized model (where everything is known, decided, ordered, controlled by the center, namely the Education Ministry headquarters) to an open, decentralized system that takes into consideration the needs of different neighborhoods, towns and educational zones.
6. From a rigid and antiquated teacher body administration to one that is dynamic and ambitious (which provides authority, responsibility, freedom and real decision power to every primary and secondary school).

D) And tools of development

How can we achieve these objectives? What tools do we have to accomplish these goals?

We are operating under new rules of engagement that allow **more ambition and responsibility, and are exploring new ways for a federal relationship between Government and Autonomous Community** (“shared powers”). Catalonia is in search of its own model, and realizes the importance of it, and to know exactly where it starts and what resources it can count on.



This model demands that resources be distributed as the need arises, and that different areas will require different resources, discarding the cookie-cutter approach. There will, of course, be rules that all must abide by. **Our strategy will be to bring equilibrium to the model by equipping each part of the system with adequate means and resources to become strong and as free as possible.**

Therefore, we envision **autonomy** for our publicly funded schools while still providing **head teacher training, evaluation processes** and opportunities for **teachers' professional career** and development, as well as for the educational staff.

Our vision mandates that publicly funded schools be given adequate resources to achieve the highest standard of quality possible. Distribution of resources would no longer be determined by generic statistics but rather will be based on real, concrete needs and progressively in achieving goals predefined and agreed.

Autonomy, demonstrating confidence in the tasks performed by teachers to accommodate social diverse needs, but mainly applied to the curriculum, organization, staff and economic resources.



Head teacher training, assume leadership and responsibilities for a successful process.

Evaluation is a “must”. It is useful in verifying needs and examining the results of projects implemented by each school. They help us determine the proper actions to take to improve projects and set the groundwork for corrective actions.

We want to emphasize recognition of the dedication, merit, innovation and effective implication of teachers and staff pursuing **professional career** and development.

For subsidized private schools: freedom, self-sufficiency, responsibility and legal protection.

(As you may already know, in Catalonia we have a mixed education system. Schools can be divided into publicly funded (State schools), privately run schools but subsidized with public funds, and purely private schools. 65% are publicly funded, 30% are private but State co-funded, and 5% are private).

Freedom to create and define projects.

Self-sufficiency, to give real meaning to a system that in reality should be free for compulsory education.



Responsibility for providing educational opportunities to a diverse and fast-growing population of students, and integrating themselves in a common effort with the publicly funded schools of each zone to reach this goal.

Legal protection to stabilize their projects.

For the entire system: proximity and confidence

Proximity (2nd and 3rd level of decentralization within Catalonia) to the community is an important element in our strategy, and all must exist in harmony, as education is not an exclusive domain of schools. Schools can not act alone, without connection to other schools or to the society which they serve. Proximity is a value.

Our strategy is based within a framework of mutual respect, one that promotes **a relationship of total trust** between teachers and pupils, between schools and families. This framework recognizes the authority held by teachers and head teachers, and demands that students exert themselves in their studies whilst acknowledging their merits.

E) Specific education policies



Bringing together all the elements of our strategy allows us to **develop outstanding education policies**. I will now focus on specific processes that have already been developed and which encompass five fundamental themes and one transversal theme.

The transversal theme corresponds to the **evaluation** carried out in the sixth grade of primary education. This evaluation allows us to help students improve their grades in subjects they are failing and help families decide which academic path is best for their children. Furthermore, it prompts the educational schools to improve their methods and administrative personnel to obtain a more thorough knowledge of the system and create adequate policies.

Regarding specific policies, **it is an unacceptable fact that 35% to 40% of our students do not continue their studies past the compulsory education level**. We consider this to be a true social injustice, and are working hard on **a plan to dissuade early school leavers, on measures to establish territorial equilibrium, and to strengthen connections between schools and the workplace**. Our strategy is called, **Professional Training**.

(I think here, in the UK, you also have a high percentage of young people –between 16 and 18 years old– who are not currently



engaged in Employment, Education or Training, they are called NEETs², aren't they?

I know you are also investing a lot of effort and money here. But we are still keen on **Professional Training**; we are sure it can be the key, more than ever in the actual framework of economic crises, especially if it is integrated, with a territorial basis and connected with the market and enterprises. That is the program we have designed in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour.

