Los círculos viciosos de la educación superior en España: 
Impacto en el desarrollo económico y en los procesos de desigualdad social

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Resumen: A raíz de la nueva crisis económica (2008-) la educación superior se convierte en un sector estratégico a desarrollar. Esta investigación analiza las políticas de educación superior en España, teniendo en cuenta el reciente informe de la OCDE, publicado en OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education series, por un equipo externo —con respecto al país— dirigido por Paulo Santiago (París: OCDE, 2009, 166 pp.). Es el informe más importante publicado sobre educación superior en España. Tiene un volumen separado, con información de referencia, publicado anteriormente por el gobierno español. Analizamos aquí los dos volúmenes, desde una perspectiva crítica en el contexto de otros informes, y de los principales datos comparativos con la Unión Europea. Se incluye el contexto histórico y político, las características principales de la educación superior en el país, y la estructura del sistema. A continuación se presentan los desafíos en educación superior en España. El análisis se divide en tres partes: la estructura del sector de educación superior; los desafíos a los que este se enfrenta, en forma de crítica a lo que se está haciendo mal; y las políticas recomendadas a desarrollar. Nos referimos a las políticas que están vigentes, así como a las políticas propuestas en diferentes ámbitos: la gobernanza, la financiación, la evaluación de la calidad, los principios de equidad, la investigación y desarrollo, los recursos humanos, las relaciones con el mercado laboral, y la internacionalización. Se discuten las diez prioridades definidas por el equipo externo. Hacemos un análisis sociológico del impacto de la crisis económica sobre la educación superior, así como el empleo y el mercado laboral. El documento incluye datos comparativos con los países de la Unión Europea (27), así como algunos análisis de la evolución (principalmente 1970-2005), de la tasa bruta de escolarización y la feminización en los 27 países sobre la base de una investigación anterior (Sadlack y de Miguel 2006). Finalmente, el artículo presenta diez prioridades, ordenadas según su importancia, para la educación superior en el país, y se presentan los correspondientes datos de apoyo. A continuación, se añaden algunas ideas sobre la evolución futura. Esta investigación es un seguimiento de los tres libros anteriores sobre el tema: Excelencia: Calidad de las Universidades Españolas en 2001 (De Miguel, Caís, Vaquera), Universidad y Democracia (De Miguel 2005), Sistemas y Políticas de Educación Superior (Iglesias, De Miguel, Trinidad 2009) un total de 1519 páginas.
Abstract: With the new economic crisis (2008-) higher education has become a strategic field to be developed. This paper analyzes the policies of higher education in Spain, taking into account the recent report of the OECD published in the OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education series, by an external team led by Paulo Santiago (Paris: OECD, 2009, 166 pp.). It is the most important report published about higher education in Spain. It has a separate volume, with background information, published previously by the Spanish government. We analyze here both volumes, from a critical perspective in the context of other reports, and main comparative data with the European Union. We include the historical and political context, the main features of tertiary education in the country, and the structure of the system. Then we present the challenges of higher education in Spain. The analysis is divided into three parts: the structure of the higher education sector; the challenges that this sector is facing in the form of criticism of what is being done wrong; and the recommended policies for implementation. We deal with the current policies, as well as the proposed policies in the different fields: governance, funding, quality assurance, equity principles, research and development, human resources, relationships to the labor market, and internationalization. We discuss the ten priorities defined by the external team. We do a sociological analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on higher education as well as employment and the labor market. The paper includes comparative data with the countries in the European Union (27), as well as some analyses of the evolution (mainly 1970-2005) of gross enrollment ratio and feminization in the 27 countries adding to previous research (Sadlack and de Miguel 2006). Finally, the paper presents ten priorities for higher education in the country, in order of importance, along with supporting data. We then include some ideas for future developments. This research is a follow up of three previous books on the subject: Excelencia: Calidad de las universidades españolas, Excellence: Quality of the Spanish Universities in 2001 (De Miguel, Caïs, Vaquera), Universidad y Democracia (De Miguel 2005), and Sistemas y políticas de educación superior, Systems and Policies of Higher Education (Iglesias, De Miguel, Trinidad 2009) a total of 1,519 pages.

Key words: Spain, higher education, universities, governance, planning, The Bologna Process, diversification, quality assurance, research and development, innovation, students, academic staff, internationalization.

