

A day at school

Un día en el instituto

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Abstract

This project aims to develop a comparative analysis between the Spanish secondary education system and the English secondary education system. The overall objective is to understand how education works in two different countries as well as studying their main differences and similarities.

The experience as a trainee teacher in two different high schools, one from Spain and another from England, is analysed. The conclusions show that each secondary education system has its own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is essential to learn from each other and try to improve all these aspects in which there are some gaps, starting from the inconsistency of the governments.

Keywords

Secondary education, Spain, England, Diversity, Motivation.

Resumen

El presente Trabajo de Fin de Máster pretende elaborar un análisis comparativo entre el sistema educativo de secundaria español y el inglés. El objetivo general de este trabajo es entender cómo funciona la educación en dos países diferentes, así como estudiar cuáles son sus principales diferencias y similitudes.

Se analiza la experiencia como profesora en prácticas en dos institutos distintos, uno de España y el otro de Inglaterra. Las conclusiones extraídas muestran que cada sistema de educación secundaria tiene sus propias ventajas e inconvenientes. Por lo tanto, resulta fundamental aprender los unos de los otros e intentar mejorar todos estos aspectos en los que existen carencias, comenzando por la inconsistencia de los gobiernos.

Palabras clave

Educación secundaria, España, Inglaterra, Diversidad, Motivación.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this final project is to make a contrastive comparison between the Spanish and the English secondary education systems. Before choosing this topic, we thought about the idea of creating a unit of work for this master dissertation, but we changed our mind when one of us was given the opportunity to do a work placement at a high school in Bradford (United Kingdom). We wanted to take advantage of this experience and given the fact that a work placement in a high school from Granada (Spain) was also done, we opted for learning from our observations and analysing how different these two education systems are. In addition, as teachers, it is important to know how education works in other countries for several reasons. One example is the possibility of teaching in a new country (England, in our case) as a result of the difficult situation that Spain has gone through due to the crisis which still remains to a certain extent, to learn from those aspects in which our system has scarcities or just to implement some techniques that may help students in their learning process. Nevertheless, since this dissertation belongs to a course from the Master in Secondary Education, Professional Training and Language Teaching and taking into consideration that the internships were done in two high schools, it is relevant to highlight that the project is mostly focused on the secondary education system.

This master dissertation also aims to put into practice some of the skills acquired during the whole academic year including the following:

- To apply the strategies learnt in order to gather information, analyse it and formulate an own opinion.
- To identify the most essential aspects of the Spanish and the English secondary education systems.
- To be able of making decisions and address the challenges that we have to face.
- To be able of defending the ideas expressed during the presentation of this project.

Concerning the structure of this master dissertation, in the first place, some notions of both the Spanish and the English education systems will be given within the theoretical frame for the purpose of understanding better how the education operates in these two countries and which the main differences or similarities between them are. Secondly, a comparative analysis focused on the secondary education system of Spain and England will be developed with the aid of the experiences we were able to notice in both high schools. It will include the school context, the student's characteristics, a brief description of the scheme of work, some of the techniques applied in class to motivate students, attention to diversity, how discipline is managed and the strategies used to give feedback to the students. To that end, most of the information gathered during the teaching practice period will be used. Finally, the key competences developed in class and some of the drawn conclusions will be discussed together with our own opinion.

2. Spanish Education System

As it is stated in the Article 27 of the Spanish Constitution (BOE, 1978), all Spanish people must have the right to access to education. Therefore, the main goal of the Spanish

education system is to provide a full education to its citizens developing them as human beings and meeting all their needs.

However, it is important to know how this system works and how it is organised first, which can be really daunting because of the several education reforms carried out in less than 35 years, in order to achieve this aim. In addition, it is also essential to understand that different types of institutions in Spain exist due to the fact that not every school follows the same rules or operates in the same way.

With regard to the institutions, it can be said that there are three different types of schools within the Spanish education system as follows:

- State schools which are run and funded by the government. They include both primary and secondary education.
- Private school which are run and funded privately. They can include primary and secondary education or just one or the other.
- *Colegios concertados* that are a combination of state and private schools due to the fact that they receive public funds, but are run independent of the government. They can include primary and secondary education or just one or the other.

On the other hand and considering how these schools work and are organized, it is essential to bear in mind that according to the Spanish Educational Organic Law (LOE) 2/2016 of 3rd May, after its modification by the Spanish Organic Law 8/2013 on the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE) of 9th December, the Spanish education system consists of every institution, agent or licence holder that makes possible the right to education in Spain through carrying out regulating and financing activities as well as providing services. Furthermore, it also includes a set of relationships, structures, measures and actions that are implemented in order to guarantee the exercise of this right and it is based on the principles of quality, cooperation, equity, freedom of education, merit, equality of opportunities, non-discrimination, efficient allocation of public resources, transparency and accountability (MECD, 2016).

2.1 Structure of the Spanish Education System

According to the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte website (MECD, 2016) and as it can be seen in the image below, the Spanish education system is mainly divided into six groups:

- **Pre- Primary School** (from birth up to 6)

It is the educational stage in which students are taught how to develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional skills with the aim of being successful in their future performances at school. This Early Childhood Education is organized in two cycles: the first comprises up to three years old; the second, which is free, ranging from 3 to 6.

- **Primary Education** (from 6 up to 12)^{*1}

^{*1} All these stages are experienced some changes with regard to objectives, contents, evaluations and organization since the Spanish Organic Law 8/2013 on the improvement of the quality of education

Primary education is compulsory and free in Spain. Students are taught basic features of language and some notions of culture in this stage. They are also prepared to be successful in their compulsory secondary education with the aid of some specific subjects such as physical education, music, foreign languages, etc. It is organized in three different cycles (each one comprised of two years) that are six academic years.

- **Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO)*¹**

The Compulsory Secondary Education is also free in Spain. In this stage students complete their basic education and they are taught basic elements of culture including humanistic, artistic, scientific and technological, study habits and work development, preparation for further studies or job placements and how to exercise all the rights and obligations that they have as citizens. It lasts four academic years ranging from 12 to 16 years old. Those students who are successful in their assessment get a General Certificate of Secondary Education (known in Spain as *Graduado escolar*) and they can choose between studying *Bachillerato* and taking intermediate vocational training.

- **Upper Secondary Education (*Bachillerato*)*¹**

It is part of the Secondary Education and it is also free, but it is not compulsory. Students are prepared specifically according to their interests and they are taught how to work in groups as well as in an autonomous way in order to have critical awareness and their own opinion. Therefore, they are offered three different modalities: Science, Humanities and Social Sciences and Arts. It is comprised of two academic years, which are usually performed between 16 and 18 years old. At the end of these two years, those students who pass all the subjects receive a certificate and those who are intended to go to the university must take an official exam. This exam is called *Selectividad*, it represents 40% of the final grade for the students and it has two phases:

- ✓ General phase (compulsory): It includes 3 core subjects (Spanish language and literature, History of Spain or Philosophy and English) and 1 specific subject (the students can choose depending on their *Bachillerato* modality)
- ✓ Specific phase (voluntary): It includes 2 specific subjects (students can choose between many different subjects depending on their future interests).

However, those students who decide not to go to the university and have passed *Bachillerato* successfully can opt for higher vocational training.

