Teachers' Working Conditions for Quality and Equity in Education

Mª José Mayorga-Fernández *, Elena García-Vila, Monsalud Gallardo-Gil and María Pilar Sepúlveda-Ruiz

University of Malaga, Spain

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RESUMEN:

Toda sociedad democrática debe sustentarse en un sistema educativo que apueste por la calidad y la equidad; por ello, en este artículo, se pretende describir y comprender la repercusión que tienen las condiciones de trabajo del profesorado en el desarrollo de propuestas de calidad y equidad en el marco de la LOMCE (2013), en relación con la LOMLOE (2020). Se adoptó un enfoque metodológico plural, desde una perspectiva cualitativa mediante un análisis documental, estudio de casos con 5 participantes y una perspectiva cuantitativa con un diseño ex post facto mediante encuestas, con un total de 215 cuestionarios. Los resultados desvelan que sigue existiendo una visión más política que pedagógica de la calidad y equidad educativa al servicio del mercado, se ha producido una mayor burocratización de la profesión docente, se ha disminuido la inversión en educación y limitado la autonomía del profesorado. Como conclusión, se considera necesario el compromiso de un pacto educativo con la participación de toda la comunidad educativa.

KEYWORDS:

Educational policies

Equity

Quality

Teachers

Working conditions

ABSTRACT:

Every democratic society must be supported by an educational system that is committed to quality and equity; therefore, this article aims to describe and understand the impact that teachers' working conditions have on the development of quality and equity proposals within the framework of the LOMCE (2013), relating them to LOMLOE (2020). A plural methodological approach was adopted, from a qualitative perspective through a documentary analysis, case studies with 5 participants and a quantitative perspective with an ex post facto design through surveys, with a total of 215 questionnaires. The results show that there is still a more political than pedagogical vision of educational quality and equity at the service of the market, there has been a greater bureaucratization of the teaching profession, investment in education has decreased and the autonomy of teachers has been limited. In conclusion, a commitment to an educational pact with the participation of the entire educational community is considered necessary.

1. Introduction

Spanish education legislation is a set of rules developed in a democratic society that defines the objectives of education in the territory and commits to a modern, more open, less rigid, multilingual and cosmopolitan education system in order to develop the potential and talent of young people to the maximum (Martínez-Agut, 2021). To this end, the legislation presents both policy and pedagogical concretisations (Bara and Gil, 2022).

Among the objectives of Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOMLOE), is a commitment to quality and equity, two essential pillars for reducing educational inequalities and providing an education that reaches all students. These elements are multidimensional, as they can be interpreted in a political, historical or social sense, depending on the positioning of the proponent (Duk and Narvarte, 2008; Marrero et al., 2022). For this reason, in order to understand the current reality of education, it is essential to start from its concept.

Quality should be understood as the excellence of educational praxis (Coromoto et al., 2018), in such a way that it prepares people to respond to the needs that arise in contemporary society (Loubet and Morales, 2015). In this regard, current education policies seem to be at the service of neoliberalism, following the recommendations of international agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2017), the World Bank or the European Union (Parcerisa, 2016), where education is kept at the service of economic development. In this sense, quality is subject to the linking of cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness variables of educational outcomes according to market demands (Rodríguez-Martínez et al., 2022).

On the other hand, equity is understood as those organisational and curricular practices that take into account individual differences and address social inequalities so that all students, regardless of their situation, condition or previous experience, have access to quality education (García Gómez et al., 2022; LOMLOE, 2020). Equity can also be defined as equal opportunities, equal justice or social inclusion (Silva, 2020). For equity to exist, there must be curricular justice, that is, offering students what they need according to their particular situation, circumstances and conditions (Torres, 2017).

It can be affirmed that the previous Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE)[1], prioritised the political approach over the pedagogical one, especially with regard to educational and social inclusion, the management of subsidised schools, the competency-based curriculum and school success, among others (Bara and Gil, 2022). This has a crucial impact on the quality of education. The current LOMLOE (2020), for its part, is more concerned with the need to address quality and equity in order to achieve a guarantee of education by establishing resources, strategies and procedures aimed at strengthening the effective inclusion of all students and promoting education linked to social reality (Valdivieso, 2021), which has also not been achieved due to the socio-economic situation (García Martín, 2021).

Society places in the hands of teachers the complex responsibility and task of providing quality education (Vallejo and Marcelo, 2018). In other words, there is an attempt to

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[1]The research conducted in this study was carried out during the period when the LOMCE was in force, although this law has now been repealed by the LOMLOE.

make teachers responsible for the success or failure of their students, without taking into account the circumstances of the students or the educational scenario in which they develop (Rodríguez-Martínez, 2019). The commitment to quality and equity cannot be reduced to a political discourse (Ruffinelli, 2014). On the contrary, their work must be based on a socio-constructivist vision and take into account their ethical, political and social positioning (García Gómez et al., 2022), especially in those schools whose students have unfavourable socio-economic conditions (Castro et al., 2016; Gil-Flores and García-Gómez, 2017). The approach to equitable and quality education does not only depend on the teacher's praxis, but is also influenced by other factors such as working conditions, policies, contextual variables and the education system, among others (LOMLOE, 2020; Moreira and Portela, 2023; Murillo and Román, 2012).

