

Spain: more Ninis and less VET students

According to an OECD report

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USPA NEWS - The 'ninis' -young that neither study or work- increase in Spain as missing VET students (FP its acronym in Spanish), according to a report by the OECD emphasizes the complete schooling of children under 16 years and lack of harmony between the classroom and the business world.

According the report, "for 15-year-old students in Spain, achievement has remained below the OECD average over the years, while the impact of socio-economic background on mathematics performance is slightly above the OECD average, according to PISA. Spanish 16-24 year-olds are more proficient than the overall adult population, but perform below the average of their peers in other countries participating in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills"^[1]. Spain has close to 100% enrolment in early childhood education and comprehensive education for all students until age 16.

Grade repetition hampers equity and completion; enrolment in VET is lower than the OECD average; and dropout rates from upper secondary education are high among students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Tertiary enrolment and attainment have increased to the OECD average. "Those with lower educational attainment are particularly affected by unemployment, more than in most OECD countries. Also, youth unemployment has risen sharply, with almost 25% of Spain's youth population neither employed, nor in education or training in 2011,"^[2] OECD says.

Spanish learning environments are positive, according to the views of 15-year-old students. The ratio of students per teacher is below the OECD average at all levels of education. "Principals are elected or selected from among teaching staff and follow a short training course. They tend to focus more on administrative tasks than pedagogical leadership. Salaries for teachers are competitive in relation to workers with similar experience. Spanish teachers have access to professional development, but appraisal opportunities seem less common for teachers in Spain than for their counterparts in other countries," added the European organisation.

The education system is steered by national and regional education ministries, with the national level defining the overall framework and guidelines. Education objectives are aligned to EU 2020 priorities. Most schooling decisions are taken at the regional level and to a lesser extent by the central government, with limited autonomy for individual schools. Funding is determined and mainly distributed by the regional governments. Although public funding has seen some reductions due to the economic crisis, expenditure per student continues to be above the OECD average.

"Spanish system-level policies such as grade repetition have the potential to impair equity and contribute to student dropout. High dropout and youth unemployment rates require efforts to consolidate basic skills and better match labour market needs, focusing on quality of education and provision of vocational education and training. At the same time, quality of teachers and school leadership can be improved through more targeted initial and continuing training. Schools require sustained support to respond to the rapid and large increase in the proportion of immigrant children they have experienced"^[3], OECD says.

Given the on-going crisis and recent budget cuts, Spain faces a major challenge as it strives to continue delivering and raising the quality of education and skills. This is especially important for more disadvantaged groups, because higher education attainment and skills generally translate into greater labour force participation and higher wages.

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