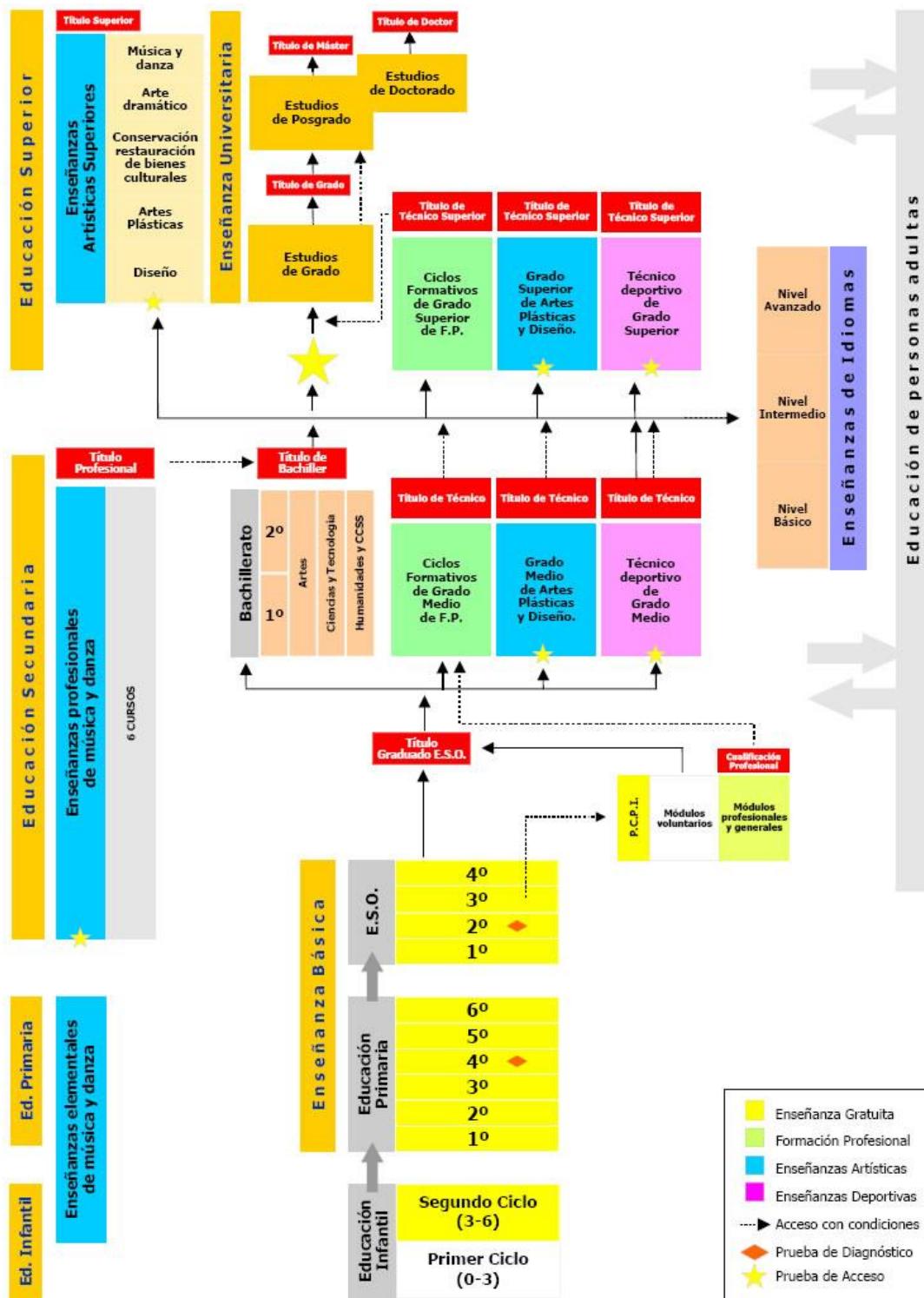
- **Vocational Training (from 16)*¹**

There are two different types of vocational training in Spain: intermediate or higher vocational education. Those who only have the General Certificate of Secondary Education will be able to do an intermediate vocational training and the higher vocational education will only be possible for those who have finished *Bachillerato* or have passed the required access test. After completing the higher vocational education, the students will be able to access to some degrees offered by the university.

(LOMCE) of 9th December, started to be implemented in 2014-2015 and it is currently stopped due to the actual Spain's situation.

- Higher Education (from 18)

Higher education includes university, vocational training, higher artistic education, professional plastic arts and design studies and sports education. It usually lasts 4 years to finish a degree with the exception of certain studies such as medicine or architecture, which require 2 more years. Afterwards, students can carry on their studies by studying a master and then a PhD.



3. English Education System

In England the Department for Education is responsible for the education and children's services according to the UK Government's website (GOV.UK, 2016). The English education system is intended to provide a high-quality education to ensure that all children and young people have the same opportunities regardless of their cultural backgrounds or family circumstances. Therefore, all children between 5 and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school.

As in Spain, in England there are also different types of institutions depending on who runs and funds them (GOV.UK, 2016) including:

- State schools that are provided by the local government authority. There are different kinds of state schools and most of them have to follow the national curriculum².
 - Community schools: controlled and run by the local council. They are not influenced by religious or business groups.
 - Foundation schools: run by the governing body. They are more flexible than the community schools.
 - Academies: held accountable through a 'funding agreement' - a contract with the Government. They are independent, free from local authority control and they do not have to follow the national curriculum.
 - Grammar schools: run by the council, a foundation body or a trust. They select their pupils on the basis of academic ability and there is often an exam to get in.
- Faith schools are associated with a particular religion. They do not need to follow the national curriculum and there are different types of schools such as voluntary aided schools, academies, free schools, etc. They are run like other state schools.
- Free schools are held accountable by the government, but are independent and free from the local council authority. They are "all-ability" schools and do not have to follow the national curriculum.
- Private schools (also known as independent schools) that charge fees to attend rather than be funded by the government. They do not need to follow the national curriculum and they must be registered with the government and inspected regularly.

3.1. Structure of the English Education System

Concerning the structure of the English education system, it is important to highlight that despite the fact that it could seem greatly different from the Spanish education system, there are also several similarities. The education system in England is divided into seven main sections and children legally also have to go to school until they are 16 years old.

² The national curriculum is a set of subjects and standards used by primary and secondary schools so children learn the same things. It covers what subjects are taught and the standards children should reach in each subject (GOV. UK, 2016).

During primary and secondary education, students are split into different “key stages”, ranging from 1 to 4. Primary education includes key stages 1 and 2 while secondary education would be key stages 3 and 4. Once students finish the last stage, they have the most important assessment of all these stages in order to get their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), which could be similar to the certificate that students get in Spain when they finish *4º ESO* although they do not have to take an “extra” exam. Therefore, the structure is as follows:

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (from birth up to 5)**

During this stage, children are taught through games all the knowledge and skills they need to start school as Spanish pre- primary schools to a certain extent. As a result, Early Years Foundation Stage provides certain standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. Foundation Stage is divided into Foundation Stage 1, which takes place between the ages 3 and 4 and it is not compulsory, and Foundation Stage 2 that takes place between the ages 4 and 5.

- **Primary Education (from 5 to 11 years old)**

Primary education is free and compulsory in England. It is intended to teach students basic literacy and numeracy as well as establishing the basis in sciences, geography, technology, history and other social sciences. Primary education comprises key stage 1, which takes place between the ages 5 and 7 (Year 1 and Year 2); and key stage 2, which lasts 4 years between the ages 7 and 11 (Year 3, 4, 5 and 6).

- **Secondary Education (from 11 to 16 years old)**

Secondary education is mandatory in England and it is focused on preparing students for higher education or vocational training. It includes key stage 3 and key stage 4 that are 5 academic years. Key stage 3 consists of 3 academic years ranging from 11 to 14 years old (Year 7, 8 and 9); while key stage 4 comprises 2 academic years that takes place from 14 to 16 years old (Year 10 and 11). This last stage mostly aims to prepare students to pass their GCSE exams that are performed at the end of the key stage 4, specifically in Year 11. Those students who do GCSE exams are entitled to choose between approximately ten different subjects depending on their interests and needs for the future in spite of the fact that there are some core subjects which are compulsory for everyone such as English, Maths and Sciences (either combined or separate Biology, Chemistry and Physics). Once they have finished their GCSE's, students can either move into Sixth Form or transfer to a college where they can undertake some vocational courses such as Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) or an apprenticeship.

- **Sixth Form (from 16 to 18)**

Sixth Form is not compulsory in England and it consists of two academic years known as Year 12 and Year 13. These two academic years are usually performed by students who are between 16 and 18 years old. During these years students are taught different subjects in a more specific way depending on the choices they make because they are supposed to take their AS levels and A2 levels at the end of both academic years, respectively, in order to go to the university. As a consequence, students continue studying three or four subjects from their GCSE's for their AS exams and then, they select two or three of these subjects for their A2 levels. These exams could be similar to the Spanish *Selectividad*. However, there are some differences in terms of percentages, marks and contents. For instance, assessment in England will be mainly by exam, with other types of assessment

used only where they are needed to test essential skills so that students do not have continuous assessment (GOV.UK, 2015). Furthermore, A levels represent 70% of the final grade and the 30% left comes from an internal assessment that they have to do in class. On the other hand, only those students who pass the A levels or an equivalent qualification can gain access to the university just like in Spain.

