

THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME IN SPAIN: A COMPLEMENTARY CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

EL PROGRAMA DE LA ESCUELA PRIMARIA DEL BACHILLERATO INTERNACIONAL EN ESPAÑA: UN MARCO CURRICULAR COMPLEMENTARIO

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ABSTRACT

To date educational reforms have not yet succeeded in addressing the standstill average results of Spanish children on different international assessments. Some schools in Spain are implementing the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme in primary education, as a curriculum framework that aligns with the skills, attitudes and knowledge students need in order to become active citizens in a globalized world.

This exploratory research is set out to investigate how the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) is being implemented at Spanish schools. Although the community of IBPYP schools is still very limited in Spain and amounts a total of 18 schools, the current education law (LOMCE) has increased the level of school autonomy and therefore schools have the opportunity to look out for other educational frameworks. The IB is forecasting an increasing number of schools seeking to implement the PYP programme and this research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how schools might integrate the programme while complying with Spanish regulations. To do so, this research paper applies the comparative method based on 7 parameters that allow comparison between the Spanish national curriculum and the IBPYP framework.

This research highlights as main finding, a clear possibility for any school to complement both curriculums. Moreover, and in concrete, the IBPYP may be considered as an engine to complete some aspects non-addressed by the national offering in relation to international standards of an up-to-date and future education.

Key words: International Baccalaureate (IB), Primary Years Programme, Key competences, Primary Education, Curriculum.

RESUMEN

Hasta ahora, las reformas educativas acaecidas en España no han permitido superar el estancamiento de los resultados medios de los estudiantes en las diferentes pruebas de evaluaciones internacionales. Algunos colegios en España están implementando el Programa de la Escuela Primaria (PEP) del Bachillerato Internacional (IB), como marco curricular que se alinea con las habilidades, actitudes y conocimientos que los alumnos necesitan para convertirse en ciudadanos activos en un mundo globalizado.

Esta investigación exploratoria pretende conocer cómo el PEP de IB está siendo implementado en colegios españoles. Aunque la comunidad de colegios que ofrecen el PEP se limita hoy a un total de 18 centros, la actual ley de educación (LOMCE) ha incrementado el grado de autonomía de

centros y dota a los colegios la oportunidad de buscar otros marcos curriculares. El IB prevé un incremento del número de colegios que soliciten implementar el programa del PEP y esta investigación pretende conocer, en más profundidad, cómo los colegios podrían realizar la integración de dicho programa y cumplir, al mismo tiempo, con la regulación española. Para ello, se aplica el método comparado en base a 7 parámetros que sirvan para contrastar el curriculum español y el marco correspondiente del IBPEP.

Como principal resultado de esta investigación, se encuentra la clara posibilidad de que cualquier centro pueda completar uno y otro curriculum. Más en concreto, que el IBPEP puede considerarse como un motor para completar los aspectos no cubiertos en la oferta nacional en relación a los estándares internacionales de una educación actual y futura.

Palabras claves: Bachillerato Internacional (BI), Programa de la Escuela Primaria, Competencias Claves, Educación Primaria, Curriculum

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the community of schools offering the IB PYP continues to grow, there is a need to investigate how schools in Spain are aligning the national curriculum within the IB framework and how this new approach is fostering an increase on expectations on students' outcomes and therefore an increase on the quality of education.

1.1 THE SPANISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND ITS PLACE IN THE WORLD

The curriculum system in Spain has suffered many changes in the latest 45 years, which includes various reforms that had continuously increased content and assessment standards until considered as immeasurable by teachers and schools. There are four general laws that introduced some changes to be highlighted in the Spanish Educational System. The first one is the General Law of Education (LGE, *Ley General de Educación*) (MECD, 1970). It was an extensive reform, which aimed to overcome the many internal contradictions derived from the various sectorial reforms that were insufficient to respond to the fast economic and social change undertaken in Spain at the time when the country was moving from a dictatorship to democracy.

The second one, the Organic Law of General Ordination of the Educational System (LOGSE, *Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*) (MECD, 1990) established 10 years of free and mandatory education. It aimed to guarantee a common educational level to all citizens. One of the major changes it introduced was the transfer of the educational policy to the Autonomous Communities in detriment of a nation-wide educational policy.

The third one, The Organic Law of Education, (LOE, *Ley Orgánica de Educación*, 2006) organized the different levels of education under the Life Long Learning paradigm. At the same time, it aimed to offer a certain degree of autonomy to schools in aspects such as organization and functioning, teachers, etc. It should be highlighted that the LOE encouraged the collaboration between schools and families, fostering a greater participation of the parents in the school life. In terms of teachers, the law paid special attention to the initial teacher training, professional development and the redesign of the schools of education offering to comply with the European Space for Higher Education regulated under the Bologna Agreement. And, in regards of assessment, the law established a diagnosis assessment at the end of primary education and at year 3 of secondary education (aligned to the PISA assessment).

The most recent law, the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education, (LOMCE, *Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa*) (MECD, 2013) is aimed to create a series of initiatives to increase the level of competence acquisition in order for students to be capable to foster their talents and achieved a complete level of personal and professional development in support of equal opportunities. LOMCE has been designed undertaking an in-depth research of surrounding educational systems. The research has concluded that there is a need for a simplification of the curriculum, a reinforcement of the core disciplines, an increased flexibility on educational paths, the development of external assessments, the promotion of school autonomy and specialization, the transparency of the results and the fostering of a culture of effort towards education. This latest educational reform is very aligned with the worrying position of the results of Spain in the different international assessment, as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Moreover, the new law has undertaken a reform to better position Spain within the world best educational systems, to better prepare our students and to converge with the objectives for the European Education Strategic Goals 2020 (MECD, 2014a).