Among these conditions, we can highlight the lack of autonomy that teachers have with regard to the modality and content of their training (García Gómez et al., 2022; Torres, 2019, 2020). The autonomy of schools is a fundamental pillar for quality education and equity, but to achieve this it is necessary to provide this autonomy so that educational processes focus on student learning (Coll, 2018). In this sense, the LOMCE (2013) provided for a certain degree of autonomy in the organisation of the curriculum, but not in the deepening and broadening of content (Coll and Martín, 2021), reducing teachers' academic freedom and leaving this autonomy in the hands of educational management (Gairín, 2020). For its part, the LOMLOE (2020) aims to promote this autonomy by allowing schools to "adopt experiments, educational programmes, work plans, forms of organisation, (...) under the conditions established by the education authorities" (Art. 128, p. 12). In this way, schools are given the opportunity to respond to and implement educational projects" or "pedagogical innovations", as also stated in Article 120(3) and (4).

Likewise, the LOMLOE (2020) strengthens the participatory mechanisms of the educational community through the School Council, while restoring the situation prior to the LOMCE (2013) with regard to the allocation of functions corresponding to the school management and the School Council. The requirements for becoming a principal are tightened and the participation of teachers and other members of the school council is increased (Montero, 2021).

In this context, a "quasi-market" model is established in which the State plays the role of evaluator, since it defines the curriculum, objectives, assessment, etc., and is the provider of resources through funding, giving the centres a certain degree of self-control over their management (Cuadrado, 2019; Verger and Normand, 2015); despite the fact that this funding has been reduced in relation to total public expenditure in recent years (MEFP, 2021). Teachers' work is conceived from a governmental and political rather than pedagogical point of view, as they are accountable to the administration, which leads to a greater bureaucratisation and intensification of their professional work and a reduction in the time they devote to other tasks related to the teaching-learning process (Zambrano-Mendoza et al., 2020).

2. Methods

This work stems from the R&D&i research project entitled: *New educational policies and their impact on equity: school management and teacher professional development*[2]. This study has focused on the specific objective: to describe and understand the impact of teachers' working conditions on the development of quality and equity proposals within the framework of the LOMCE (2013).

The research design is based on a plural methodological approach (Fino and Vera, 2020), structured in different phases and approached from different qualitative-quantitative perspectives. A first phase of documentary analysis, a second comprehensive qualitative phase that took the form of a case study (Iño, 2018; Yin, 2015, 2018), and a third phase of quantitative research through surveys.

For the documentary analysis, the LOMCE (2013), the LOMLOE (2020), the Decree 93/2013, of 27 August, which regulates the initial and continuing teacher training in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, as well as the Andalusian System of Continuing Teacher Training, and the Order of 31 July 2014, which approves the *III Andalusian Plan for Continuing Teacher Training*.

In the comprehensive phase, a case study was carried out in one province of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia[3], as it is essential to know the opinion of the actors involved (Qu and Dumay, 2011). The aim is not to generalise the results but to understand them (Flick, 2018). In this phase, the collection of information was carried out throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, using the semi-structured interview as an instrument (Mayorga, 2004). A script of questions was designed around the following core themes: the implementation of educational policies, the influence of current legislation on management, school planning, school practices, teacher training and the improvement of school quality and equity. The information was analysed using an emergent category system (Gibbins, 2012), following a procedure of discovery, coding and relativisation (Bogdan and Taylor, 1990).

For the quantitative study, a non-experimental design with ex post facto surveys was used. The data were collected through an online questionnaire during the academic year 2021-2022 (Martín-Alonso et al., 2024), specifically through the free software LimeSurvey. The questionnaire was structured in two blocks, a first block with socio-demographic data (9 items) and a second block with questions related to opinions, attitudes, motivations, feelings and cognitions (12 items) and a final open-ended question. The response options were varied depending on the item, sometimes dichotomous and in other cases with different response options (4-point Likert scale). In this study, the focus was on items related to teachers' working conditions that promote equity (9 items). A descriptive analysis was carried out, followed by an inferential analysis with a significance level of sig. <0.05, which means that we have worked with a confidence level of 95% and therefore an error of 5%. The data were analysed using the SPSS 22.0 statistical package. The statistical contrast was carried out

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[2] R&D project on Knowledge Generation and Research Challenges of the state programme for the generation of knowledge and scientific and technological strengthening of the R&D&I system. Ref. PGC 2018-095238-B-I00, Ministry of Science and Innovation. Years 2019-2022. Directed by Carmen Rodríguez Martínez and Javier Esteban Marrero Acosta.

[3] Although the project is nationwide, for reasons of space, we will focus on the data collected in the case study carried out in Andalusia, which has been prepared by Teresa García Gómez. Full details of the case study can be found at https://hdl.handle.net/10630/26227..

on the basis of the variable: positions held in the educational trajectory. After carrying out the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (KS=5.256, gl=3, p=0.001), it was found that the variable did not follow a normal distribution, so non-parametric tests were used, specifically the Kruskal-Wallis test.

The triangulation of actors and methods increased the credibility of the data (Flick, 2014). The following ethical considerations were also taken into account: a negotiation with the participants prior to entering the study field, by means of informed consent, commitment to reciprocity and respect for their demands, and making the results obtained available to them (Googwin et al., 2020).