- **Vocational Education (from 16)**

In England, most vocational courses are career-focused and aim to give professional training to students. Vocational qualifications can range from general to more specialist qualifications depending on the area of work and they are awarded by several bodies, such as City and Guilds, Edexcel and OCR and can be taken at many different sizes and levels (nidirect, n.d.). The most popular vocational programmes include: BTEC and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

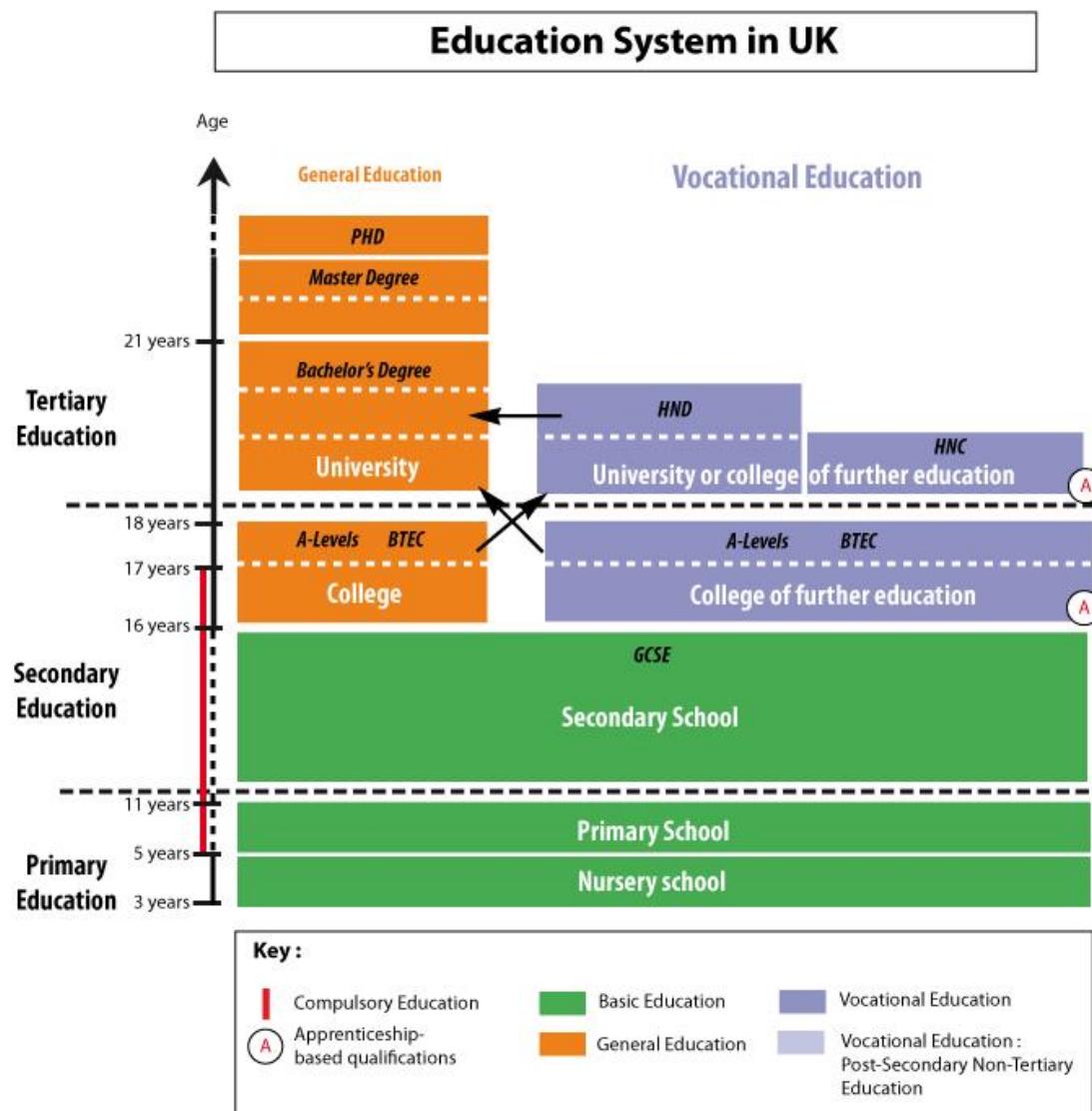
- **Apprenticeship (from 16)**

Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study and it is intended to teach some specific job related skills as well as studying towards that qualification. Furthermore, students earn a salary and they get holidays paid. Apprenticeships usually last from 1 to 4 years depending on their level (GOV.UK, 2016).

- **Higher Education (from 18)**

According to the British Council website (British Council, 2014), higher education students in England are usually 18 years old or older and have generally already achieved the required further education qualifications. UK higher education includes undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and all these studies can be taught at universities, but also at colleges, specialist art institutions, business schools and agricultural colleges.

After having explaining the structure of the English education system, the following image (Onisep, 2013) intends to provide an overview of the items previously shown in order to ease its understanding.



4. Methodology

A methodological approach based on some of the techniques used within the qualitative methodology has been utilised in this project in view of the fact that the features of this dissertation match an interpretative paradigm. Two selected high schools have been analysed so that the project often challenges in some way our subjectivity.

Regarding the methods used to conduct this final dissertation were first of all to observe and note down all the characteristics that called our attention according to our experiences at both high schools. Then, the structure of the Spanish and the English education systems was analysed to understand better the education in both countries and a comparison between the working manner and the way in which these two high schools were organised, one from Spain and the other from England, was made. Finally, eight aspects were chosen taking into account the accessibility to information about them and their relevance according to our own opinion such as the following:

- The school context
- The student's characteristics
- Brief description of the scheme of work
- Techniques applied in class to motivate students
- Attention to diversity in the classroom
- Classroom and discipline management
- Feedback methods
- Key competences developed in class

It is also significant to comment that all these analysed sections are founded on books, articles, laws and the reports published by the schools (see bibliographical references) that have helped this arduous process of selection and classification that it is hereafter shown.

5. Spanish Secondary Education System vs. English Secondary Education System: a comparative analysis

In the following section two different high schools – IES Generalife, Spain and Grange Technology College, England – in which we have had the opportunity to intervene in some way will be described and analysed in terms of context, students' characteristics and backgrounds, working methods, evaluation criteria and discipline management, among many other aspects, in order to compare the focus of this project, which is the secondary education system of both Spain and England from a realistic and more pragmatic perspective.

5.1. The school context

Regarding the context of the high school placed in Spain, it is relevant to highlight that IES Generalife is located on *Calle Huerta del Rasillo*, near *Méndez Núñez* area and next to the main ring road of the province of Granada (Andalusia, Spain). IES Fray Luis de León is based in front of our High School and the municipal police station is also close. The location of the school causes one of its fundamental problems such as the danger for the students due to the traffic of the ring road. The location also explains some of the students' characteristics who come from all the outskirts of the city. This high school has approximately 700 students between the age of 12 (1º ESO) to any age limit (2ºBACH and Vocational Training), taking into account the different kinds of lessons that students can attend to due to the fact that the school also offers some vocational training studies (IES Generalife, 2015-2016:3).

It can also be pointed out that the students of this school have a middle socio-economic and cultural background according to the English department school programme (IES Generalife, 2015:3) as it can be deduced from the following statements:

- The majority of the students come from middle class families, whose parents are civil servants (teachers, doctors, nurses...)
- Their cultural level is medium-high. Many of the students are also taking part in other studies apart from the school such as music, languages or dance classes.
- The level of concern of the parents regarding their children's education is high. It is important the presence of the families in the meetings organized by the school at the beginning, the tutorials and some interviews carried out by the management.
- The number of students from other nationalities and cultures is low. Therefore, their level of integration is good.
- Parents and teachers show concern and interest in the development of plurilingual programs.
- In spite of the fact that there are few students who have to repeat a course, academic failure is always an aspect that has to be taken into consideration within the educative project.
- There are students with special needs (almost always, learning difficulties). The school has a specially trained teacher to help them.
- The absenteeism and discipline problems are always two important worries at any school. Therefore, it is necessary to act individually and collectively in certain moments.