1.2 THE SPANISH PRIMARY EDUCATION AND ITS MAIN CHALLENGES

State education in Spain is free and compulsory education lasts from 6 to 16 years of age. Primary education in Spain, aimed to students aged 6-12 years, is compulsory. The programme is structured in 6 academic years (primary 1 to 6). Among those identified as main current challenges within primary education in Spain, there are three ones, that are considered of special relevance for this research paper: school drop-outs, competence acquisition and internationalization

1.2.1 School drop-outs

The basics of the Spanish educational system were established in 1970, when compulsory attendance was required up to the age of 14 (currently expanded up to 16 years of age). During this time, Spain was still under a dictatorship and this regulation set up the basis for a complete educational system, where all stages were included and to prepare society towards a democracy.

The central government directly funded state primary schools and schools did not charge tuition fees to students. Children's access to primary school in Spain become universal and has therefore reached the least privileged social groups. While this fact has been one of the most outstanding events in the Spanish education system in the past decades, there is a strong consensus among economists and education policy-makers that the primary education sector is not up to the challenges it faces. Spanish primary students showed a high drop-out rate, despite the fact that secondary education enrolment grew rapidly during the early 1980s, but the primary school dropout rate has remained dramatically high over the years.

The primary school dropout rate, an indicator of school quality, plays a critical role in the government's effort to improve skills of Spanish workers, because primary (and secondary) education provide the basic skills that individuals need for the future general training they undertake (Peraita & Pastor, 2000).

The implementation of the LOGSE in 1990 did not help to overcome the raising drop out of students but in contrary accelerated its increase. In addition, other problems become notable among educational specialists and the society in general. On the one hand, there was a perception of declining in educational standards and an increase in students' lack of discipline. On the other hand, approached to education were evolving at different speed and direction as that of students' expectations. While in history, drop-outs were aligned with the least privileged group of students, today children are protesting their disconformities with their educational offering by achieving a maximum lack of discipline, which it is at the end actioned by dropping out from school. These problems were identified as drivers of drop-outs. Despite further educational reforms have stabilized this tendency, drop-out in primary education still remains as a priority in the agenda of Spanish educational authorities as in the latest available statistics from academic year 2013-14, 15.1% of children age 12 have not finished primary education (MECD, 2016).

1.2.2 Competence acquisition in primary education

The LOGSE reform was contradictory towards society's increasing need for a more practical education and was adding a bigger gap between how children needed to learn to become better equipped for their future jobs and how the academically oriented model was educating them. This educational reform established primary education on 6 levels, usually for students aged 6 to 12 years old but did not make special advancements regarding the approaches to education.

The priority assigned to content knowledge at the expense of gaining analytical and problem-solving skills remained unsolved until the introduction of the European key competences framework in 2006. The development of key competences for lifelong learning has been an

important policy imperative for EU member states. Key competences were expressed in the European Reference Framework (EU, 2006), which built on previous developments by the OECD, UNESCO and Member States themselves (Pepper, 2011).

The inclusion of the basic competences in the mandatory education curriculum in Spain was an important novelty of the LOE (MECD, 2006). The expression “competence” was already in use in Spain but in relation to vocational education since a long time ago, but in the last decade there was a shift towards being used in general education. In such use, one of the biggest influences came from the worries of international organizations regarding students’ academic outcomes (Tiana, 2011).

The last educational reform in Spain, which concluded with the approval of the Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) predominately determines aspects related to the acquisition of the Key Competences of the European Union (European Commission, 2004) fostering its successful implementation in practice and assessment and promotes schools’ initiatives towards an increase of the quality of education. The incorporation of key competences or similar intended learning outcomes in school curriculum frameworks has therefore been evident for some time. However, it is necessary but insufficient step towards implementation. For learners to successfully develop their key competences, assessment must also change. Together with teacher education, it is identified as one of the two vectors of implementation for educational policies (Pepper, 2011).

While introducing competences, schools and teachers have not been offered the needed accompanying training to successfully develop these new approaches to teaching and learning within schools. The introduction of outcome-based approaches and key competences is part of much broader reforms that have affected mind-sets and attitudes by addressing the structure of the system (e.g., the length of compulsory education), school governance, the roles of principals and teachers, teacher training, etc (Dabrowski & Wisniewski, 2011). Parent’s expectations have evolved and students are growing up in a much more connected environment with internet and social networks and an exponential development of access to ICT and the need for digital competences and a range of key competences for lifelong learning and work (Gordon et al., 2009).

This interconnection has also helped the development of a more global student which demands a different approach to education. The matching of offering and demand still has a gap in Spain and educators are in need of a guidance to undertake the challenge.

1.2.3 Internationalization

In a globalized world, education is putting more emphasis on equipping individuals from an early age, and throughout life, with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors they need to be informed, engaged and empathetic citizens. The European Union (EU, 2006) has taken action by the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning. Key competences for lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context.

Global/World citizenship education is often considered a synonym for global education (Tuomi, Jacott & Lundgreen, 2008). The term World Citizenship Education is by some scholars distinguished from global education - an academic field, which is education about global issues but does not necessarily involve education for global/world citizenship. Global/world citizenship acknowledges the interlinking of local, national and global aspects of citizenship. It is a political concept, an active commitment to the world, which all living beings have in common and for which all humans must take responsibility. Global/world citizenship education is based on the familiar term 'citizenship' that inherently includes both rights and obligations: benefits and requirements

inherent in citizenship. It is a holistic approach based on the assumption that there is only one humankind and that global problems require global solutions, (Castro, Lundgren & Woodin, 2013) The OECD proposed in 1997 that education systems in industrialized societies needed to equip their future citizens with the levels of competence and skills expected by their respective workplaces, and recommended that governments respond to this expectation. Munro (2007) highlights that the OECD saw global market success determined by the quality of education.