Participants

The case study involved 5 teachers working in pre-school, primary and secondary education. Purposive sampling was used for their selection, which does not follow a probabilistic procedure (Hernández-Ávila and Carpio, 2019). The selection criteria were: teachers with extensive professional experience; in public and private schools, in urban and rural contexts; management experience; commitment to lifelong learning. The main characteristics are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1

Case study participants

Name	Qualification	Service-years	Experience
Sumatra	Specialist in Mathematics and Science	38	Rural schools Centres in disadvantaged socio-cultural contexts Advisor to the Teachers' Centre Innovation-focused training
Borneo	Specialist in Music Education	20	Private centre Public centres in disadvantaged socio-cultural contexts Position in management teams Teacher centre advisor Training focused on action research
Marika	Early Childhood Education Specialist	15	Public centres Teacher centre advisor Innovation-focused training
Euboea	Specialist in Therapeutic Pedagogy and Psycho-pedagogy	20	Educational guidance teams Guidance departments Training focused on innovation for inclusion
Siros	Specialist in Geography and History	30	Secondary schools Political positions in the community and inspection Associate professor at the university Training focused on equality and citizenship issues

The quantitative study collected 1205 responses across Spain. Data from the Autonomous Community of Andalusia were selected for this article. In total, there were 215 valid questionnaires, of which 65.58% were female, 33.45% male and 0.93% non-binary. Most of the participants were part of management teams (Graph 1), were between 36 and 50 years old (Graph 2) and were career civil servants (Graph 3).
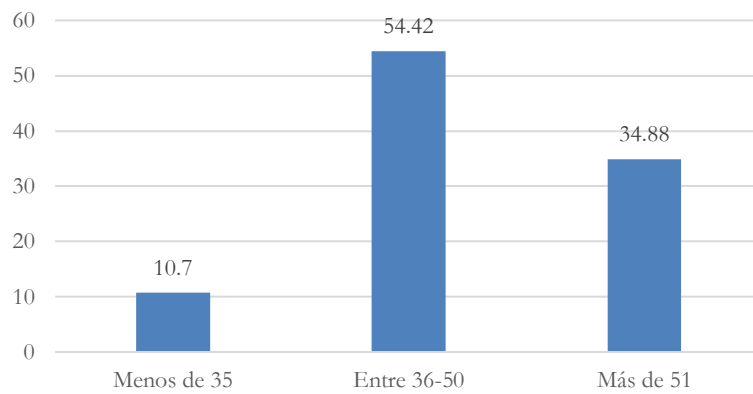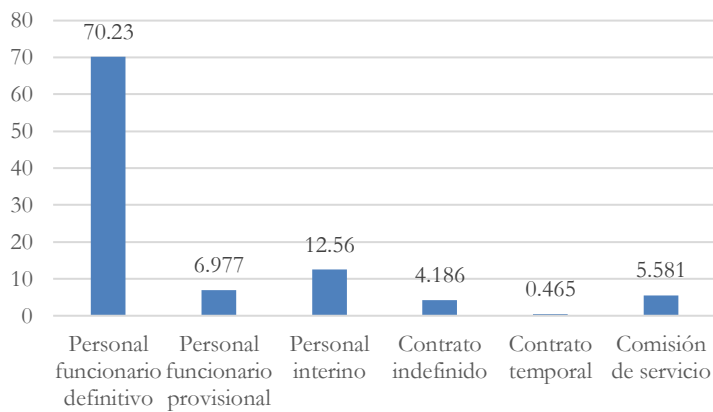
Graph 1
Positions held
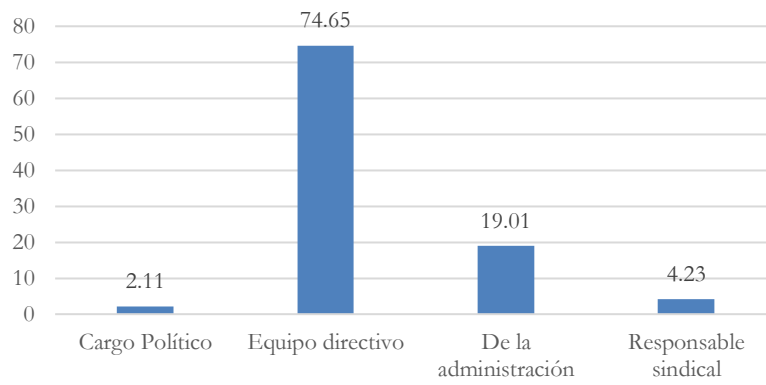
Graph 2
Age range

Graph 3
Administrative situation

3. Results

The main findings are presented below, organised according to the categories that emerged from the case study and the results obtained of the quantitative analysis.

3.1. Bureaucratisation of the teaching profession

The LOMCE (2013) has increased the bureaucratisation of teaching work. In practice, this means an intensification of work that does not lead to a real improvement of learning and the education system. Through this Law and its corresponding orders, the concern for efficiency and effectiveness has been emphasised from a bureaucratic perspective, as shown by the Order of 31 July 2014, which highlights the importance of training teachers in "administrative management and evaluation as learning and self-evaluation of the work carried out and the results obtained" (p. 23). This issue has been reinforced by the LOMLOE (2020), as the degree of bureaucratisation is increased by the need to assess students for basic skills (Quirón, 2021), which is incompatible with the education required and reflected in the Law.

The concept of quality is linked to measurable results, objective student outcomes and teacher accountability, as one participant points out.

> *[...], if I design a training plan, which is now compulsory but wasn't before, [...] they ask you to then make objective, evaluable, measurable, quantifiable evaluation indicators. Moreover, it expressly says so, to see how this has worked. If you design the improvement plan, which is not the same thing, which is the improvement of practices here in the school, the same indicators, for the management project, indicators... indicators for everything, absolutely everything, and in the end, what does that translate into? [...] I mean, because in the end..., if you want to take it seriously, you are not going to work for those indicators, I mean, I cannot spend two months doing a thousand questionnaires here so that you can fill in the indicators. No, I prefer to spend those two months on training, on innovation, on making real improvements [...]* (Borneo, p. 29).

Borneo suggests that these decisions and actions, provided for in the LOMCE (2013) to "improve the quality in schools" (article 122.bis), involve an investment of hours that do not affect the direct work and real needs of students, families and teachers, and are "subject to accountability by the school" (LOMLOE, 2020, article 122.bis).