On the other hand, the school situated in England is a part of the Southfield Grange Trust and it is found on Haycliffe Lane, which is an area from Bradford (West Yorkshire, England) where the Southfield Grange Campus is. Grange Technology College is part of The Southfield Grange Trust, which is a partnership of Southfield School and Grange Technology College under a Single Trust, Multi- Academy Model (Southfield Grange Trust, 2016:2). This new Campus was inaugurated in June 2011, so it has new facilities that help students and meet their needs. Due to the fact that this project is focused on Grange Technology College, it is essential to point out that it is a secondary education school that serves 1800 students from all over the world between 11 (Year 7) and 18 (Year 12).

Regarding the socio-cultural background of the students, it can be described as follows (Southfield Grange Trust, 2016:3):

- The majority of the adolescents come from families from South Asia and Eastern Europe, so that the commitment of the high school is to welcome the heterogeneity and ensure that students have the same opportunities and rights.
- There is a wide variety in terms of students' cultural level. Some of them have very good general knowledge, whereas others show lack of understanding and even struggle with English.
- The level of integration of the students is high because most of them are foreign, therefore the main goal of the school is to achieve that students feel comfortable and have a successful integration.
- Most parents are concerned about the progress and the attitude of their children. The school follows several procedures to communicate with them and they also have a Community Team that works on developing activities to involve parents in their children's education (translation services, parent forum, parent consultations...).

- There are a large number of students with special needs and disabilities. As a result, the school provides general learning support, support to students who are new to English, students with statements for Autism, students with social, emotional and behavioural needs, curriculum inclusion or any other kind of support needed by the students.
- Students' attendance is good and discipline problems are managed under the Behaviour Policy of school, which is based on various rights and responsibilities.

Therefore, it could be said that only considering these two different contexts, there will be dissimilitude not only because of the size of the schools, but also because of the students' background.

5.2 The student's characteristics

The characteristics of the students are also an important point to bear in mind for teachers if they want to become successful (Powell and Kusuma-Powell, 2011). Depending on the learners' styles found by the teachers within a classroom, certain techniques, methods and strategies should be used to get students to learn well because there are different learning processes that can be adapted to the needs of each adolescent (Lilienfeld, 2010:92). According to the Institute for learning styles research (2013), students can show seven perceptual learning styles such as print, aural, visual, haptic, interactive, kinaesthetic and olfactory. Therefore, the way in which the class is addressed will vary in accordance with the strengths of each student.

In view of the facts mentioned above, it is pertinent to describe the main characteristics of the students one of us has been with both in Spain and in England in order to better understand how these two schools work.

- **IES Generalife (Granada, Spain)**

3º ESO A	Developed activities in the classroom
This group is created by 27 students that come from different backgrounds and places. Most of the students seem to be enthusiastic and participate in the classroom. However, they sometimes get distracted and tend to chat amongst themselves instead of paying attention to what the teacher is explaining. The general level of English is medium bordering high due to the fact that they have English as a first language although there are several slow learners who show more difficulties at learning. Some of them also attend to language academies out of class so they have a really good basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worksheets, blackboard games (hangman, scattergories...) - Role plays - Songs - PowerPoint - Theatre - Making recipes - Making your own poster - Creating a film/trailer/TV spot - “Guessing who”
3º ESO C-D	

This group has 25 students and it is a culturally homogenous group although there is a student who has family from EEUU. The level of English in this classroom is high and the students are participative and motivated. A unit of work has been taught to them and they showed interest and a positive attitude. There are four students who struggle, but even they try to be engaged in the activities carried out and make an effort to follow the rest of their classmates. The group is greatly close and they know how to work in groups and cooperate with their partners to achieve their goals.

4º ESO A

This group is formed by 28 students and it is a homogenous group. The level of English in this classroom is medium and there are some learners who clearly have difficulties at learning and fall behind in class. There are also students that have a very good level. In general, the students are participative and keen. The classroom runs very well as a group and the students try to encourage those who are less able to take part in the activities and do their best.

2º BACH C

This group has 29 students and its English level is low. However, some of them have a higher level and are more interested. In general, the students are lazy and they tend to get distracted at times. Furthermore, they have to do "Selectividad" this year so they do not have time to revise every explained content and they should review and practice more at home, but they do not do it. Apart from that, the students are respectful and participative.

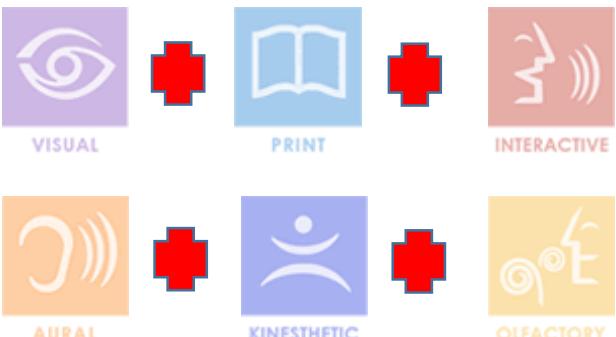
Vocational Training

This group is smaller than the others and it consists of 16 students. The English level in this classroom is very low although there are 2 students who have a very good level. Most of them struggle with English and they should study more given that they have many difficulties and they need to know English to become secretaries, which is what they are



learning in the school. Besides that, the students are respectful and keen participants and the environment in the classroom is very welcoming.

- **Grange Technology College (Bradford, England)**

Year 7 Bg/IL 6	Developed activities in the classroom
This group is formed by 24 students and it is a mix- ability classroom. The level of English is medium because most of students are not native speakers. However, they are participative and keen on learning. There are 2 students who have difficulties (special needs and autism), so they have their own teacher assistants with them within the class and they attend mainstream lessons wherever possible in order not to fall behind and to feel themselves as a part of the community in which they are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading time - Worksheets - Team work - Presentations - Quizzes - Going to the library - Use of computers in the classroom - Role plays - Debates
Year 8 Bg/En 3	
This class has 20 students who come from different countries. The level of English is medium or even high (in some cases) despite their origin. The students are respectful and there is a friendly atmosphere in the classroom. The students pay attention to the teacher and some of them are keen participants. Girls seem to be shier.	
Year 8 Bg/En 5	
This group consists of 30 students who show a low level of English due to the fact that for most of them English is quite new and the biggest challenge they have to face. However, there are a few students who stand out and sometimes become bored. The students are not so motivated and they get easily distracted. Therefore, the teacher uses activities to try to engage them.	
Year 10 Bg/En 5	
This group has 16 students and it is a greatly heterogeneous group. Its English level is low, but they do their best and they are hardworking and try to help and integrate those students who show more difficulties. Within the classroom, there	

are also 2 students who have their own teacher assistant (one of them suffers from autism). However, they also try their best and they seem to be comfortable within the class.

Year 11 Ry/En 4

The class consists of 24 students who have a medium level of English. It is a heterogeneous group, which sometimes is complicated to manage because some of them show lack of interest and tend to be distracted. In spite of the fact that they are expected to do their GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams in June, they do not seem to be worried about it and some of them even have a bad behaviour.

Year 12 D

This classroom has 16 students who are supposed to take their A levels next year, which is similar to “*Selectividad*”. Therefore, they are only focused on activities that will help them pass the exams and they seem to be aware of the importance of reviewing and studying on their own at home. The students are respectful and participative.



In regard to the aforementioned characteristics of the students, it can be concluded that although teachers use different activities depending on the group and the country in which they teach, they all have the same goal: to get the students to learn and be motivated. To that end, while Spanish teachers introduce new dynamic activities to involve their students, teachers in the school from England tend to take advantage of the diversity in their classrooms.