Globalization is influencing curriculum developers and therefore influencing those in the process of curriculum decision-making choices. To cope with the changing educational environment schools are looking further afield than their national or state curriculum frameworks (Wylie, 2008). In addition, Harkins & Nobes (2008) stresses that within the internationalization of programmes, cross-border programmes, multicultural, multi-linguistic models that adopt educational materials according to local cultures and demands, serve as good means of meeting educational needs globally and Olson (2005) indicates that cross-border programmes 'translate local expertise globally' and promote economic partnerships, labor market exchange and technological progress preparing students to negotiate effective participation within the realm of global diversity.

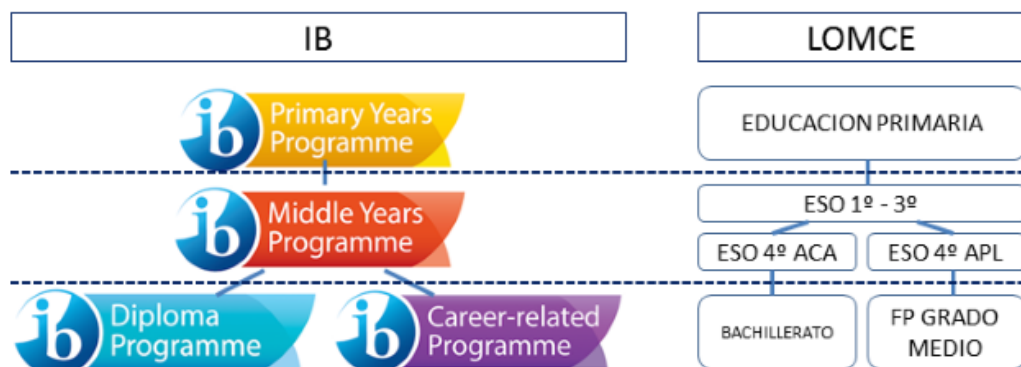
Valle (2013) explains a series of phenomena that have brought the appearance of Supranational Education. The first phenomenon is globalization. The advent of information technologies and communications, the internet, and the evolution of means of transportation have turned the planet into the "global village". In a global context, the second phenomenon is mobility from all walks of life, particularly students, teachers and professionals and the third one and more decisive in the development of Supranational Education Policy as an academic and scientific discipline, is the proliferation of international organizations since the mid-20th century.

Finally, Myers (2010) concludes that the study of globalization is essential for adolescent to understand how the world functions and can help them to tackle the challenges of making globalization and global society a more democratic, equal and inclusive process for all. Students considered themselves as global citizens and expect that educational system prepares them to gain knowledge and skills that allow them to work everywhere in the globe.

1.3. IB AND THE PYP IN THE SPANISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The IB educational system is fully aligned with that of the National system at all stages. The main difference between the two educational systems relates to the study path towards a more applied or vocational education (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Comparison between LOMCE¹ stages and IB programmes



Source: Original material.

IB programmes are present in Spain since 1977 and there are currently 114 authorized schools offering one or more IB programmes (see table 1).

Table 1: Number of Spanish IB Schools per programme

Number of IB schools 2018				
Program	School type	State	Private	Semi-private
PYP		0	17	1
MYP ²		0	16	1
DP ³		32	77	1
CP ⁴		0	1	0
MYP+DP		0	8	0
PYP + IBMYP + DP		0	6	0

Source: (IB, 2018)

In Spain, there is a growing interest on IB programmes and the IB community of schools has grown at a high rate in the latest five years as described in table 2.

Table 2: Number of IB Schools in Spain (2008-2018)

Number of IB schools in Spain	
Year	Authorized
2008	43
2009	47
2010	47
2011	50

¹ The Spanish National System is divided into 3 stages: Educación Primaria (Primary Education), Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (E.S.O.) (lower Secondary Education) and Bachillerato (Baccalaureate) or Formación Profesional de Grado Medio (FP) (Vocational Education) (Upper Secondary Education).

² MYP is the IB Middle Years Programme for students aged 11- to 16 years old and it is equivalent to the Spanish ESO level of Education in the Spanish System.

³ DP is the IB Diploma Programme for students aged 16 to 19 years old and it is equivalent to the Bachillerato level of Education in the Spanish System.

⁴ CP is the IB Career-related Programme for students aged 16 to 19 years old and it is equivalent to the Formación Profesional level of Education in the Spanish System.

2012	57
2013	63
2014	75
2015	86
2016	98
2017	111
2018	114

Source: (IB, 2018)

The first IBPYP School was authorized in Spain in 1999. There are currently 18 authorized IB schools that offer the IBPYP in Spain, being all private schools (see Table 1). Spanish IB Schools authorized for the PYP implement the framework and adopt the mandatory contents of the Spanish national system. Thereafter, the IBPYP used as a pedagogical change for Spanish schools while remaining complying with Spanish educational regulations. There is currently a growing interest from schools in Spain to implement the IBPYP.

In the last decades, Spanish schools have been very constrained in their efforts to overcome those areas where there was special need for improvement. Regulations were very restrictive and schools did not have much space to develop innovative solutions. In regard to the promotion of school autonomy, one of the advantages of the new reform has to do with a notable increase in the level of schools' autonomy and thereafter promoting that schools lead new initiatives.