> *[...] The programming has more and more sections in order to reaffirm the technocratic belief that the more papers and the more everything is written down and the more everything is broken down, the whole curriculum, the better things will be. Completely false.* (Borneo, pp. 37-38)

It can be seen that teachers spend a great deal of time filling in and completing documents. This creates an image of the teacher as a bureaucrat rather than a professional with decision-making powers. "Everything has to be recorded and we seem to think that the more recording there is, the better the students are served, and this is not the case" (Makira, p. 17).

Both Borneo and Makira are challenging the way we think about planning, achieving better learning and reaching learners in order to achieve equity. In this sense, neither the LOMCE (2013) nor the subsequent LOMLOE (2020) have guaranteed a change in professional practice:

> *[...] I can tell you that the changes are very, very small and are not exactly related to education laws. [...] Since their commitment was to achieve quality education in Andalusia, I don't think they know what innovation is and the only thing they want is for there to be a lot of practices also in networks, to be spread through the networks [...].* (Sumatra, p. 39)

Sumatra's words are in line with the Order of 31 July 2014, in which new technologies play an important role in in-service teacher training. Similarly, the qualitative data corroborate the results of the quantitative study, as for 77.36 % of the respondents, bureaucracy is an obstacle to the implementation of professional work (Graph 4).

Graph 4

Increased bureaucracy mitigates teacher performance
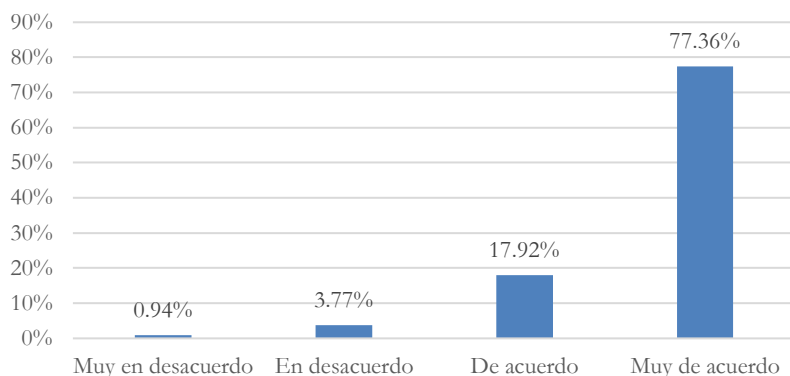
The hypothesis test (Table 2) shows that there are no significant differences between the participants in the study (p=0.374), i.e. all participants, regardless of the position they have held, consider that bureaucracy is an element that hinders teaching performance.

Table 2

Contrast in relation to the increase of bureaucracy as a limitation of autonomy.

Null hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision
The distribution of [5. There is an increase in bureaucracy that reduces teacher autonomy] 10. To begin with, please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements, according to current school practice: it is the same between categories 3. Please indicate whether you have held any of these positions in your career.	Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples	0.374	Retain the null hypothesis.

NB. The asymptotic significances are shown. The significance level is 0.05.

In the analysis carried out, there is disagreement with the approach of the education administration, which believes that changing the law or increasing the bureaucratisation of teaching does not contribute to improving education, promoting equitable proposals or changing teaching practices and providing quality teaching. Sumatra even states that the responsible institutions do not know what innovation or quality is. In Eubea's view, quality is equated with performance:

> *They understand it as performance, they understand it as whoever is good, is good, and whoever is not, is good for something else. For me that's it [what the latest education law reflects], so I'm not going to waste my effort on those who aren't worth it, so, well, there are options for everyone, but those who are worth it are here.* (Eubea, p. 54)

This performance can be extended to students and teachers, as can be seen in the strategic lines developed in the Order of 31 July 2014, which emphasises performance, as well as in Decree 93/2013, which links the quality of the education system "to the improvement of student performance" (p. 8) and in the LOMLOE (2020), which focuses more on how to teach than on what to teach. The preoccupation with activity control manifests itself in excessive record-keeping and evidence, leading to increased workload, a gradual loss of autonomy and increased pressure. These voices are supported by the results of the survey. 76.10 % of the teachers surveyed believe that

promoting equity is at odds with bureaucracy (Graph 5). They perceive a deterioration in their working conditions and a dichotomy between theoretical discourse and classroom actions.

> *[...] there are some people in the administration who believe that with paper they are going to transform reality, they really believe it [...] There are people who think that papers are excuses and are ways of pressuring teachers and pressuring schools to do things well.* (Borneo, p. 62)

The issue of recording everything, i.e. I don't care what you do in the classroom, but prepare a document for me and with the decisions given (Makira, p. 23).

> *[...] there are plans and projects, if in a centre you want... you have to do the project, then the report and I don't know what else. [...] I mean, in the end there are a lot of side stories that people end up doing that don't serve much purpose.* (Sumatra, p. 8)

From a legislative point of view, they are seen as measures to promote quality in schools. However, what emerges from the interviews is that the administration believes that by controlling schools it can somehow guarantee quality.

Graph 5

Administrative tasks promote equity
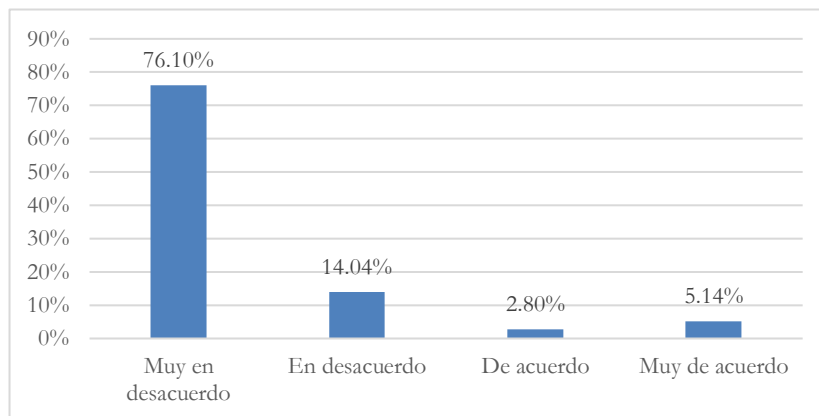
For the participants in the study, the performance of administrative tasks is not conducive to equity, as only 5.14 % of the teachers strongly agreed with this statement. There were no significant differences between the contrasts (p=0.487), i.e. all participants agree that bureaucracy does not promote equity in education, regardless of the job position held (Table 3).