5.3. Brief description of the scheme of work

As it has been said before there are several kinds of learners that are known to work best with particular methods and techniques due to the fact that there are different teaching methods in terms of how the students’ brain works (Petty, 2009: 3). Therefore, teachers have to bear in mind several principles of evidence-based practice including reviewing their teaching and adapting it constantly to understand which methods fit in better with their students (Petty, 2009: 4). Hence, the planning of the teaching for the different classrooms should have been established beforehand by the relevant department and the purpose of this section is precisely to describe some of the contents, objectives and materials used in the groups in which we have intervened both in Spain and in England.

- **IES Generalife (Granada, Spain)**

In IES Generalife, the annual planning for the subject of English with regard to contents, main learning objectives, evaluation criteria and materials are designed by the English Department (IES Generalife, 2015:14-15) under the guidelines established by the Spanish Educational Organic Law (LOE) 2/2006 of 3rd May and the Spanish Organic Law 8/2013 on the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE) of 9th December. Thus, taking into account that one of us had the chance to intervene in several groups from different levels, it is relevant to highlight certain features, which may include the following:

3º ESO

Textbook: Spark 3, Express Publishing

Objectives: The general objective of the English department is to develop the communicative skill of the students making them aware of the use of the English grammar and vocabulary that they need to communicate with each other. This general objective includes some specific objectives such as:

- Identify general and specific information of oral texts in different communicative situations.
- Understand and apply learning strategies and resources including new technologies to get, select and present the information both in oral and written contexts.
- Use sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects of their daily day to understand written and oral texts.
- Learn different communicative functions of the language as well as how texts are organized.
- Understand and apply basic phonetic, lexical, structural and functional components correctly in real contexts of communication.
- Express themselves and interact orally in daily situations and in the most suitable, understandable and autonomous manner.
- Read and understand different types of written texts of an adequate level according to the students' interests and needs so that they can extract general and specific information and use the reading as a source of pleasure.
- Write simple texts on several topics using the adequate resources for getting coherence and cohesion.

Contents:

Block 1: Understanding of oral texts

Block 2: Production of oral texts: expression and interaction

Block 3: Understanding of written texts

Block 4: Production of written texts: expression and interaction

4º ESO

Textbook: Advanced Real English, Burlington

Objectives: The general objective of the English department is to develop the communicative skill of the students making them aware of the use of the English grammar

and vocabulary that they need to communicate with each other. This general objective includes some specific objectives such as:

- Listen and comprehend general and specific information of oral texts in different communicative situations.
- Express themselves and interact orally in daily situations and in the most suitable, understandable and autonomous manner.
- Read and understand different types of written texts of an adequate level according to the students' interests and needs so that they can extract general and specific information and use the reading as a source of pleasure.
- Write simple texts on several topics using the adequate resources for getting coherence and cohesion.
- Use basic phonetic, lexical, structural and functional components correctly in real contexts of communication.
- Develop autonomy in the learning process, think about their own process of learning and transfer to English their previous knowledge of other languages.
- Use learning strategies and resources including new technologies to get, select and present the information both in oral and written contexts.
- Learn to love the English language as a tool to access to information and communicate with people all around the world without any impediment.
- Express a receptive attitude and self-confidence towards learning a new language and using it.

Contents:

Block 1: Listening, speaking and conversing

Block 2: Reading and writing

Block 3: Knowledge of the language and reflection on learning

Block 4: Socio-cultural aspects and intercultural awareness

2º BACH

Textbook: Trends 2, Burlington

Objectives:

- Express and interact orally in a spontaneous, understandable and respectful way using the suitable strategies regarding the communicative situations and showing fluency and accuracy.
- Understand the general and specific information of oral texts and be able to follow a conversation on current topics emitted in the media and in any everyday context.
- Write several types of texts in a clear and well-structured way taking into account the readers and the communicative aim of the text.
- Understand different kinds of written texts and interpret them critically using adequate comprehension strategies regarding the asked activities to carry out.

Identify the most important elements of the text, their function and discursive organization.

- Read texts with diverse objectives autonomously according to their needs and interests and value reading as a source of information, pleasure and leisure.
- Use the knowledge of language and its linguistic rules to speak and write correctly and coherently, to understand oral and written texts and to think about the use of the foreign language in communicative situations.
- Acquire and develop different types of learning strategies using various means and including the information and communication technologies for the purpose of using the foreign language autonomously and improving their learning process.
- Know social and cultural characteristics of the foreign language to understand and better interpret other cultures apart from their own and the target language.
- Value the foreign language as a tool to access to other cultures and knowledge and recognise its importance as a communicative tool in an international and multicultural world.
- Strengthen self-assessment strategies with the acquisition of a communicative competence, with attitudes of initiative, trust and responsibility in the process.

Contents: See 4º ESO

Vocational Training

Textbook: Market Leader 1, Pearson

Contents:

Use of oral communication techniques in order to inform, assess, communicate, solve doubts or problems or help any public or private institution in activities related to the secretary's office or customer services both in Spanish and in English.

Write, analyse, summarise, organize and file written texts and documents both in Spanish and in English correctly and accurately using the sources, equipment and technologies available in the company.

Value the importance of new communication technologies in administrative and management processes.

- **Grange Technology College (Bradford, England)**

In Grange Technology College, teachers from the same department meet weekly in order to plan and improve their lessons. It is the responsibility of the department to design and create the materials they will use in order to achieve the objectives established by the National Curriculum (Southfield Grange Trust, 2016:12). Consequently, the objectives and contents followed by the school when teaching, for instance, French are as follows:

Year 7 Bg/IL 6

Textbook: No textbook

Objectives: The general objective of teaching a modern language as it is stated by the Department for Education (2014:242) should be focused on developing the students'

competences in listening, reading, writing and speaking through a sound basis of core grammar and vocabulary. This general objective comprises several specific aims such as (Department for Education, 2014: 242-243):

- Understand and communicate personal and factual information.
- Develop and justify their personal points of view both orally and in writing.
- Identify and use tenses and structures which express the present, past and future as suitable to the language being taught.
- Use a variety of grammatical structures and patterns.
- Develop and use a wide-ranging of vocabulary that allows students to give and justify their opinions.
- Use accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Listen to a variety of forms of spoken language to obtain information and respond appropriately.
- Initiate and develop conversations, coping with unfamiliar language and unexpected responses, making use of important social conventions such as formal modes of address.
- Speak coherently and confidently, with increasingly accurate pronunciation and intonation.
- Read and show comprehension of original and adapted materials from a range of different sources, understanding the purpose, important ideas and details, and provide an accurate English translation of short, suitable material.
- Read literary texts in the language, such as stories, songs, poems and letters, to stimulate ideas, develop creative expression and expand understanding of the language and culture.
- Write prose using an increasingly wide range of grammar and vocabulary, write creatively to express their own ideas and opinions, and translate short written text accurately into the foreign language.

Contents:

Term 1: personal identification (name, colours, numbers, descriptions, likes and dislikes, hobbies)

Term 2 and Term 3: the wide World (food, drink, country, school subjects, time, daily routine, sports, music & Art)

Year 8 Bg

Textbook: No textbook

Objectives: See Year 7

Contents: See Year 7

Year 10 Bg/En 5

Textbook: No textbook

Objectives: The main aim is for students to develop the ability to use a foreign language in order to communicate with people all around the world. Furthermore, knowing another language can also help students to understand different cultures and communities better. To that end, students are supposed to be taught:

- Basic speaking, reading, listening and writing skills.
- How to talk about their everyday lives (accommodation, travel, and work, pastimes, shopping, ordering food, illness)
- How to talk about themselves and their families and friends.
- Reading and listening skills through current issues, environmental problems, world issues, etc.

Contents:

Term 1: Students look at their life and the one of a foreign student to talk about themselves. They also learn how to talk about their likes and dislikes and to do a review about their favourite film.

Term 2: Students look at their school and what their future plans are taking into account the situation in other countries in order to talk and write about them.

Term 3: Students look at tourism both in England and in other countries.

Year 11 Ry/En 4

Textbook: No textbook

Objectives: See Year 10

Contents:

Term 1: Students look at health and lifestyle issues to better understand the importance of doing sport and eating healthy.

Term 2: Students look at world issues, problems in the area and environmental issues.

Term 3: Students look at current affairs and their impact on the Earth.