The Lisbon European Council affirmed —in the year 2000— that the goal for the European Union was to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world by the year 2010. That was also the year that the Bologna Process (1999-2010) ended. The formation of the European Union can be analyzed from a sociological point of view. Here we look at the impact of that integration with reference to higher (or tertiary) education, and one country: Spain. The changes known as “Process of Bologna” are the most important ones, but not the only ones in the European context. We explain the higher education sector, which covers institutions, programs, as well as policies. International organizations —such as UNESCO and OECD— insist on using the terminology of “tertiary education” (mainly types 5B, 5A, and 6) but this terminology is not very successful. Other concepts used are “higher education” and “post-secondary education”. Sometimes it is defined as mainly “university education”. In the case of Spain the 77 universities are dominant, as they cover 86% of all tertiary education in that country. The rest, non-university tertiary education, 12% are post-secondary vocational education (formación profesional de grado superior), and 2% are specialized higher education (art, military, and so on). Here we analyze the problems as well as the proposed policies in the different fields: governance, funding, quality assurance, equity principles, research and development, human resources, relationships to the labor market, and internationalization.

Political and historical context

The history of the university system in Spain is early State foundation, and late developments. Spain has some of the first universities in the world, but at present there are no Spanish universities in the top-150 universities in the world. The higher education system in Spain is influenced by the long lasting monarchist-centralist tradition, the Napoleonic model of organization, and forty years of dictatorship in which the university was at the service of the
autocratic regime. The centralist tradition is very important to understand the structure of higher education. The budget of the universities was mainly public, controlled by the State, and all programs of higher education were the same. Although it is mentioned in passing, the authors do not present the hypothesis that the main cause of the lack of modernization of the higher education sector is the forty years of dictatorship of General Franco, from 1936 to 1975. Spain is a peculiar case, within the European Union, with a recent long rightist dictatorship. Obviously much of the present higher education problems can be traced to the authoritarian, centralist, and heavily controlled university system during those four decades. After Franco’s natural death, it takes eight years to produce a university reform. A brief, but essential chronology to understand the higher education sector is developed in the Table 1.

There are five hypotheses in relation to this chronology that are basic to understand the higher education system in Spain. The OECD report overlooks a causal/historical analysis, making more a static analysis of the higher education sector. However, the university system is impossible to understand without taking into account these tendencies. The real change is produced by the socialist law, Ley de Reforma Universitaria or LRU, in 1983, issued by the Ministry José M. Maravall. All subsequent laws are reforms of that LRU.

The first hypothesis is that the modernization of the university system was retarded and handicapped by forty years of dictatorship, from 1936 to 1975. The higher education system in Spain cannot be explained without referring to the impact of this dictatorship (with heavy censorship, as well as ideological domination) on universities. Some time has passed, but the influence of the dictatorship is still noticeable, and it explains many of the structural problems that the system still has.

Second hypothesis, is that the process of the two previous decades (1983-2007) is dominated by party reforms. If the left government issues a new university law (in 1983), later the right government changes it (in 2001), to be changed again by the left government when returning to power (in 2007). In each turn they all invent a new system for the selection of university teachers, but the university remains equally full of corruption and in-breeding. Geographical mobility is very low. There is not a national university market.

The third hypothesis is that the main reform is done by the leftist government: the LRU of 1983. The PP mainly wants to continue with a system that is ideologically similar to the dictatorship. So the PP amends the reforms done by the left. Then, the left needs to reform them again. The university laws are politicized with a deep symbolic political meaning. Therefore, the important problems are never resolved. Often the main problems are never stated, analyzed, or explained.

The fourth hypothesis is that the Process of Bologna was implemented in Spain very late, slowly, and in an incomplete manner. The reason is that during the first five years under the PP government the Bologna process was practically ignored. When the PSOE returns to power in the year 2004 it needs to implement the Process of Bologna reforms, with six years of delay. But then it is late, and the Government suffers a strong opposition from the student body. The reform was little explained to students and teachers. At the end, by 2010, the Bologna Process is adapted nominally, but the important reforms are never undertaken.

The fifth hypothesis is that even now, there is not a national market of students, teachers, and researchers. The market is fragmented by regions. Universities are mainly regional, or even exclusively regional. There are few universities, and they are big (the biggest in Europe together with the Italian ones). There are no world-class universities. Even when public universities are quite similar (in salaries, organization, inefficiency, lack of resources, small libraries and so on) they are isolated from each other. Universities never compete for the best students of the best

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1 As a curiosity: the university degrees are still given by the King of Spain.
teachers. There is only a national market for university scholarships, but their impact is minimal, and the regions are also asking (from 2010 on) for the power of distributing those scholarships at the regional level. Mobility is very low in Spain.