Table 3

Contrast bureaucracy as an overload of equity-enhancing tasks

Null hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision
The distribution of [Bureaucracy (Administrative overload)] 13. In your opinion, which working conditions are most conducive to equity in the education system as a whole? Choose a score from 1 to 4, where 1 is least suitable and 4 is most suitable. It is the same between categories 3. Please indicate whether you have held any of these positions in your career.	Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples	0.487	Retain the null hypothesis.

NB. The asymptotic significances are shown. The significance level is 0.05.

The increase in bureaucratic tasks means a distancing from teaching responsibility. In this sense, a "good teacher" ends up becoming a "good educational technician", a bureaucrat who answers to the education administration. Teachers have experienced reduced autonomy, job insecurity and high levels of accountability, making it difficult to implement quality education and promote equity based on reflective and critical teaching practice.

> *[...] it is a system that tells us everything we have to do, as I was saying the other day as well, a tremendous excess of regulations, which removes responsibility and decision-making from the teaching staff.* (Borneo, p. 89)

In this whole process, the education inspectorate plays an important role, focusing, according to the participants, on the control of bureaucratic compliance:

> *I think it can be summed up in one sentence, or in a handful of words almost, asking for papers, that's his role, there is no other, I've never really met another one. In other words, in 20 years in the profession, I have never seen an inspector do anything other than ask for papers, that's it, they make sure that everything on paper is beautiful, that it looks nice.* (Borneo, p.44)

> *[...] the inspection is there to inspect, I don't want an inspector to come and give me such a hard time that I end up crying, because of what that man tells me, [...]. I don't think it's bad, and as long as it's not the discourse of ok, come on, we've seen this and I can say: I don't agree with you, or I agree with you on this, and then, if I'm doing a self-assessment, someone can tell me, well, what's wrong with what you're doing? what have you improved? what's stagnating? what's going wrong? So, a follow-up, because in theory, on paper, that evaluation exists, but what is the real follow-up of this evaluation, and what is its specific form. At the end of the day, that's what it is, bureaucracy.* (Sumatra, p. 88)

They believe that the role of the inspectorate should be different, i.e. it should move away from the role of inspecting and sanctioning and take on functions related to educational evaluation, providing teachers with tools that have an impact on the quality of their work.

There is a traditional conception of how to understand educational processes, as indicated in Title V of the LOMCE (2013) when it states that the success of the educational system "will be measured in terms of the objective improvement of students' results" (p. 7). Success that in the new law, LOMLOE (2020), is linked to an education of "quality for all and among all" (p. 4), based on the principles of equality and equity. However, it seems that educational inspection is being put at the service of neoliberal free market policies.

> *[...] I believe that the educational world cannot become a market, that is very clear to me, and I remember that an inspector who was also a teacher in the Department of Education was insisting that the school was like a company and when I said to her "look, I am not in any company, I am in a public institution and in a public space, I cannot become a company,.... what I do have to do is to be accountable for how I have awakened the children's interest in learning, for them to be freer, for them to detach themselves from their families, which are sometimes counterproductive, for them to have other points of view, to have other horizons, that is where transparency is and where accountability lies.* (Siros, p. 38)

In contrast to such neoliberal policies, teachers like Siros believe that education cannot be based on business or market measures, but on the real impact of teaching and learning on the development of students' critical thinking. In the LOMLOE (2020), however, inspection is improved by introducing concepts such as supervision and evaluation (Art. 151.a), which are intended to be pillars of the inspection model (Frades, 2021); another issue will be its implementation (Cuadrado, 2024).

3.2. Reduced investment in education

In recent years there has been a reduction in state investment in education, which has had an impact on teachers' working conditions and thus on the quality and equity of the education system. Despite this, teachers continue to believe in what they do:

> *[...] there are teachers with a real concern to turn the school into a space for coexistence, not only for the transfer of knowledge, which is fine, but also knowledge to promote citizenship, that is, I do not think of school knowledge from any other point of view.* (Siros, p. 22)

> *Most of us who work in this field are not there for the money, nor are we there because we have a lot of holidays in the summer or because we have a great timetable, I think it is because we really believe that this is fundamental work and we have to develop it.* (Eubea, p. 43)

The lack of resources limits the effectiveness of educational policies because they cannot be put into practice, and plans and projects related to compensatory education and attention to diversity disappear, as stated in article 26.1 of the LOMLOE (2020). It is easy to see how the lack of professionals has led to a continued focus on diagnosing deficits, as indicated in Article 20.4 of the LOMCE (2013), and not on promoting inclusive education, as emphasised in Chapter II of the current education law "in order to make effective the principle of equity in the exercise of the right to education" (p. 43), as expressed by Sumatra:

> *So, understanding that you can learn difficult things, even if you don't have certain tools, it's very complicated. What does special education do? Well, since the tool is language, since the tool is mathematics, until we get beyond here we grind and grind away. And those children who are not able to understand issues that have to do with the universe, nature and history and understand it and live it and comprehend it and we cut their world short because we take them out, and that is still the case in most places.* (Sumatra, p.24)

The lack of human resources makes it impossible to reduce the ratio, to have flexible grouping or to allow different teachers to work in the classroom so that students learn in their reference group at their own pace and in a natural way. In practice, the existence of a "one-size-fits-all curriculum" is evidenced by the inability to diversify itineraries, spaces and times. This curriculum regulates both the teaching work and the learning and experiences of the students.