Year 12 D

Textbook: No textbook

Objectives: The general objective for students of Year 12 is to develop confidence and effective communication skills in a foreign language as well as understanding the culture and the society where this language is spoken. To that end, students are required to:

- Develop an interest in language learning.
- Write and speak fluently and accurately by using complex structures and grammar in different contexts.
- Consider the study of a language in a broader context.
- Understand several written and spoken purposes in a variety of situations and genres.

- Use language spontaneously to initiate communication; ask and answer questions; express thoughts and feelings; present viewpoints; develop arguments; persuade; and analyse and evaluate in speech and writing.
- Use language-learning skills and strategies, including communication strategies such as adjusting the message, circumlocution, self-correction and repair strategies.
- Listen, read and respond to spoken and written passages including some extended passages from a range of different contexts and sources, adapted as necessary, covering different registers and types, including authentic communication involving one or more speakers.
- Understand the main points, gist and detail from spoken and written material.
- Assimilate and use information from spoken and written sources, including material from online media.
- Summarise information from spoken and written sources, report key points and subject matter in speech and writing.
- Translate an unseen passage from a foreign language into English and vice versa.

Contents:

Social issues and trends

Artistic culture

Grammar

Works

5.4. Techniques applied in class to motivate students

If the idea of Abraham Maslow is followed and it is thought about motivation in terms of met needs (Petty, 2009:50), it can be deduced that students learn by achieving challenging goals, by feeling love and affection, by being recognised by their peers, by developing their passions and interests and by searching for their identity and meaning in life (Petty, 2009:51). All these aspects mainly belong to the last three needs of the Maslow's pyramid: the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs and the self- actualisation needs and teachers can encourage them to meet all these needs by means of original activities and tasks and unusual symbols.

Considering the effectiveness of enthusiastic students on the learning process, the techniques applied in class to motivate them both in Spain and in England will be discussed in the succeeding paragraphs:

- **IES Generalife (Granada, Spain)**

There are numerous methods that can be applied to motivate students. However, the most implemented in IES Generalife were:

- Remembering the name of the students
- Asking students how everything is going
- Making students able to prepare their own recipes
- Playing games, songs and flashcards

- Expressing personal values and beliefs in their pieces of writing or in debates held in class
- Building on creativity
- Playing performances
- Using online quizzes to activate their prior knowledge
- Making use of the online platform *Edmodo* where students can share information, receive feedback and interact with their peers
- Awarding students “happy faces” when they do their homework or are volunteers

- **Grange Technology College (Bradford, England)**

At Grange Technology College, motivation is one of the staff's concern so that teachers also tend to use diverse strategies to get students to be keen and engaged in the activities performed in class that are to a considerable extent similar to those mentioned above.

- Remembering the name of students
- Having high expectations
- Playing videos
- Doing role plays and oral presentations
- Working in groups to do projects
- Expressing their opinion in debates held in the classroom
- Hanging their works on the classroom wall
- Recognising their work and behaviour in front of their classmates
- Holding regular assemblies to encourage them to study and review for their final exams
- Awarding students “a stamp” when they work well or help someone

5.5. Attention to diversity in the classroom

As teachers, knowing what diversity is and how to manage it is really important due to the fact that this new concept is more and more visible within a classroom. The heterogeneity existing in the classrooms is shown through students with different lifestyles, interests, needs and even different types of motivation concerning the way of learning, given that children have different abilities, learning speeds and experiences that influence their learning process by making it unique in each student (Blanco, 1990:1).

Therefore and taking into account the diversity of the classrooms in which one of us had the opportunity to observe and intervene, there are certain strategies that deserve to be mentioned.

- **IES Generalife (Granada, Spain)**

In view of the fact that the attention to diversity for education is regulated in the Spanish Education System by the LOE 2/2006 of 3rd May, as well as stated by the Spanish Organic Law 8/2013 on the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE) of 9th December and the draft of the Order of 8th March, 2016 (Junta de Andalucía, 2016), the school holds a set of curricular measures designed to meet all the requirements demanded.

In this way, it can be said that teachers prepare extra materials for those students who finish the tasks they are given earlier. Furthermore, teachers group the students randomly or sometimes they say those students who have more difficulties to join a particular group

in order to ensure that every student is in a group where s/he can learn as much as possible at the same time that they promote the integration of the students and avoid that the groups are always built by the same people (friends, in the majority of the cases). However, any adaptation of the curriculum has been needed since no student shows meaningful difficulties.

With regard to the evaluation, teachers take into account the background of each student and motivate them to go on. As a consequence, students are assessed depending on their characteristics and having in mind how much effort they make when performing the activities.

- **Grange Technology College (Bradford, England)**

Grange Technology College is built on the values of Aspiration, Respect and Equality (Southfield Grange Trust, 2016:3), which means that they are aware of the importance of paying attention to diversity and implement a wide range of measures and programmes in order to achieve a real and complete inclusion.

As a consequence and taking into consideration the characteristics of the students at this school, Grange has an Inclusion department that supports different types of needs. For example, there are four programmes available such as General Learning Support, New Arrivals, Designated Special Provision and FLEX, whose main target is to help those students who have any kind of difficulties to have access to education by adapting part of their curriculum (Southfield Grange Trust, 2016:10). In addition, students are provided with a “tutor system” led by a Director of House (a teacher) and supported by a Pastoral Manager (non-teacher) that take the responsibility for guiding and supporting students besides ensuring that they are progressing.

It is also interesting to underline that Grange Technology College has many teaching assistants (even 3 per class) in order to support the regular teacher and make possible that those students who struggle or have special needs attend mainstream lessons as often as possible without falling behind and feeling part of the community.

5.6. Classroom and discipline management

Becoming a good teacher does not only involve performing creative activities or planning an entertaining and unforgettable lesson (Petty, 2006:3). It is not enough to be kind and benign all the time, either (Petty, 2006:3). Since becoming a well-known teacher does not only comprise of developing students academically, but also personally and in consideration of the importance of classroom management to accomplish such a goal, it is really meaningful to have control of the students and keep discipline within the classroom. Nevertheless, getting students to behave well is not an easy target and each teacher has their own methods and strategies to deal with it based on their students and classrooms.

Although discipline problems can vary from class to class depending on the students, each teacher manages them in a different way. There are several common reasons why discipline matters may arise including lack of motivation, personal problems, unclear instructions, student-teacher relationships or setting low expectations; and usual solutions

that seem to work such as creating and agreeing a set of rules and procedures together with the students, using strategies to increase leadership, increasing cooperation, establishing discipline reminders and applying mental set strategies (Petty, 2006: 2).

As a result, some of the measures carried out by the above mentioned high schools will be broken down in this section.

- **IES Generalife (Granada, Spain)**

Classroom and discipline management is one of the aspects every teacher has to confront at some point in time during their careers. However, there are schools where students are more bad-behaved than others and at IES Generalife a real complex issue apart from some trivial discipline problems such as speaking loudly, lack of attention or “playing” when it was not the most appropriate moment has never happened. Consequently, teachers usually call students’ attention or ask them to leave the classroom for a while. Notwithstanding, if students behave particularly badly in class or the problem becomes more serious, teachers could also make students go on report or discuss a plan of action with the school counsellor if necessary.

A set of rules designed by the teacher jointly with the students is hung on the classroom wall to remind students of their responsibilities. In addition, teachers take care of building a good relationship with the students by being flexible and understanding while at the same time they are firm and strict. To that end, teachers sometimes make use of an authoritative body language (eye contact, proximity, posing questions...) or warn them that they can arrange a meeting with their parents.

As it has been mentioned before, the level of the parents’ concern at this school in respect of their children’s learning and attitude is generally high and teachers and parents contact each other very easily through an online platform called *Seneca* or via telephone to solve any kind of problem or communicate anything relevant. And that could be one of the reasons why students are so respectful and well-behaved.

- **Grange Technology College (Bradford, England)**

On the contrary, the experience at Grange Technology College has been a little bit different due to the fact that students had worse behaviour and managing the classroom was often a real challenge in spite of the strategies and measures taken.