*(Apparently, we have already obtained good results. Last month we presented a research study concluding that we are progressively increasing the number of graduates in secondary education, regardless of the difficulties caused by social change. However, we are concerned about the high level of students leaving the education system post obligatory studies (after 16 years old³), **they are 12% of the total**. In the last 8 years, it could be caused by the job market's dynamicity that has tempted many students to abandon the education system for a job, very often under qualified, badly paid, but very easy to obtain. In that sense,*

² **NEET** is an acronym for the government classification "Not currently engaged in Employment, Education or Training". It was first used in the United Kingdom but its use has spread to other countries, including Japan, China and South Korea. In the United Kingdom, the classification comprises people aged between 16 and 18 (some 16 year olds are still of compulsory school age). As of 2007, 9.4% of the age group was classified as NEET.

³ In Spain/Catalonia education is mandatory until the age of 16 years old.



the economic crisis could be an opportunity to keep students “safe” in the education system).

The percentage of the population between 20 and 24 years old that have finalized their post obligatory studies in Catalonia is 65'7% (61,1% in Spain), very far from the Lisbon objectives stated for 2010 (85%).

Linguistic diversity, or **multilingualism**, will be promoted, using Catalan as a firm basis for acquiring fluency in Spanish and learning other languages as well. The multilingualism requires the development of a wide range of skills to face different situations and activities in each language.

The first stage of pre-primary education should allow us to increase schooling rates. In Catalonia, practically all children between the ages of 3 and 6 (corresponding to the second stage of pre-primary education) are enrolled in school. For some years now, we have invested in enrolling children aged 0-3; this, however, is a very laborious process requiring a lot of time, money and resources. Nonetheless, we have engaged the help of the local city councils to create 45,000 slots for children in this age range starting with the 2009-2010 school year. In four years, we have doubled the publicly founded school spaces available for 0-3 year olds, increasing the schooling rate from 15% to 30%. We are committed to continuing down this path, but realize that we



will have to double or triple the number of available slots if we want to be at a suitable level.

Innovation is one of the education system's motors of change and an important element to improving the quality and the progressive adjustment to challenges faced in the Age of Technology and under the social evolution taking place. When we talk about innovation, we immediately think of ICTs, or Information and Communication Technologies. There is a paradigm shift taking place in Catalonia – with ICTs evolving into LKT, or Learning and Knowledge Technologies. But innovation goes beyond ICTs and LKTs; innovation is, above all, pedagogical: **from books to LKTs. The publishing industry in Spain and in Catalunya will play important roles in this transformation. The debate over free textbooks is no longer a valid one; modernization dictates that we move from the printed format and go digital.**

Last, but not least, **teacher training** it is said to be the key for good results in education performing: students who have good teachers have better results. According to a paper from McKenzie&Company, if we look at high performing schools the three things that matter most are: 1) getting the right people to become teachers; 2) developing them into effective instructors and, 3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best



possible instruction for every child. Therefore, teacher training matters.

In Catalonia (in Spain), in the context of the European Higher Education Area, we are designing a new course of teacher training lasting a year, nowadays it only lasts 3-4 months, maximum.

* * * * *

3. Final:

I would like to wrap up my presentation by offering reflections on two final issues:

When I speak of our strategies for reform, I am also speaking about the nature and character of our Government. **Our President, Jose Montilla, spoke about this moment in time as being a moment for structural reform**, and that the only thing we cannot do is be passive and wait for situations to find their own solutions.

Finally, I would like to tell you that everything I have explained to you is already written in a proposed bill which **we are going to pass in the near future**. It will be approved by a parliamentary majority in Catalonia. This will not be a law for any one sector or



political party, but rather a law for institutional efficiency that considers all points of view. **Catalonia will offer this project and strategy as a contribution to the common (Spanish and) European patrimony.** With our strategy of modernization we would like to contribute to the European education heritage, to the legacy of the most advanced European education systems, with our model of quality (excellence) and equity. We also would like to find an equilibrium between our legal tradition (French-Jacobin) and yours (Anglo-Saxon-liberal); between State and private schools; between security and the possibility of freedom, and again, between equity and excellence.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Good night.

Bona nit.