> *[...] what does the pupil feel when someone is taken out of the class... the pupils themselves who leave feel that they are different, they think "I go out because I need something else outside that they don't give me here", and the rest are like "they need help and so they leave", ... as we emphasise, children from an early age do not see differences between one and the other... it is the others, it is the school... we ourselves make them see these differences when they do not see them, that is, they learn them during their extensive time at school.* (Makira, p. 45)

Makira states that it is necessary to take into account that each student has his or her own pace of learning, as indicated in Title XI of the LOMCE (2013), in order to avoid creating the inequalities that are perceived today. But for this to happen, according to the teachers interviewed, it is essential that schools become more democratic and that all students have the opportunity to learn, participate and develop their abilities to the maximum. It is therefore essential that legislation is at the service of education and not the political orientation of the government, and that adequate, unhurried training is provided to enable teachers to work more safely in the classroom, issues that have not changed with the implementation of LOMLOE (Fernández and Malvar, 2021; Quirós, 2021).

A school for all means keeping the principle of equity in mind. For the teachers surveyed (Graph 6), equity means assuming different responsibilities during the

educational process such as: demanding from everyone according to their ability, giving to everyone according to their needs (38.57 %); taking into account human diversity (21.43 %); a way of compensating for inequalities (11.43 %); a form of social justice (10 %); treating students differently according to their needs (8.57 %).

Graph 6

Equity-defining statements
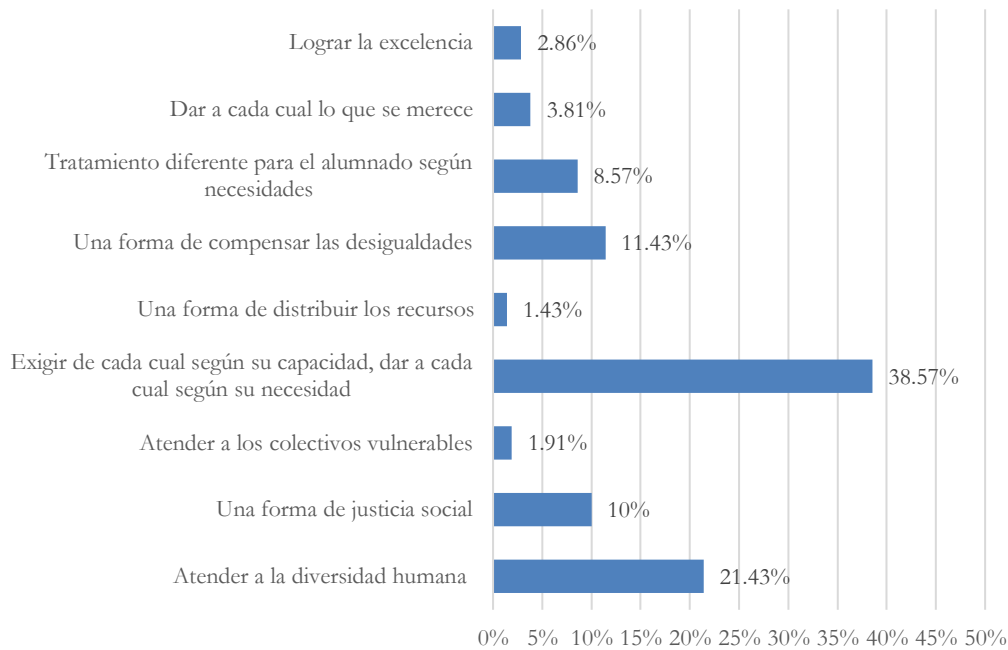
The hypothesis test shows that there are no significant differences according to the position or post held in the previous career (Table 4). Having held one or another does not influence their views on how they perceive fairness.

Table 4

Contrast in relation to previous track record

Null hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision
The distribution of 20. Of the following statements about equity, which one do you think best defines it (one choice only). It is the same between the categories 3. Please indicate whether you have held any of these positions in your career.	Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples	0.263	Retain the null hypothesis.

NB. The asymptotic significances are shown. The significance level is 0.05.

Teachers are also concerned that the reduction in investment in education affects material resources, e.g. schools do not have the digital resources and teachers do not have the skills to use them, as expressed by Eubea:

> *The situation is similar with digital resources. Schools are not provided with these resources and the inventory budget of schools is not sufficient to invest in these types of resources, there is little computer equipment in schools and the ones that do exist have to be shared between different classrooms, which does not contribute to working on one of the competences established in the curriculum: digital competence. The Department of Education provided digital whiteboards*

to the fifth and sixth grades, but not to the other grades, without bothering to provide training on how to use them. (Eubea, p. 43)

This concern about the lack of human, material and digital resources, despite the fact that Decree 93/2013, article 2.c emphasises the importance of training teachers in the use of ICT, is also evident in the quantitative study, where 79.34 % of teachers consider that they fully agree with increasing this investment, adapted to the needs of each educational institution (Graph 7).