According to the Eurydice (2007), school autonomy refers to “several different aspects of school management (essentially funding and human resources)”. Empirical evidence suggests that increased autonomy in schools that are held accountable improves student achievement. Schools that are held accountable for their outcomes are most likely to utilize their autonomy to find the best means to improve achievement, given the specific nature of the pupil intake. Spanish schools enjoy less autonomy than those in most OECD countries (OECD, 2009).

The LOE allowed regional governments to assign further responsibilities to schools; however, the LOE still limited school autonomy in many ways. Recent educational reforms in Spain (LOMCE, 2013) are pushing Spanish schools to be increasingly more responsible for curricular and instructional decisions as well as for managing financial and material resources. It is undeniable that by stressing autonomy and decentralization of schools, we are making schools increasingly more different one from each other. This situation is pushing many schools into unknown competitive dynamics, which for many researchers are considered to be key in privatizing public education (Prieto y Villamor, 2012; Maroy, 2008; Ball & Youdell, 2008).

In the use of this school autonomy and on the need to educational transformation to meet the challenges of 21st century education, some Spanish schools have started their process of authorization to offer the IBPYP as an innovation approach to teaching and learning in primary education towards competence acquisition and internationalization, which are two of the major gaps to achieve higher international standards. In fact, the community of IB schools offering the IB PYP will duplicate in 2020. As the number of schools offering the IB PYP continues to grow, there is a need to investigate how schools in Spain are aligning the national curriculum within the IB framework and how this new approach is fostering an increase on the expectations on students' outcomes and therefore an increase in the quality of education.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is set out to gain some insights on first how feasible is the alignment between the two curriculums, secondly in what areas they may contribute to each other and to what extent and lastly if the IBPYP may be considered as an engine to fulfill the gaps found at the national offering regarding international standards of a present and future education.

Taught in over 109 countries around the world, the PYP curriculum framework is uniquely adaptable to state and national standards and therefore the study of its alignment with the Spanish national system is of great interest.

2.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In order to make a curriculum comparison there is a need to compare two educational offerings. In this sense, it is fundamental to define which elements of the curriculum will be considered as units of comparison for subsequent alignment. The decision process to identify those units, should rely on the principle of responding to the research questions that underline this investigation which are the following:

- In what ways does the IBPYP align with national education requirements with regards to:
 - Primary education curriculum, objectives, content and core competencies?
 - Pedagogical approaches?
 - Assessment practices? and
 - Philosophical underpinnings?
- To what degree are the non-scholastic attributes of the learner profile (i.e. ‘caring’, ‘principled’, ‘open-minded’, ‘balanced’ and ‘reflective’) congruent with Spanish education principles and standards?
- In what ways does the IBPYP framework support Spanish schools in meeting European Union Key Competencies for Life Long Learning?

To develop this phase, I have followed the main stages of the comparative method (García Garrido, 2002): 1. description; 2 interpretation; 3. juxtaposition; and, 4. comparison. Thereafter, we have produced a systematic confrontation between the data and the parameters and indicators of comparison already described and the convergences and divergences.

2.2 UNITS OF COMPARISON

The two main units of comparison are the Spanish national curriculum and the IBPYP framework. In order to make this alignment, there is a need to explain that in the national curriculum there are three levels of curricular compliance:

- The central administration, which is represented by the Ministry of Education.
- The state level administration represented by the regional authorities of education from the 17 different Autonomous Communities (States).
- The schools’ autonomy, which is captured on two mandatory guides for all Spanish schools: the educational project and the curriculum project.

We have analyzed all elements and factors that define the primary education curriculum in Spain and the IBPYP. These include the delimitation of the categories of comparison. The final proposal determines the following eight: (1)overview, (2)pedagogical approaches and philosophical

underpinnings, (3) subjects area covered, (4) objectives, (5) content, (6) competencies, (7) non-scholastic attributes and (8) assessment practices.

2.3 DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

To develop the objectives and the research questions, the documentary analysis have been completed by the use of the following primary sources:

- Spanish national Curriculum
 - Organic Law 8/2013, from December 9th, for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) published on December 2013, which regulates the general framework of the Spanish National System (MECD, 2013)
 - Royal Decree of minimum teaching and learning in primary education. Royal Decree 126/2014 determines the basic curriculum for primary education, including nation-wide minimum content, assessment criteria and learning outcomes standards of core subjects (MECD, 2014b)
 - Order ECD/65/2015, from January 21st, which describes the relationship between competences, content and assessment criteria for primary, secondary and upper secondary (baccalaureate) levels (MECD, 2015).
- IBPYP curriculum framework
 - Making the PYP happen: A curricular framework for international primary education.
 - The Primary Years Programme: A basis for practice.
 - Introduction to the PYP scope and sequence.
 - The Primary Years Programme: A basis for practice.

3. RESULTS

As indicated before, this research consists of a curricular alignment between the Spanish national curriculum (defined by the current Spanish educational legal framework) and the IBPYP. In this research study, we have concentrated in the main curriculum framework elements, which define both curricular proposals, in order to gain insights on how both offerings complement each other and to find any potential contradiction which might restrict the implementation of the IBPYP in Spanish schools.

3.1 OVERVIEW

Spanish students begin primary education at the age of 6. Primary education Year 1 is the first year of compulsory education in Spain. According to the current legal framework, the purpose of Primary is to ensure that students:

- Acquire and acknowledge the values and norms of coexistence, learn to work in accordance with those, prepare children to become active citizens and to respect human rights and pluralism in a democratic society
- Develop individual and team-work habits, effort and responsibility in your own study, attitudes towards self-confidence, critical thinking, personal initiative, curiosity, interest and creativity in the learning process and entrepreneurial spirit.
- Acquire skills to prevent and peacefully resolve conflicts.