**Higher education policies**

Spain has around 77 universities (27 of them, smaller, are private). There are about one million and a half university students. That means that there are few universities in Spain, but large, with an average size of 20,000 students. This is a fact, but the report does not discuss that the country needs more universities, more students, and specially more students finishing their studies (graduating). These ideas are never presented because what surprises the external experts is the rate of creation of new universities, which have doubled in number in two decades. But there are still few universities in the country, and they are too large. In the last decade enrollment has decreased by 6%. This is due —experts say— because the cohorts are smaller. However, they do not suggest that the system should have increased, in order to enroll most of the young population. It does not explain that enrollment is different to graduates. The Spanish university system is characterized by many dropouts, and a very low productivity. The system is decentralized, especially in 17 autonomous communities or regions, evolving from a centralist model that dominated during the dictatorship. This is the main change in the Spanish higher education. There is “certain autonomy” in the higher education institutions, but it is limited and diffused. Decentralization has been applied, but no so much the autonomy of universities. Public universities are still funded —and heavily controlled— by the public administration.

There are about 82,850 doctoral students in the country; around 6% of the total number of students at the universities. They are more than enough, but the productivity is very low. The same year (2007) there were 7,235 students obtaining the doctoral degree. That means one out of twelve students. But they belong to previous smaller cohorts. If we compare the doctoral degrees in relationship to the students of doctorate ten years before, productivity is about one out of eight. Reality is that only one out of ten doctoral students finishes her/his dissertation. This is a very low productivity. It is not clear why students enroll in the doctorate if there is no expansion of university teachers. It is probably used as a way of finding a job, not as a real research vocation. The situation is slightly better now: in the last decade the number of doctoral students have increased 1,4 times, while doctoral degrees have increased 2,2 times. Dropouts in undergraduate studies (around one out of two students) and in doctorate (around eight or nine out of ten) are not seen as a problem of productivity of higher education in Spain. The OECD report presents data, but it does not analyze the consequences or the structural problems. It focuses too much on the integration of higher vocational education, and very little in the real problems of university education.

Structurally the only positive changes (if those can be considered always positive) are decentralization, and more autonomy for the universities. However, productivity remains very low, and privatization is rapidly increasing, both in private and public universities. Public universities are deteriorating. The Process of Bologna has been incorporated —just in time— in the last two years, but many reforms are still lacking. The main reform of careers failed because the government did not want to have additional political problems. University population is decreasing instead of increasing, and universities are too large and scarce. There is not a clear higher education policy in the Government, even taking into account that the PSOE governments have been much more progressive and favorable to the Bologna Process than the PP governments. At the end, the delay in applying the Bologna Process has created more problems than expected, and the opposition of students (and some teachers) has not been resolved. Inside the country there is not an interest group or stakeholder that has a clear idea about the problems of the higher education sector. Recent reports inside the country (like Reques 2009) overlook all-important problems. Even the OECD external research team (whose
research is based on a background report by the Ministry of Education) does not focus well on these important problems.

The autonomy of university institutions is not yet a reality: “In spite of the increasing degree of autonomy, the universities are far from being self-regulating” (p. 62). They do not follow a market or quasi-market system of regulation. According to OECD the problem in Spain is the risk of over-regulation. It is one of the best criticism of the report: “If the coordination is inefficient or in practice does not achieve coherence, it can easily fall into the trap of adding more rules, through an increasingly specific definition of powers for the diverse groups involved” (p. 63). There are then difficulties in taking decisions, and you never know who is really responsible for the inefficiency. Universities tend to homogeneity —café para todos— without diversifying or being innovative. In Spain all public universities (and even private universities) look alike. All have doctoral programs that are mainly to provide doctoral degrees to their own staff. The system is not diversified and the external experts see this as a problem. There is no competition among institutions, and no motivation for excellence or performance. Productivity is very low, and the dropout rate is high. Many students abandon their studies. The majority of students choose the university closest to their parents’ home. About 10% of students are from other autonomous communities. There is not a real market for university teacher positions. The only limited exception is the attraction of Madrid, and sometimes Barcelona. Institutional in-breeding is high. According to the OECD, the universities should specialize in certain areas of knowledge, and also in their roles in relationship to knowledge and the market. The criticism is that “university behavior is driven more by the compliance with the official regulations rather than the concern to meet the expectations of users in a competitive setting” (p. 65).