It is true that at Grange a school’s Behaviour Policy for managing behaviour is followed persistently by the staff and that students are aware of their rights and responsibilities because they are hung in every classroom, but even so there are sometimes in which students are out of control. In these cases and depending on how many times they have been warned, teachers tend to use some of the next strategies:

- Telling-off
- Letter home
- Removal from a class or group (that means to spend the lesson doing homework in another classroom where the student does not know anyone)
- Confiscating something inappropriate for school , e.g. mobile phone or MP3 player
- Detention (reporting to a designated area and remaining after school for a specified period of time)

Furthermore, teachers usually show themselves as strict and authoritarian individuals until they take the control of the classroom despite being friendly and flexible eventually. They also tend to walk around students who usually mess about, hold eye contact or hold their hands up to lips and pretend to zip lips shut until everyone does the same. In addition, students have an active learner sheet at Grange that they have to complete by being given “stamps” (when they do their homework, there are volunteers, they help someone...). Once they get 40 stamps, they are awarded with a star by the school, so it seems to me a very efficient technique because they seem to be more motivated.

From our point of view, different from the experience at IES Generalife, all these discipline problems may arise because most of the students come from broken homes where any rule is established and parents are not always interested in their children’s education.

5.7. Feedback methods

In this last section, the ways in which students receive feedback, how they are assessed and the criteria used to do that will be analysed. As teachers, it is essential to take into consideration that making mistakes is just another part of learning provided you know and understand why you are wrong. According to Geoff Petty (2009:246), these teaching methods that provide feedback are the most influential in increasing achievement together with when to use them. As a consequence, self- and peer assessment methods, the best questioning strategies and student demonstrations are some of the most implemented techniques within the classroom.

- **IES Generalife (Granada, Spain)**

Regarding the various approaches used by the teachers at IES Generalife to give feedback to their students and carry out their evaluation process, it can be affirmed that teachers generally make use of:

- Question and answer: volunteers and nominees answer
- Buzz groups: volunteers and nominees answer
- Assertive questioning
- Pair checking
- Quizzes
- Student and class demonstrations
- Peer explaining topics
- Peer assessment in groups
- Peer assessment by swapping work with your neighbour
- Self-assessment against learning goals
- Tests

In addition, teachers carry out a continuous evaluation of the students by non-formal, semi-formal and formal techniques along with a summative evaluation as it is broken down below:

3º ESO

Process of evaluation:

1. 80% of the grade will be achieved through objective tests and exams. These include reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary, phonetics, listening and speaking. There will be two exams per term and one of them will be a quarterly exam. The first exam will be 20% of the grade and the second one will be 30% of the grade. The minimum grade for each one to pass is a 3.

2. 20% is obtained through:

a. Workbook, homework, class work, written compositions, projects and readings: 10%.

b. Active participation and a positive attitude toward the subject: 10%.

The student will pass the subject if s/he achieves all the established objectives in the English department school programme. The evaluation of the subject will be continuous so the students who fail in June must do an extra test in September.

4º ESO

Process of evaluation: See 3ºESO

2º BACH

Process of evaluation:

1. 90% of the grade will be obtained through objective tests and exams. These include:

- First and second term: Students will do two exams per term.
 - Comprehension 30%
 - Grammar & Vocabulary (extended) 40%
 - Writing 30%
- Third term: Students will do two exams per term and one of them will be a quarterly exam according to “*Selectividad*” criteria of evaluation.

2. 10% is obtained through:

- a. Participation in class: 5%.
- b. Homework and work in class: 5%

Therefore, the grade corresponding to each evaluation will be obtained as follows:

- First test: 35%
- Second test: 45%
- Writings (at least one per term): 10%
- Participation in class and homework: 10%

The student will pass the subject if s/he achieves all the established objectives in the English department school programme. The evaluation of the subject will be continuous. There will be a final exam in May/June that will include all the contents learnt during the whole academic year. The students who fail in June must do an extra test in September.

Vocational Training

Process of evaluation:

1. 60% of the grade will be achieved through objective tests and exams. These include reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary, phonetics, listening and speaking. There will be two exams per term and one of them will be a quarterly exam.
2. 40% is obtained through:
 - a. Homework and class work: 5%
 - b. Active participation and attendance to class: 5%
 - c. Writings, projects and readings: 30%

The student will pass the subject if s/he achieves all the established objectives in the English department school programme. The evaluation of the subject will be continuous. There will be a final exam in May/June that will include all the contents learnt during the whole academic year. The students who fail in June must do an extra test in September.

- **Grange Technology College (Bradford, England)**

The methods and how students are assessed at Grange Technology College differ from those applied in Spain due to the fact that the majority of the students do not take exams that decide if students are able to promote to the next school grade at the end of the academic year or not with the exception of Year 11 and Year 13 (students generally take their GCSE's and A levels, respectively). Furthermore, those students who take these exams do not have a continuous evaluation, so the marks are only based on how well they do at a given time.

In relation to the strategies used by teachers to give feedback to their students, the most put into practice are:

- Question and answer: volunteers and nominees answer
- Class demonstrations
- Self-assessing to improve a summative assignment
- Assignments

From our point of view, the methods utilized in Grange Technology College are poorer than those implemented by IES Generalife, since teachers do not let students to apply and improve their constructs because they sometimes do not give them enough time to think about what they are being asked and teachers usually make use of a common practice approach. Students are not familiar with the evaluation criteria and exams, therefore, when they are at a higher level they feel overwhelmed, confused and nervous because they have to take exams that require a deep knowledge and “put all their eggs in one basket”.

6. Key competences developed in class

The European Union insists on the necessity of acquiring the key competences to become social, personal and professional individuals that adjust to the requests of a globalized

world and make possible the economic development related to knowledge (MECD, 2016). Key competences are declared to be those that everyone needs to feel fulfilled and personally developed as well as those that are required to be part of an active citizenship and benefit from social inclusion and employment opportunities (BOE, 2015:6987). It means that these are skills learnt by practising them and they can be developed both in a formal educational context (e.g. curriculum) and in an informal or non-formal context. Thus, all these key competences can appear in a huge diversity of social, academic and professional contexts and since the learning based on competences is characterized by its cross-curricular teaching and its dynamism, this type of learning and teaching process has to be addressed from every area of knowledge (MECD, 2016).

The key competences described by the Spanish Education System in its Order ECD/65/2015 of 21st January (BOE, N° 25) are the following: linguistic competence, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression.

Thence, having understood what it involves and the importance of all these competences we would like to express the key competences developed at the two high schools:

- **IES Generalife (Granada, Spain)**

Linguistic competence: The students have developed the four language skills by doing different types of exercises and they have been able to adapt the language to the communicative situation and the contexts as well as recognising the functions of the language when they were asked to carry out certain kinds of tasks such as recommending or giving opinion when playing a “role play”. They have also improved their knowledge of vocabulary and intonation.

Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology: The students are taught to interpret graphics and statistical figures in order to convey specific information about a current issue. They have also learnt how to budget money for a trip and which is the best option bearing in mind quality, price and quantity.

Digital competence: The students have made use of many online resources since new technologies are becoming more and more important every day. They are being encouraged to use *Edmodo* as well as online dictionaries, quizzes, videos from YouTube and the Internet in order to improve their knowledge and learn how to be autonomous or take advantage of many other resources apart from the book.

Learning to learn: Students have carried out activities that have involved thinking about their own work, guessing from the context, looking for words in the dictionary and using the digital board autonomously. They have also evaluated themselves and their peers and they have taken part in a speaking project performed in groups.

Social and civic competences: The students have learnt how to interact socially through working in pairs and in groups. In addition, they have realised how important being respectful and listening to the other is in order to communicate with each other and achieve a real interaction.

Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship: The students have worked in pairs and in groups, so they had to negotiate and manage to reach some agreements. Furthermore, they have

done a final task that entailed organization, time management and making decisions, which contribute to develop autonomy and entrepreneurship.

Cultural awareness and expression: Learning a new language involves knowing its culture, literature and its most important characters. As a result, students have been exposed to different multicultural festivals, songs and plays in order to make them aware of the differences between countries. They have also been encouraged to make a short film about one of Shakespeare's plays taking into account that this year the fourth centenary of his death is celebrated.