- Exercise their rights and obligations as citizens.
- Know, understand and respect the different cultures and the diversity of people, equal rights and opportunities between men and women and avoiding discrimination against handicapped people.
- Know and properly use the Spanish language y the co-official language in case of being applicable and develop reading habits.
- Acquire in at least one foreign language, the competence of basic communication to let them express and understand simple messages and get on with daily situations.
- Develop the competences in basic mathematics and to start with problem resolution involving simple calculations, geometric knowledge and estimations, and to be able to apply them to real life situations.
- Know the fundamental aspects of the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Geography, History and Culture.
- Start with the use of information technologies and communications by developing a critical thinking towards received and sent messages.
- Use different art expressions and representations and start with the development of visual and audiovisual proposals.
- Value hygiene and health, accept your own body and adopt behavioral attitudes towards taking care of your body.
- Know and value the more closed to the humans, the animal kingdom and adopt behavioral attitudes towards taking care of them.
- Develop their emotional capabilities in all their personality aspects and in their relationships with others. Develop a contrary attitude towards violence, to any prejudice and towards sexist's stereotypes.
- Develop an understanding of road education and respect to prevent accidents.
- The IBPYP is designed for students aged 3 to 12. The PYP prepares students to become active, caring, lifelong learners who demonstrate respect for themselves and others and have the capacity to participate in the world around them. It focuses on the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both within and beyond the classroom.

The IBPYP balances the acquisition of significant and relevant knowledge and skills, the development of conceptual understanding, the formation of personal, positive attitudes and the capacity to take responsible actions.

The IBPYP:

- Addresses students' academic needs and their social and emotional well-being
- Encourages students to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning
- Supports students' effort to gain understanding of the world and to function effectively within it
- Helps students to establish personal values as a foundation on which international-mindedness will flourish.

The programme model for the IBPYP is represented by Figure 2 (IB, 2013).

Figure 2: IBPYP Programme Model



Source: (IB, 2009)

The more in-depth circle around the student describes the features of the programme that help students develop interdisciplinary understanding: 1. The student learner profile: describing the attributes of an IB learner; 2. Approaches to learning: demonstrating a commitment to approaches to learning as a key component of the IBPYP for developing skills for learning; 3. Approaches to teaching: emphasizing IBPYP pedagogy, including collaborative learning through inquiry; 4. Concepts: highlighting a concept-driven curriculum; 5. Attitudes—showing how learning is also reinforced by attitudes.

The second ring describes some important outcomes of the programme: 1. Inquiry-based learning may result in student-self initiative; 2. The IBPYP culminates in the exhibition (for students in IBPYP year 6) as team project.

The third ring describes the IBPYP's areas. The IBPYP organizes teaching and learning through six area groups: language, social studies, mathematics, arts, science, physical, social and personal education.

The fourth ring describes the transdisciplinary learning within the IBPYP which is exercised by the use of units of enquiry. The IBPYP programmes works with 6 units described as follows:

- Who we are
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organize ourselves
- Sharing the planet

Regarding the years of implementation, while the PYP may start in kindergarten, it is easy to make an equivalence year per year with the national system as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Equivalence per year

Equivalence between Educational Systems	
LOMCE	IB
1º Primaria	1 st Year PYP
2º Primaria	2 nd Year PYP
3º Primaria	3 rd Year PYP
4º Primaria	4 th Year PYP
5º Primaria	5 th Year PYP
6º Primaria	6 th Year PYP

Source: Original material

3.2 PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

In relation to the pedagogical approaches and philosophical underpinnings, obvious differences between the Spanish curriculum and the IBPYP framework were found. In the Spanish case, there is only some specific considerations at the preambles of the laws. By contrast, there is much more extensive and detailed framework in the IBPYP.

The preamble of the Spanish law LOMCE (MECD, 2013) states that, “student is the center and the reason of education. Learning at school should target to educate autonomous, critical and reflective people. All students have a dream, every young person have their own talent. Our people and their talents are the most valuable of our country.”

This preamble ends establishing that “only an inclusive, integrative, demanding and quality system will ensure equal opportunities and it will become effective the possibility that each student develops their fullest potential. Only from quality, it will be possible the mandate of Article 27.2 of the Spanish Constitution: “Education’s objective is the full development of the human personality in deference to the democratic principles of harmony and the rights and fundamental freedoms”.

As it will be discussed below, LOMCE determines aspects related to the acquisition of the Key Competences of the European Union (European Commission, 2004). As a result, it indicates, “This learning involves an integral training of people that, at the end of their compulsory education, will be able to acquire new achievements that they would need in their choice of life. Thus, they could reorganize their thinking and learn new knowledge. They will improve their performance and discover new skills to help them achieve tasks and promote lifelong learning.”

Meanwhile, the IBPYP has a more extensive coverage, through documents and sections, of issues related to pedagogical approaches and philosophical underpinnings. This philosophy, framed in “What is an IB education?” (IB, 2013), is embedded in all aspects of the IBPYP. Regarding this, it is interesting to note that the IBPYP offers (based on philosophical underpinnings) extensive, accurate, flexible and suitable pedagogical approach that can be compatible with other more specific approaches that can be found in national levels.

In conclusion, we found compatibility between the IBPYP and the Spanish curriculum. Moreover, we consider that the curriculum framework of the IBPYP would benefit a deeper rethinking of these aspects of the national curriculum since the LOMCE does not indicate too much, nor very accurately aspects related to the pedagogical approach and to clear, precise and shared philosophical underpinnings.