The governance of the institutions is not efficient, looking inwards, incapable of generating changes, and with little connection and collaboration with the external world. The worries are internal and institutional, hardly societal. So we can explain that the dropout rate is very high and there are no studies —and no policies— to decrease these failures. The criticism is that the system is pseudo-democratic, in which many bodies and groups have to be consulted, reducing individual authority and responsibility, and slowing down any process. The power is mainly in the hands of full professors, even in administrative decisions. This reasoning is circular. The consequence is the impossibility of producing changes. Programs that are outmoded or simply inefficient are never closed down, and new initiatives and programs are hardly organized. Relations with the labor market are weak; both within the management of the institutions of higher education, and with outside firms and companies. The Consejo Social or Social Council is a body lacking efficacy.

Education (not only higher education) is a field of trenches in Spain, where the mass political parties —PP and PSOE— are very opposed. It is a field of symbolic war. The OECD report is in favor of active, rather than passive, change. That means reinforcing the data collection and policy analysis capacity. The higher education sector needs a better information system, and better information strategy, with more published data. Most of the published information now is of the type of “misplaced concreteness”. We are lacking good information about the central problems: failure and dropouts, privatization, universalization, quality of the teaching, and especially inequality of the system and discrimination in the graduating rates. In addition, Spain is late for the Bologna Process, and the year 2010 arrived when the reforms are still not completed. So the OECD reaction is to affirm that Spain needs to “modernize” and become more like the central countries of the European Union. The policies suggested by the OECD go in that direction. The framework is then to integrate higher education, to open it to the market, and to modernize the whole sector. But that is not enough. It is not clear what is the model of higher education in Europe, probably there is no model. If we do not criticize the trends in Europe, to conclude that Spain just needs to look more “European” and to be more competitive, are not enough. The OECD report is lacking a critical vision of what is happening in Europe, lagging behind not only from the United States, but also from rising Asia.
Funding. The higher education sector is under funded (the 23rd country out of 28 OECD countries, around 69% to 73% of the average of the OECD). It is very public—78% of total expenditure is public—and every year is more public. Public expenditure is very institutional: it goes directly to public universities. Most of that money goes to pay (not well, but many) university teachers, who work with little productivity. There is little money left to pay well the non-teaching staff, or functioning expenditures. There are few and scarce scholarships and loans for students and their families (about 8% of public expenditure while the OECD average is 18%). Even when privatization is a clear trend, the public money allocated for private institutions is merely 2%. The number of students enrolled has decreased by 7% in the last decade. Although expenditure-per-student grows a little, the situation is not favorable, because Spain is the country with the least expansion of student enrollment in the OECD. The goal of universalization seems each year further away. Immigrants and lower classes are excluded from the university, especially from the graduating rates. All these tendencies increased during the years of the PP in the central Government (1996-2004). Public expenditure is about 74% of total expenditure in the year 2000, to grow to 78% in the year 2005. The surprise is that the rightist government (of the PP) did not privatize higher education, although the investment in this sector was minimal, and well under the average of the OECD. Even being very low, the expenditure on higher education has grown very little in the last decade, from 1.0% to 1.1% of the GDP. The position of Spain is relatively lower every year. The higher education sector in Spain remains very public but poor.

Families pay on average 19% of the real cost of higher education, with a moderate tuition-and-fees of approximately 760 € per academic year. In total, the private sector (families and other private sources) cover about 22% of expenditure. This proportion is medium, and decreasing proportionally. So the private sector pays less and less. As a percentage of the total public spending, even when the State invests on higher education, the proportion is only 2.5%, quite low comparatively speaking. The country looks also bad on public resources allocated to economic aid to students (and their families): only 8%, very low in the context of the developed countries of the world. Loans to students are almost non-existent (especially in those years). Global funding—and public funding—is very low in higher education, but in the proportion of current expenditures that goes to pay teachers Spain is number one country (around 59% of that current expenditure). The higher education system has very low resources, they are mainly public, and they go mainly to pay for teachers, but not to economic aid to students, and little to undertake research. This model of higher education is probably the worst we could imagine. However, the OECD experts do not analyze in depth these problems, but data—even data from the Ministry of Education—are clear about the funding deficiencies.