Graph 7

Need for human, material and digital resources adapted to the reality of each centre.
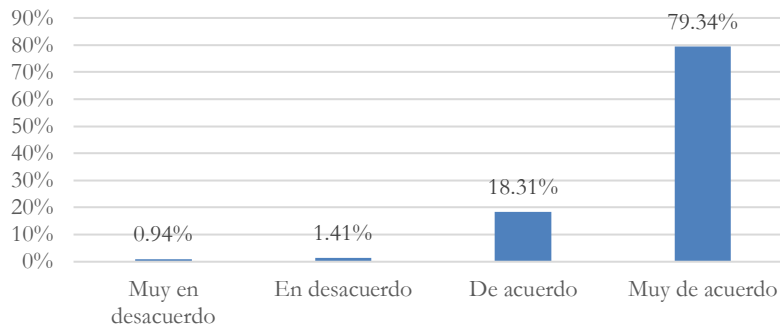
The hypothesis test (Table 5) shows that there are no significant differences between the groups analysed p=0.598.

Table 5

Contrast in relation to the need for resources

Null hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision
The distribution of [Human, material and digital resources adapted to each centre] 13. In your opinion, which working conditions are most conducive to equity in the education system as a whole? Choose a score from 1 to 4, where 1 is least suitable and 4 is most suitable. It is the same between categories 3. Please indicate whether you have held any of these positions in your career.	Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples	0.598	Retain the null hypothesis.

NB. The asymptotic significances are shown. The significance level is 0.05.

### 3.3. Lack of autonomy for schools in general and teachers in particular.

For schools to have genuine autonomy, a real decentralisation policy is essential. The LOMCE (2013) indicated in article 122.bis (4.C) that "the educational administrations will favour the exercise of the management function in schools" (p.46), functions that are complemented in article 132, which develops *the competences of the principal.* These aspects show how school management has been given more power than in previous legislation, reducing the participation of teachers in decision-making, a power that has been consolidated with the LOMLOE (Bara and Gil, 2022).

> *[...] when this whole issue was published, that too much power is given to them, as if I am the last one to make the decision, so what happens with this kind of thing is that in the end it does not favour democratic practices in the centres [...].* (Makira, p. 13)

> *The law is a bluff, because the autonomy that the schools have is minimal..., if I want to organise inter-level classes between children of different ages, I can do it on an ad hoc basis, but I could not organise the curriculum in that way, that is, organise the class in that way, you have to keep within what the regulations set [...].* (Sumatra, p.12)

These data are corroborated by those from the quantitative study. The majority of participants think that management teams should have more autonomy (Graph 8).

Graph 8

Perception of management team autonomy
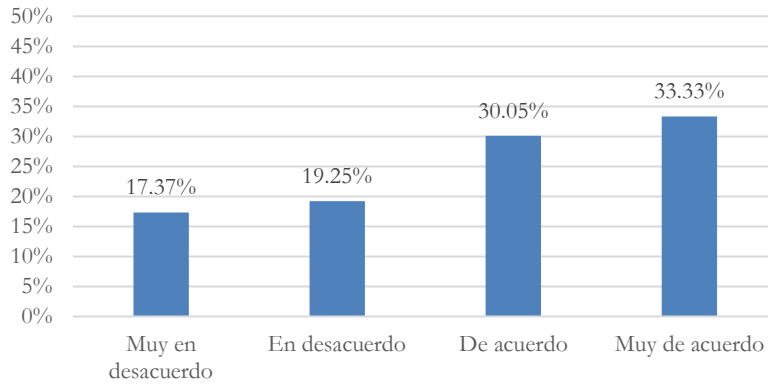
In this case, significant differences are observed in the Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 6), which shows that there are differences between the participants in the study (p=0.001) according to their previous position.

Table 6

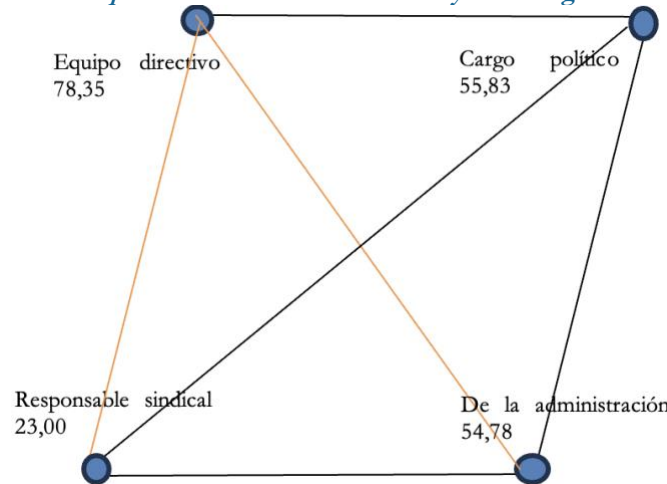*Contrast in relation to the autonomy of the management team*

Null hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision
The distribution of [Autonomy of the management team to recruit/recruit teachers] 13. In your opinion, which working conditions are most conducive to equity in the education system as a whole? Choose a score from 1 to 4, where 1 is least suitable and 4 is most suitable. It is the same between categories 3. Please indicate whether you have held any of these positions in your career.	Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples	0.001	Retain the null hypothesis.

NB. The asymptotic significances are shown. The significance level is 0.05.

As can be seen from the pairwise contrast (Graph 9 and Table 7), the main differences are found between union officials and management teams, with a higher average rank for management teams (R=78.35), and between administration officials (R=54.78) and management teams (R=78.35). In both comparisons, it is the management teams that have the highest scores, indicating that they are more in favour of being able to hire or recall teachers, i.e. they are in favour of greater autonomy.