3.3 SUBJECT AREA COVERED

In the current Spanish context, LOMCE has established three type-groups of subjects valid throughout the entire country:

- Core subjects: These are common subjects for all students. Core subjects allow students to acquire knowledge and skills with a solid basis.
- Specific subjects: this group of subjects offers greater autonomy to schools to promote differential offerings in time and content. Thus, enrich the subject's offering.
- Regional subjects of free configuration: This approach allows Autonomous Communities to offer different subjects. These regional subjects give a greater autonomy to regional administration and schools.

Students are required to take all core subjects as established in Article 8 of Royal Decree 126/2014 of 28 February. Table 4 shows a comparison of subject areas covered in both units of comparison.

Table 4: Subject Areas

Subject Areas	
LOMCE	IB PYP
Natural Sciences	Science
Social Sciences	Social Studies
Language and Literature	Language
Mathematics	Mathematics
Foreign Language	
Religion	
Physical Education	Personal, social and physical education
Arts*	Arts
Second Foreign Lang*	

*Schools may choose to offer arts or a second foreign language.

Source: Original material

While in the IBPYP framework transdisciplinary learning through units of enquiry emerge at a superior level and subject are connected through global context and key concepts, in the Spanish curriculum, subjects remain separate. This makes it more difficult for teacher to achieve cross-disciplinary learning and competence acquisition.

In general, difficulties are not highlighted in the alignment process between the subjects of the Spanish curriculum with the IBPYP framework. In contrast, I believe that by gradually introducing units of enquiry into the national curriculum could contribute to a greater flexibility and to fostering interdisciplinary learning in the Spanish system.

3.4 OBJECTIVES

The LOMCE and the Royal Decree of minimum teaching and learning in mandatory education (RD 126/2014) only define general objectives for the Primary level. They do not stipulate objectives for the different subject and years and only address a framework of general objectives for the entire primary stage. According to the laws, primary will help students to develop skills that will enable them to:

- a) Know and value the coexistence norms, learn how to live complying with them, prepare to actively exercise their citizenship and respect human rights and the pluralism of a democratic society.
- b) Develop working habits individually and in teams, effort and responsibility with their studies, self-confidence, critical thinking, personal initiative, curiosity, interest, creativity and entrepreneurship.
- c) Acquire skills to prevent and peacefully solve conflicts, to be autonomous within their families' context and within their society.
- d) Know, understand and respect the different cultures and the diversity of people, equal rights and opportunities between men and women and avoiding discrimination against handicapped people.
- e) Know and properly use the Spanish language y the co-official language in case of being applicable and develop reading habits.
- f) Acquire in at least one foreign language, the competence of basic communication to let them express and understand simple messages and get on with daily situations.
- g) Develop the competences in basic mathematics and to start with problem resolution involving simple calculations, geometric knowledge and estimations, and to be able to apply them to real life situations.
- h) Know the fundamentals aspects of the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Geography, History and Culture.
- i) Start with the use of information technologies and communications by developing a critical thinking towards received and sent messages.
- j) Use different art expressions and representations and start with the development of visual and audiovisual proposals.
- k) Value hygiene and health, accept your own body and adopt behavioral attitudes towards taking care of your body.
- l) Know and value the more closed to the humans animals and adopt behavioral attitudes towards taking care of them.
- m) Develop their emotional capabilities in all their personality aspects y in their relationships with others. Develop a contrary attitude towards violence, to any prejudice and towards sexist's stereotypes.
- n) Develop road education and respect to prevent accidents.

IBPYP's documents include and define these overall objectives of the Spanish national system on the IB document: "Making the PYP happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education" (IB, 2009). In section, What do we want to learn? of the above mentioned document, the IB talks about objectives as follows: "In the PYP a balance is sought between acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, development of conceptual understanding, demonstration of positive attitudes, and taking of responsible action". This overall objective is then described at each unit of enquiry:

- Who we are: An enquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human.
- Where we are in the place and time: An enquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationship between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations from local and global perspectives.

- How we express ourselves: An enquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture and beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.
- How the world works: An enquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.
- How we organize ourselves: An enquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment.
- Sharing the planet: An enquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resource with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution. (IBPYP, 2007:12)

As it happens in the Subject area covered (5.3.) the alignment with the Spanish national curriculum is perfectly feasible in this regard. In addition, introducing IBPYP units of enquiry could contribute to reflect on the Spanish objectives. Overall, IBPYP objectives are synthetic and they have a holistic nature. They also encourage a transdisciplinary approach and competence learning by defining objectives based on units of enquiry. Definitely, introducing goals that go beyond the academic curriculum (of the subjects) and basic skills could be a very good contribution to the Spanish educational system.

3.5 CONTENT

As seen before, the Spanish Royal Decree of minimum teaching and learning in primary education (RD 126/2014) only describes general objectives for all primary levels of education and thereafter describe subject's curriculum. The Royal Decree describes content for every subject taught; and it's important to note that content is intimately related to subjects. The contents of each subject are - with the assessment criteria and the learning standards- are the essential elements of the Spanish Primary curriculum. In addition, Spanish content is characterized by:

- Only be disciplinary: related to a specific subject.
- Highly extended.
- Lacking a gradual vertical implementation of content from year to year, there are many overlaps.
- Poorly worded: sometimes are drafted with nouns, sometimes verbs; sometimes happen to be objectives, activities and other times assessment criteria, etc.