University education in Spain is not free: around 760€ average per year. That means about 5 € for each day of classes per student. These payments cover about 18% of the total expenditures of the universities. Even that, the main cost for students and their families is not tuition fees but just living. There are few and very scarce scholarships. To say it gently: “the student financial aid system is relatively modest in Spain” (p. 33). Only about 15% of the students have a scholarship. And the average amount of scholarship is around 100 € per month (1,665 € per academic year). Most of the scholarships simply cover tuition fees payments, known as matrícula gratuita. The report mentions that during the eight years 1995-2003 there was a reduction of 36% of students with scholarship, and a reduction of 20% in the total amount spent on the national scholarship system. Those are the years of the PP government. The PSOE government introduced a loan system but is too early to evaluate its results. There are also a limited number of becas de colaboración, or collaboration scholarships, to students in the senior year of college, who work part time for the Departments. On average there is only one of those scholarships for each Department, of about 225 € per month. “Given the incipient development of the student financial aid system, the assistance from the families remains the main means through which students cover their study costs” (p. 35). The situation is not good. Youth poverty is increasing in the country. Around 2010, unemployment rates for youth were as high as 40%. The dependency from parents is high, so marriage rate is low, birth rates are very low,
and young people do not abandon the house of their parents. All this creates high dependency from the parents (as it has been correctly analyzed by Gøsta Esping-Andersen 2007, 2009; and by Pau Mari-Klose et al. 2008, 2009). A comparative picture can be seen in the OECD report Growing Unequal? (2009).

Total spending in higher education in Spain remains below the OECD mean. Tuition fees are not free, and they represent quite an effort for the lower classes, covering 18% of the real cost of teaching. In addition, higher education competes for public expenditures with other types of education, which lately concentrate more attention: childhood education that has many problems in Spain, and continuing education or LLL (for adults). Higher education is inefficient: many students enroll but few graduate. Only 43% of an age-cohort is expected to graduate in higher education, while the OECD average is 54%. This is taking into account that the young population in their twenties is still decreasing in Spain more than in any other country in the OECD, due to the lower birth rates of those cohorts. The 18 year olds cohort will stop decreasing in numbers by 2013 and will began to grow again by 2015. The smaller cohorts can be a solution to the low public expenditure on higher education, but this solution is not analyzed seriously. The return of studying a higher education degree in Spain is the lowest in the OECD. That means that the income differential between people with a university degree in comparison with the population without a university degree is only about 40%. But we also know that the unemployment rate —so high in Spain— is much lower for people with university degrees.

To find appropriate policies for increasing funding is a challenge in the case of Spain. The OECD report is not brave enough to ask the State to duplicate their public budget in universities, to duplicate investment in academic research, to triplicate the economic aid to students, or to multiple by five the budget of university libraries. The authors of the report are realistic, and know that proposals in that direction and amount are impossible. So they rely on the only solution possible, which is to privatize higher education. To cover the lack of polarity of that advice —especially among antibolonios— they rationalize: “An immediate priority for Spain, prior to any plans to increase funding in tertiary education should be reducing the current inefficiencies in the use of resources” (p. 107). It is clever, but not very true. Inefficiency depends on the low budget. Apart from that general statement the OECD report proposes seven concrete changes whose (supposed) objective is to reduce public expenditure: (1) more funding on the basis of graduation rates; (2) reduction of public subsidies to students who remain too long in the system; (3) elimination of duplicative low-enrollment programs; (4) reducing the number of teachers; (5) sharing more facilities by institutions; (6) increasing student mobility between institutions; and (7) incentives to reduce non-completion rates and the long length of study time. However, when the global expenditure is so low, to try to cut corners is just an inefficient way of facing the problem.

The model of “privatization” is being sold now as “diversification”. Universities should diversify their roles and missions; the student support system needs also to be diversified. What it means is that economic aid should come not only from the public sector. This is exactly what the antibolonios define as the mercantilization of the university system. Who is going to apply these policies? From a political point of view now it is impossible. On the other hand, diversification means more resources from households (tuition fees) and more other resources. The tuition fees are already high enough according to the comparative data; and enterprises are lacking resources in this time of crisis. We do not see any possibility for a substantial diversification. Reality is that the budget of higher education in Spain needs to be increased by at least 40%, in some aspects by 100%. There is no way that households—which already pay 19% of the expenditures with medium-high tuition fees—are going to supply the money that is lacking. It is statistically impossible. So there is no other choice that to increase, substantially, public funds that in Spain cover the majority of the higher education expenditures (78%), but are not enough. To propose the increase of tuition fees with only 8% of economic aid to students is also inappropriate.
Quality assurance (and accreditation) and improvement. Spanish higher education sector is full of norms and bureaucracy. The creation of quality agencies (national and regional ones) increases even more that bureaucracy. The reality is that universities do not compete for (good) students, teachers, or researchers. There is not a national university market. Universities do not compete among them. The first year of the undergraduate studies is usually considered as a selectivity year, especially in engineering. In careers with *numerus clausus* (a fix number of students they can enroll, like Medicine) the selectivity is absent, and most of the students pass the courses. But on the whole the failure and abandoning from higher education is very high, and quality agencies do very little to resolve that problem. They measure the quality of the surviving students and programs, but not of students that abandon the programs. According to the OECD experts, evaluation and norms are worthless in Spain. “There is a widespread fatigue about recurrent evaluation bureaucracy (some speak of ‘evaluation madness’), all the more so that it goes together with a feeling that these evaluations make little difference in the end” (p. 75). Presently, there is more power in the ANECA than in the Ministry of Education. There is also a tension between regional quality agencies and the national one (ANECA). The report considers that “The level of development of regional agencies is very uneven and there is no mechanism at national level to discriminate between credible and weaker ones —which means a threat to the credibility of the Spanish QA [quality assurance] system as a whole” (p. 75). Localism is quite criticized by the OECD along the report. It criticizes that the master programs are organized by applying local standards instead of international evaluators. Also the masters are usually very short (one year), and there is no time to really create professionals in only one year. QA systems are applied nominally, but with little effect on higher education: “the relation between assessed performance and the reward and funding systems remains weak” (p. 76). The QA system tends to reward programs that are successful, mainly in Madrid and Barcelona. But some of these evaluations are never publicized. There are no reliable ranking systems in Spain, as students mainly choose the university close to their homes. University or program competition is almost non-existent.