- **Grange Technology College (Bradford, England)**

Linguistic competence: Students are able to use the language as a mean of oral and written communication thanks to different interactive activities. They have also learnt how to express their emotions and opinions by doing debates, comparisons and brainstorms.

Digital competence: Students have at their disposal several laptop in the class that they can use whenever they need to look for some specific information or finish a task. They are allowed to use Internet in an autonomously way and they are also taught with the aid of digital boards.

Social and civic competences: Students have learnt how to be respectful and tolerant by working as groups and helping those students who have more difficulties. They have also carried out activities related to the globalization that let them realize the importance of being good citizens.

Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship: Students have worked in groups and also in pairs, so that they have taken the responsibility for managing their time, look for the most reliable and relevant information and sometimes come to an agreement in a cooperative way.

Cultural awareness and expression: This competence has been developed through videos, texts and images from many cultures around the world. Students have learnt about Brazil and Africa, for example. They have also been encouraged to participate in a literary contest for the purpose of developing their artistic skills.

7. Conclusions

After the experience as trainee teacher in two different high schools located in two different countries such as Spain and England of one of us and the experience of a full-time teacher, we have drawn several conclusions that are worth to comment.

It is a fact that there exists differences between the Spanish and the English education systems since they are run and developed by two countries that have their own culture, costumes, economy, traditions, values and beliefs. This does not have to mean that a system is better than the other because each of them has its own advantages and disadvantages or, in other words, its own weaknesses and strengths. The following charts are intended to summarise some of the main differences in terms of structures, working manners, materials, length of the academic years, etc. that we were able to notice when working as teachers.

Spanish and English Education System



	Spain	England
Compulsory:	From 6 to 16	From 5 to 16
Free:	From 6 to 18	From 5 to 18
Supported by:	Government in each region	Department for Education
Structure: See English and Spanish education system structure below ²		
Working manner: 1. Planning 2. Assembly 3. Groups Division	<p>1. Each department reaches an agreement of the planning and the inspector can ask for it anytime.</p> <p>2. Students meet within their classrooms in order to talk about their worries, the schools, the exams, etc. The assembly takes place 1 hour per week.</p> <p>3. Students are not divided into different levels.</p>	<p>1. Teachers weekly plan their lessons and send the planning to the head of the department and afterwards to the head of the school to supervise.</p> <p>2. Students meet every day into their classroom to review and talk to the tutor. However, all the students from Year 11 meet once per week to be told about motivation, final exams and important events.</p> <p>3. Students are streamed according to their levels in low, middle and high sets.</p>
Material resources:	Students have their own books (in Andalusia, they are lend by the <i>Junta de Andalucía</i>). Parents are the responsible for buying the students' materials.	Students do not follow any particular book, so they use worksheet or sometimes the school books. Schools are in charge of buying the students' materials (notebooks, pencils...)
Teaching assistants:	No	Yes (They support the tutor by helping those students who have more difficulties in the daily work)
Supply teachers:	Supply teachers come to the school when class teachers are off work during a long period of time. If class teachers are not able to come one day, those teachers from the school who are on cover have to go into that particular class.	Supply teachers come every time that a class teacher is not able to go to his/her class. They are called on short notice and they are usually given the tasks that the students should complete.

Academic Year:	From September until June (three terms)	From September until the end of July (three terms)
Uniforms:	No (they are only used in some private schools)	Yes
Continuous teacher training:	Less frequent	Frequent

Spanish and English Education System Structure²**Spain****England**

Stage	Age	Year	Cycle	Stage	Age	Year	Curriculum stage	
Pre-Primary school	0-6	0-3 (nursery school)	1 st cycle	Early Years Foundation Stage	0 1 2 3 4	0-3 (nurser		
		3-6 (pre-school)	2 nd cycle			y school)		
Primary education	7 8 9 10 11 12	1º Primary	1 st cycle			4	Foundation stage 1	
		2º Primary				5	Foundation stage 2	
		3º Primary			5-6 7 8 9 10 11	Year 1	Key stage 1	
		4º Primary				Year 2		
		5º Primary				Year 3		
		6º Primary				Year 4	Key stage 2	
Compulsory secondary education (ESO)	13 14 15 16	1º ESO	1 st cycle	Primary education		Year 5		
		2º ESO				Year 6		
		3º ESO				Year 7	Key stage 3	
		4º ESO	2 nd cycle			Year 8		
Upper secondary education (Bachillerato)	17	1º Bachillerato				Year 9		
		2º Bachillerato				Year 10	Key stage 4	
Higher education/vocational training	+18/ +16					Year 11		
						Year 12		
						Year 13	Post 16	
				Higher education/vocational education/apprenticeship	+18/ +16			

Apart from the dissimilarities shown above, we would like to mention that students in England tend to have different eating timetables. As a consequence, at Grange

Technology College they generally eat lunch at the school cafeteria at period 5, which lasts for 30 minutes, and they also have a little break after period 3, which is 20 minutes long. During their lunch time and considering how big the high school is, students have various shifts in order to take lunch. Depending on the year they are, they have lunch at one time or another. For example, students from years 7 and 11 have lunch from 12:15 to 12:45; those from years 8 and 10 between 13:15 and 13:45 (when the last period begins) and students from year 9 take lunch from 12:45 to 13:15 (they have their break in the middle of the period). This system runs very well and it is very organized, given that not everybody is at the cafeteria at the same time and there is not so much queue. Furthermore, students have two breaks instead of one (unlike IES Generalife) in case they need to go to the toilet, talk with their partners or just clear their minds, so that they seem to be more relaxed, quiet and concentrated afterwards. In addition to this, the school has a big screen hanging on the middle of the school cafeteria with a clock on it that shows what time it is. Therefore, students can see how much time they have left when they are eating or between one period and another (when they exactly have 4 minutes).

It is also relevant to highlight that in England students are streamed according to their level, which is really surprising. To be honest, this type of segregation at schools could be one of the factor that contributes to let those students who are “less capable” to believe that they cannot do anything else and accept that they will not achieve “big” aims, since they can experience what is known as the Pygmalion effect³. Nevertheless, in Spain students are not grouped according to their levels, but to their ages and they can repeat a course if they do not achieve the promotion criteria established in the school Plan of two subjects (or three exceptionally). In this way, despite the fact that it could seem similar, students who repeat at some time for several reasons (they are adolescents and usually get distracted) are not said that they are “less capable”, but they are given the chance of redoing the same course to meet the established standards and not fall behind their classmates.

On the other hand, students are normally more encouraged at the high school from England respecting motivation because of the assemblies hold every week to inspire and move them to carry on their studies. These assemblies, where students of the same age and in similar situations meet, are conveyed by teachers from the high school or special guests that try to help students stay focused on their goals and be happy. All the members of the staff, on their behalf, also attend to regular assemblies held at school every week with the intention of being informed about the events that are going to take place at school during that week and being told what aspects need to be improved by the end of the week.

To conclude, it is important to underline that although the way in which each high school manages the teaching is slightly different in these two countries and in contrast to the Spanish mainstream thinking on our country falling behind and being a complete mess in terms of education, both educational systems are part of the European Union and, therefore, they also share similarities because they are trying to match more and more the arranged standards. It is true that Spanish schools are currently confronting the emergence of “new” realities that have gone unperceived for years such as diversity and multiculturalism within the classrooms, the use of technologies or even the schools’ facilities, which are clearly elements more implemented in other countries like England. Nevertheless, the new Spanish generations are being taught what our shortcomings are and what role teachers have to play in order to improve the Spanish education system,

³ Teachers' expectations influence on students performances (Sánchez, M and López, M., 2005:9).

whose main goal must be to educate children and teenagers in terms of autonomy, knowledge, critical thinking and values. To that end and given that there is still so much to be done within such an important field such as the education, the first aspect that should be considered is the lack of agreement between political parties concerning an issue that involves the whole society.

Finally, it is also crucial to value all the opportunities and possibilities offered by our country because there are times in which we take them for granted and wish for what other people seem to have without knowing what is better or worse and it is not until you go abroad and have new experiences that you realize things are not as bad as you used to think in your country.

“The key to success lies in teaching to recognise what we have and always aim higher.”

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