In contrast, the essentials elements of the IBPYP curriculum, which is based on concepts instead of concepts like the Spanish one are the following:

- Knowledge: Significant, relevant content that we wish students to explore and know about, taking into consideration their prior experience and understanding.
- Concepts: Powerful ideas that have relevance within the subject areas but also transcend them and that students must explore and re-explore in order to develop a coherent, in-depth understanding.
- Skills: Those capabilities that the students need to demonstrate to succeed in a changing, challenging world, which may be disciplinary or transdisciplinary in nature.

- Attitudes: Dispositions that are expressions of fundamental values, beliefs and feelings about learning, the environment and people.
- Action: Demonstrations of deeper learning in responsible behavior through responsible action; a manifestation in practice of the other essential elements.

In this curricular element, it is where there is a greater discrepancy between the Spanish curriculum and the IBPYP. It is in this element that we may highlight that pedagogical approaches of the two systems are not the same. However, compatibility is possible. Rather, as complementary, we could indicate that the addition of the IBPYP concepts and units of enquiry to LOMCE/Spanish Contents may foster an improvement in the Spanish curriculum. You may address a more interdisciplinary approach and competence base learning without necessarily giving up the current contents. That being said, it would be interesting that in the Spanish context there was a chance to rethink the focus, the wording and the number of contents related to each subject at primary education.

3.6 COMPETENCES

Along with the overall objectives, LOMCE promotes the development of the European Union seven Key Competences:

1. Linguistic
2. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
3. Digital competence
4. Learning to learn
5. Social and civic competences
6. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
7. Cultural awareness and expression

Due to the fact that the competence based learning approach is characterized by its mainstreaming, its dynamism and its comprehensive nature, the competence teaching-learning process should be approached from all areas of knowledge and by the various agents that make up the educational community in both formal and informal settings. Its dynamism is reflected in the skills which are not acquired at a particular time and remain unchanged, but involve a developmental process in which students are acquiring higher levels of performance in the use of them. Order ECD / 65/2015 describes the inclusion of Key Competences in the curriculum (MECD, 2015):

- The key competences should be integrated in the areas of curriculum materials or proposals, and they defined, explicit and sufficiently developed learning outcomes that students should achieve.
- The skills must be developed in the areas of formal, non-formal and informal along Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, and ongoing throughout lifelong education.
- All curriculum areas or subjects should be involved, from the corresponding field in the development of various skills of students.
- The selection of content and methodologies should ensure the development of key competencies over academic life.
- The assessment criteria should serve as a reference to assess what students know and can do in each area or subject. These evaluation criteria are broken down into measurable learning standards. To assess student skills development, these standards will be measurable learning as elements more concrete, observable and measurable, which, by

being compared with the key skills, will enable performance graduate or performance achieved in each.

- The set of measurable standards or learning a particular subject area will result in your profile area or subject. Since measurable learning standards are set in relation to competence, this profile will identify those skills that are developed through that area or subject.
- All the areas and subjects should contribute to skills development. The set of measurable standards of learning from different areas or subjects that relate to the same profile competition results in that competition (competency profile). The development of this profile will facilitate student competence assessment.

IBPYP's documents do not mention many issues relate to competences. This is due to the general pedagogical approach of the IBPYP, which understands that the significant learning must be experiential, practical... competence-based. The IBPYP curriculum framework is based itself on the competence learning. Unlike the Spanish curriculum, in the IBPYP framework, learning competences are embedded, as it's the fundamental approach to teaching and learning in the IB. In Spain, at present time, it has been reduced to the incorporation of the seven Key Competences (transversal) and not, so far, to a systematic work that permeates the whole curriculum.

In this sense, as in other sections, there is high compatibility between Spanish context and the IBPYP but the latter could help the Spanish curriculum to keep expanding and improving the learning competences that began in 2006 with the LOE and has progressed a bit more with the LOMCE and the publication of a specific Royal Decree (MECD, 2015).

3.7 NON-SCHOLASTIC ATTRIBUTES

As in the pedagogical approaches and philosophical underpinnings section, non-scholastic attributes are not included as concrete aspects in the Spanish curriculum. We can find non-systematic specific sentences in some documents. In example, the Royal Decree 126/2014 refers to (MECD, 2014b):

- The educational authorities encourage the development of effective equality between men and women, prevention of violence against women or against people with disabilities and the values inherent in the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination for any condition or personal or social circumstance.
- The teaching program must include in any case the prevention of gender violence, violence against people with disabilities, terrorist violence and any form of violence, racism and xenophobia, including the study of the Holocaust as a historical fact.
- The Spanish curriculum will incorporate elements related to sustainable development and the environment, the risks of exploitation and sexual abuse, abuse and mistreatment of people with disabilities, situations of risk arising from the improper use of information and communications technology, as well as protection against emergencies and disasters.
- The Spanish curriculum will incorporate elements aimed at developing and strengthening entrepreneurship, acquisition of competences for the creation and development of various business models and the promotion of equal opportunities and respect for the entrepreneur and business person as well as business ethics. The education authorities shall promote measures so that students participate in activities that will allow strengthen entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship from competences such as creativity, autonomy, initiative, teamwork, confidence in itself and the critical sense.

In the IBPYP curriculum case, we have found that the best definition about non-scholastic is the IB learner profile: The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities:

- **Inquirers:** We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.
- **Knowledgeable:** We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.
- **Thinkers:** We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.
- **Communicators:** We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.
- **Principled:** We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.
- **Open-minded:** We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.
- **Caring:** We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.
- **Risk-Takers:** We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.
- **Balanced:** We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.
- **Reflective:** We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development

The proposal of non-scholastic attributes of the IB IBPYP is wide and universal enough to be approved by all democratic and modern educational systems. In conclusion, I find compatibility between the proposals of the IBPYP programme and the Spanish curriculum. Beyond this, we believe that the curriculum framework of IBPYP promote a deeper rethinking of the student profile. By clearly defining these non-scholastic aspects in the curriculum, the law will offer more clarity on expected attributes that students should develop as part of their education.