Equity. In the form of social and economic equality, equity is difficult to measure, and even more to change. In any country, higher education is one of the most important social strategies to reproduce inequality. Many talents are lost, that never reach —or fail— higher education programs. One of the characteristics of higher education in Spain is that many people fail. There are 100 students beginning studies, but only around 50 getting their degrees. In doctorate there are one or two finishing their doctorates for each ten students. Data to demonstrate the discrimination of higher education are very scarce. OECD does not deal seriously with this problem. Women are also analyzed rarely in the report. It mentions statistics about the expansion of the university —something that is common to countries in the European Union— but nothing about the relationship between expansion and decreasing inequality. OECD never enters in the debate of universalization, that is, of expanding higher education to most of the population. A special study is needed on equity in the university system. There are not enough data available. There are some data about women (women enrolled, women graduating, specialties, and so on). But the OECD experts do not deal with equity-and-women. In the previous decades the number of students enrolled in higher education increased three times. We tend to believe that the expansion in numbers of students enrolled in higher education is related to an increase in equality. On the one hand an increase of students means more students from the lower classes, and more non-university higher education students. But on the other hand, this is related to the privatization of higher education, which doubled (2.5 times) the number of students, with six times more universities in only one decade. The first process increases equality, but the second increases inequality; and so it is difficult to evaluate both effects. Apparently there are more “disadvantaged” students now in the system but nobody calculate their numbers. Private higher education sector is concentrated in developed areas: Madrid, Barcelona, and Basque Country/Navarre.

Gender equality is a topic not well developed. Women’s participation in higher education is now greater than for men. This is an area in which —surprisingly being a Catholic and
A Mediterranean country—Spain is better than the average of the OECD countries. All universities created “equality units”, but there is no evaluation of their success. The incorporation of women at a higher level than men came to a surprise, but it is not related to these “equality units”. Adults are incorporated sometimes using the system of enrollment of “older than 25 years old” that account for 4% of enrolled students every year. The public system discriminates in favor of adults (older than 25), students who have completed higher vocational education, and persons with (officially accredited) disability. “Equity is not yet prominent among the priorities of tertiary education policy: a limited number of initiatives are targeted at improving equity, little information is collected to assess the extent of the problem, and a relatively small share of public funds are set aside for need-based grants” (p. 78). Equity is not a debate in the higher education system in Spain.

Tuition fees in Spain are not extremely high, but they are high enough to discriminate against lower classes. The OECD criticizes the scholarship/loans public system: “The student financial support system is still underdeveloped and does not assist adequately those students with financial need. The grants currently offered are not sufficient to cover realistic costs of living, are available to a small proportion of students, and a public loan system is not available” (p. 80). We cannot agree more. However, the official discourse is that the system is widespread, very efficient, and improving greatly. Equity should be guaranteed not only in the access but also in the outcomes. The university in Spain is quite popular, but around half of the students never finish their studies. Nothing is organized for failing students. It is considered “normal” that people fail exams, repeat several years, take a long time to graduate, and abandon the studies in the middle. People abandoning their studies correlate with low socioeconomic class.