Graph 9

Peer comparison based on the autonomy of management teams

Equipo directivo
78,35

Cargo político
55,83

Responsable sindical
23,00

De la administración
54,78

Table 7

Peer comparison on the basis of management team autonomy

Sample1-Sample2	Statistical test	Standard error	Dev. Statistical test	Significance	Underlying significance
Union official - From the administration	31.778	17.461	1.820	0.069	0.413
Trade Union Officer-Political Position	32.833	27.357	1.200	0.230	1.000
Trade Union Officer-Management Team	55.348	16.239	3.408	0.001	0.004
From the administration-Political post	1.056	23.545	0.045	0.964	1.000
From the administration - Management team	23.570	8.348	2.823	0.005	0.029
Political position-Management team	-22.514	22.654	-0.994	0.320	1.000

NB. Each node shows the sample mean range of 3. Each row tests the null hypothesis that the distributions of Sample 1 and Sample 2 are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are shown. The significance level is 0.05.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Throughout the study, it has become clear that there is a more political than pedagogical vision of the planning and implementation of the educational model, according to Bara and Gil (2022). This has a decisive impact on the quality and equity of education, as it does not result in real practice (Ruffinelli, 2014). There is a trend towards the bureaucratisation of the teaching profession, which has woven its threads into everyday educational processes. Teachers have become educational technicians, accountable to the education inspectorate (Cuadrado, 2019, 2024; Verger and Normand, 2015). It also assumes an important responsibility for the success or failure of the education system, as already indicated by Rodríguez-Martínez (2019) and Vallejo and Marcelo (2018). However, this intensification of teaching work has not had a positive impact on equity and quality of education due to the lack of ethical, political and social positioning at the service of public education (García Gómez et al., 2022). All these problems have not been resolved with the entry into force of the LOMLOE (2020), as Bara and Gil (2022, p. 13) point out: "instead of integrating and opening up

to freedom and plurality, it closes options without taking into account pedagogical reasons".

Second, there is a decline in investment in education (MEFP, 2021). This situation contradicts the "quasi-market" vision of education policies at the service of economic development (Cuadrado, 2019; OECD, 2017; Parcerisa, 2016; Rodríguez-Martínez et al., 2022; Verger and Normand, 2015). The limited material and human resources available to teachers hinder curricular justice (Torres, 2017), understood as equal opportunities, equal justice and social inclusion (Silva, 2020). In these circumstances, not all students have access to quality education (García Gómez et al., 2022) and the opportunity to succeed in the system.

Third, there is evidence of a worrying reduction in the autonomy of both schools and teachers, which limits their creative capacity and the design of diversified teaching proposals (Coll and Martínez, 2021; Gairín, 2020; García Gómez et al., 2022; Torres, 2109, 2020). These aspects shed light on the challenges faced by the current educational system, questioning its ability to guarantee educational quality and equity (Loubet and Morales, 2015; Martínez-Agut, 2021), especially when we consider that article 121 of the LOMLOE (2020) omits the plan for attention to diversity within the structure of the school's educational project (Fernandez and Malvar, 2021).

After analysing the situation of teachers and reviewing the legislation in force, it can be affirmed that no substantial changes have taken place; the LOMLOE (2020) has thus lost a valuable opportunity to address an issue that has never been tackled with the seriousness and rigour it deserves (Amengual et al., 2021).

In short, it can be said that teachers' working conditions have a strong influence on the implementation of an equitable and quality education system, according to Moreira and Portela (2023) and Murillo and Román (2012). Therefore, it can be concluded that the Spanish education system is currently facing a major challenge, which is to cope with political and social challenges (Novella, 2020). It is necessary to establish an education pact that addresses transcendental issues such as strengthening the decision-making capacity of teachers and the autonomy of schools, and making funding more effective and efficient, among other aspects (Fernández, 2018; Guaita, 2018). However, the success of such pacts requires the participation of members of the educational community (Cruz, 2019), especially teachers, in order to achieve true public education for all.

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Short CVs of the authors

Mª José Mayorga-Fernández

Professor of the Department of Didactics and School Organisation of the Faculty of Education Sciences of the University of Malaga since 2017, teaching mainly in the Degrees of Early Childhood Education and Pedagogy. Since 2009 she has been carrying out her research activity in the Group: Educational Innovation and Evaluation in Andalusia: Rethinking Education, previously directed by Ángel I. Pérez Gómez and currently by Encarnación Soto Gómez. Her publications focus on teacher assessment, initial teacher training, early childhood education and education and communication technologies (ICT). Email: mjmayorga@uma.es

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3749-1264

Elena García-Vila

PhD in Education and Communication Sciences. Since 2017 she has been carrying out her research activity in the Group: Educational Innovation and Evaluation in Andalusia: Rethinking Education, previously directed by Angel I. Pérez Gómez and currently by Encarnación Soto Gómez, and taught on the Primary Education and Pedagogy degrees in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the University of Malaga. Her publications focus on initial teacher training, educational innovation and good professional teaching practices. Email: elenavila@uma.es

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5866-5062

Monsalud Gallardo-Gil

Lecturer in the Department of Didactics and School Organisation in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the University of Malaga, teaching mainly on the Primary Education and Pedagogy degrees. Since 2000, she has been a researcher in the Group: *Educational Innovation and Evaluation in Andalusia: Rethinking Education*, previously directed by Angel I. Pérez Gómez and, currently, by Encarnación Soto Gómez. Her lines of research include: Lesson Study, Service-Learning, initial teacher training, educational innovation and schools in rural contexts. Email: monsalud@uma.es

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4068-2133

María Pilar Sepúlveda-Ruiz

Lecturer in the Department of Didactics and School Organisation at the University of Malaga since 2001. She teaches master's degrees and Bachelor's Degrees in Primary Education and Pedagogy. Since 1991 she has been carrying out her research activity in the Group: Educational Innovation and Evaluation in Andalusia: Rethinking Education, directed by Encarnación Soto Gómez. Her research and publications focus on educational innovation, initial teacher training and good teaching practices. Email: mdsepulveda@uma.es

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/000-0002-6829-7790