3.8 ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

In reference to the assessment practices, the Spanish Royal Decree of minimum teaching and learning in primary education (RD 126/2014) only describe general approaches to assessment. “Assessment must be continuous and holistic, and will take into account students’ global progress”. The contents, the assessment criteria and the learning standards are the curriculum elements that are shown in the Spanish curriculum in a more explicit way. We already addressed the issue of the

content (4.5). In the Royal Decree 126/2014, learning standards were incorporated as a new element coming from the latest education reform -LOMCE (2013): its justification comes from the inclusion of learning through competences to which the Spanish education system wants to get closer. However, as it was drafted, the learning standards are specifications of the assessment criteria: they concrete the assessment criteria in a greater manner though its input as curriculum elements are not very significant. Thus, in relation to the evaluation, the essential part in the Spanish Curriculum is the assessment criteria. The Spanish law does not make any reference to assessment strategies.

The assessment criteria are always related to the disciplinary subjects and, therefore, to the contents. Contents and assessment criteria shape the defining elements of the curriculum and both are described exclusively linked to a concrete disciplinary subject. The Spanish assessment criteria are characterized by:

- Being numerous
- They are not vertically calibrated from one level to next: there are numerous overlaps.
- They are not properly written: sometimes they are drafted with nouns, some other times with verbs; sometimes they seem to be activities and some others they mention interdisciplinary matters, cross matters, etc.

Assessment in the IBPYP is integral to all teaching and learning. It is central to the IBPYP goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding students through the five essential elements of learning: the acquisition of knowledge, the understanding of concepts, the mastering of skills, the development of attitudes and the decision to take action.

The IBPYP approach to assessment recognizes the importance of assessing the process of enquiry as well as the product(s) of inquiry, and aims to integrate and support both. The teacher is expected to record the detail of inquiries initiated by students in order to look for an increase in the substance and depth of the enquiry. The teacher needs to consider:

- If the nature of students' inquiry develops over time – if they are asking questions of more depth, that are likely to enhance their learning substantially.
- If students are becoming aware of the real problems require solutions based on the integration of knowledge that spans and connects many areas.
- If students are demonstrating mastery of skills.
- If students are accumulating a comprehensive knowledge base and can apply their understanding to further their enquiries successfully
- If students are demonstrating both independence and an ability to work collaborately.

The IBPYP guide also provides a list of assessment strategies and the tools they may use to put them into practice as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: IB PYP Assessment Strategies and Tools

IBPYP Assessment Strategies and Tools					
	Assessment Tools				
Assessment Strategies	Rubrics	Exemplars	Checklists	Anecdotal Records	Continuums
Observations	X		X	X	X
Performance assessments	X	X		X	X

Process-focused assessments	X		X	X	X
Selected responses		X	X		X
Open-ended tasks	X	X		X	X

Source: (IB, 2009)

Even though the Spanish educational reform is advancing on assessment practices, teachers still need more information and training to move towards a more concept-based approach. The Spanish Royal Decree of minimum teaching and learning in primary education (RD 126/2014) makes explicit that assessment in primary education should guarantee competences acquisition but lacks providing a guidance for teachers to achieve the described goal.

In comparison with subject knowledge and skills, the challenge of assessing key competences across the curriculum is acute and ongoing (Commission of the European Communities, 2009). Assessing key competences means directly assessing information about learner's knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to each of the key competences through their application in a range of relevant and real or authentic contexts. Given the recent rise of the key competences approach in education policies for schools, there is a lack of examples of policies that address all these challenges (Pepper, 2011). Assessment practices in the IBPYP may help Spanish schools to advance towards assessing key competences with specific guiding and training.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In relation to the curricular alignment between the Spanish primary education and the IBPYP, the study allows to conclude that the alignment is not just feasible but of easy implementation. We refer to the alignment as a process of labour intensity but of clear efficacy and non-contradictory elements have been found in the investigation.

According to what has been described, the ease of implementation derives, to a great extent, from the fact that the IBPYP offers a curriculum framework and not a concrete and closed set-up structure that may have led to a conflict with the requirements of the national system. In fact, the IB makes explicit the use of national curriculums contents within the IBPYP framework.

In the particular case of Spain, this integration of the Spanish curriculum in the IBPYP framework allows further development of those elements that either are not covered or are covered in only a limited way within the national system to reach to its full competence with the IBPYP approach. In this sense, due to the fact that the Spanish curriculum is centered on the definitions of the general objectives of the educational stage, the Key Competences and subject-related content, assessment and learning standards, the core of the IBPYP (approaches to teaching and learning, non-scholastic skills, attitudes, etc.) has the potential to add value to the national system. This complementary positioning of both systems enhances the opportunity for a successful alignment. In relation to curriculum alignment the study can conclude that alignment between the IBPYP and the Spanish primary curriculum results in a powerful systematic approach to real Key Competence acquisition. The Spanish curriculum introduced the Key Competences in 2006 in the LOE, and had been maintained in the latest curriculum reform captured in LOMCE approved at the end of 2013. A further attempt has been recently introduced in a Royal Decree that establishes

connections between curricular elements and competences. Even though, the Spanish system has made prominent progress towards a competence based approach, there is still a long way to go. In this sense, the IBPYP may be considered as a framework to take into consideration due to its promptness and efficient alignment with the national system leading to internationally expected outcomes at primary education level.

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