The lack of data about equity —by social class, gender, and regional differences— is the main obstacle to have a sound policy in this area. A first step is to reduce inequities in the access to higher education, but also about completion of studies. Access into higher education depends of much earlier age, because that access at 18 years depends on completion and discrimination in primary and secondary education. It is especially important to prevent dropouts in upper secondary education. Spain is known as having a high rate of dropouts in secondary education, one of the highest rates in the European Union. The OECD recommends generic policies: career guidance, counseling services, incentives to attract less represented groups, persons with disabilities, adult learners, part-timers, improving also transfers from higher vocational institutions. Immigrant population is mentioned at the end of the policies towards equity. But nothing concrete and measurable is really stated. There are no concrete policies in the report, and nothing measured, not even comparative. It surprises us that the OECD can write about such an important subject with so little detail.

Research. As a proportion of the GDP, Spain has a research and development (R&D) spending that —during the last decade— is around 1%, growing slowly, while the average of the OECD is more than 2% approaching 2.5%. Research in Spain was traditionally separated from universities, concentrated in a public institution know as Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, or CSIC. A typical Spanish policy is that universities begin to absorb and produce scientific research since 1983, but the role of the CSIC does not disappear. To say it quickly: Spain invests in research and development (R&D, sometimes called research, development and innovation R&D&I) about half of what it should be. Spain’s investment is only about 62% of the OECD average. The same as the higher education sector, R&D in Spain is very public, depends more than in any other country from the public budget, and universities —now— play a key role in scientific research. There are many graduates in natural sciences as well as in technology and engineering. So universities in Spain are important for research, but still below other countries. Private universities have around 10% of the total number of university students, but only half of that percentage in R&D spending. Even the spending in R&D is so low —being one of the main problems of the country— the perception is that research has attracted too much interest.
About research —in Spain— all indicators are low, and the research is not very competitive. The problem is not only the low level of research funds available (they are mainly public) but also the very low level of funding per researcher, about half the average of the European Union. The research culture —even at public universities— is often negative. It is fragmented regionally, with little mobility of young researchers. Research programs are also fragmented geographically. Many students in doctoral programs do not really want to be researchers, but teachers, or professionals with a salary. In the last twenty years the number of new doctoral degrees has increased by seven times. This is taking into account that they finish about one out of ten students. Researchers are kept within the region. There are three new tendencies: increasing patent licenses, establishment of spin-offs, and creation of science parks. But the development of these initiatives is “incipient”. Evaluation is still rudimentary, and many times biased. Evaluations are mainly individuals, not institutions, programs, or schools.

**Human resources.** The structural problems of the human resources sector of higher education are: in-breeding, segmented labor system, low salaries, increasing part-time jobs, and gender discrimination. Faculty or academic staff concentrates the majority of expenditure of higher education. In human (academic) resources the problems are failure, in-breeding, and never ending reforms that never produce changes. Since 1983 the selection procedures have changed three times, but no progress has been obtained. In-breeding —endogamy or enchufe— is the main problem of the universities. The system is very rigid, and full of norms, but highly corrupted in the selection processes. The number of years in the teaching position and fidelity to the academic authorities (Director of the Department, Dean, full professors) is the real key to academic promotion. But as few teachers do research at an international level of competition, then some faculty tend to say that teaching is more important. But it is not true; university teaching has low quality in Spain, and it is quite traditional. The problems are more structural: salaries are low, there is not a clear career for most of academic staff, competition is scarce, and in-breeding is extremely high. The failures are not in the academic staff per se, but in the structure of the system and the organization of the institutions.

Precariousness among teachers is now higher. But we need to take into account that half the teachers do not hold a doctoral degree. The system is then segmented into two types of teachers: doctors, many of them with tenure (public servants) and a career, and the other half with no doctorate, part-time jobs (where the university job is probably the second one), and with an unclear academic career. This segmented labor market is also differentiated by gender. Women are scarce in the university level, being only about one third of the total. In public universities teachers are mainly male and, students, females; in the private sector is the reverse. In any case, women occupy the lower levels and most part-time jobs. The problem is that this situation —of historical discrimination by gender— is not changing too much.

Incentives have gone mainly to research, and high levels of tenured teachers, but not so much to teaching. The change is that teaching is increasingly in the hands of part-time teachers. The organization of education at the Spanish universities is quite authoritarian, stratified, and discriminated by gender. There are few full professors, and not all academic careers end up in a professorship. This creates stress and conflicts. Increasingly the universities are interested in research, because it is a sector that produces resources. But research outputs are limited. The main criticism is the high endogamy of higher education institutions. Traditionally, at least from 1982, the Government has tried to decrease this in-breeding, but with no success. The system of selecting teachers has changed with every reform (and party in power), but the progress is minimum. Nowadays —since 2007— there is a new system of national accreditation and local (institutional) access. But the system begins in a period of scarcity of university jobs. The local access makes the selection system even more prone to in-breeding.

The problem is the combination of no academic career, low salaries, many teachers, and a high rate of in-breeding (and so of corruption). The academic staff is quite traditional. High levels —professor with tenure— are in control of institutions, and even the sector of higher education.
The Minister, high officers in the Ministry of Education, presidents of the universities (rectores), deans, and even directors of Departments are mainly full professors-with-tenure. There is hardly any power out of their hands. The power is concentrated in a class of professors. The system has low resources, many teachers, and then segmented salaries. Absenteeism is high. Many full professors have other jobs, they spent time in politics or in outside firms. A professor really dedicated to the university is a rara avis. Academic and staff mobility is low. The reason is that most of professors do not want to move—they cannot do it—because they have parallel businesses. They cannot abandon power. When they take sabbatical years, they usually do not move from the city. In a country like Spain with a long tradition of geographical mobility it is a surprise that academic (and non-academic staff) are so static.

Relationships to the labor market. In Spain the salary difference of the population with high education qualifications and that of the population without those qualifications is lower than in other countries. Also unemployment rates for people with a higher education degree are lower, but not much lower. So returns from higher education are not as high as expected. To study at the university is not such a big difference, especially in short careers. Women are traditionally at a disadvantage in everything: higher unemployment rates, fewer jobs, less salary. Even that, there are more female students at the university, and that differential proportion with males is increasing. That tendency is clear in the whole world, although the impact on the labor market is not as visible. Feminization of higher education (students, not teachers) is a general trend, but in Spain is less profound. There is still room for an advancement of women at the universities. Spanish universities also have more lower classes enrolled than other European countries, but the dropout rate is very high, and we suppose—there are no data—that failure and abandoning is much higher among those lower classes. Higher education enrollment is decreasing in Spain since the year 2000, more than in any other country of the OECD. But from 2013 the cohort of 18 years olds will grow again, and probably so the total enrollment. The Government explains the reduction of enrollment based on the demographic reduction of the fertility rates, but it is not a convincing explanation. The surprise is that enrollment is declining, and the Government does not see it abnormal. Perhaps that declining rate is related to the small returns from higher education, that the population interpret as “No vale la pena estudiar” (it is not worth it to study). Many university graduates have temporary contracts, and their average salary is lower than in other European countries. This can be interpreted as that Spain is a more equalitarian society (differences in salaries are not that high), or simply as a country were higher education is of low quality, and does not prepare well for a competitive market. Another problem is that higher vocational studies are considered of low status, and that education is understood as an extension of secondary education rather than real higher education. What is distinctive of Spanish university education is that there is a considerable expansion of engineering students. In a decade (1994-2004) the proportion of engineer students in the whole university system grew from 14% to 26% of the total. All other fields kept their numbers, or they slightly decreased.

The main hypothesis is that the relationship between the higher education system and the labor market is weak. Rates of returns for university graduates are low, and so university degrees have the lowest return among advanced countries. The rates of return have even declined recently (the data is for 1995-2002). Every year to be a university graduate is less significant. Is that because the quality of public university education is low? Other causers could be the increasing enrollment rates of women; or because there are more lower class students than in other European countries. In the private sector, MBAs are quite popular, and in spite of the high tuition fees (up to 68,000 € per year) they insist that the returns are high, and that the cost of an MBA can be balanced in a few years. In the public universities “teaching has limited practical contents and does not provide graduates with competencies valued in the business world: leadership, creativity, English language, and management and communication skills” (p. 91). The teaching is still based on memory, and quite traditional. Few students know English well. The OECD experts expected a debate about these ideas in their report, but nobody has read it or discussed it.
The peculiarity of Spain is that the country has many Erasmus students, and also many Erasmus-students abroad; but very few students go to Spain to study a degree, and also there are few Spanish graduate students abroad. Coming (and going) for half a year, or an academic year, for an Erasmus “vacation” has become highly popular, but not to do serious studies. Real Europeanization and internationalization are low, lower than expected for the level of development of the country. The problem is that Spanish students do not know foreign languages; and the same for the teachers. Spanish universities do not attract many foreign students—to study a degree— because there are no world-class universities in the country. The general level of teaching and research are not competitive. The main object now is to “modernize” Spanish universities, which means also to be more competitive at an international level. The wishful thinking of the Government and public authorities is that universities will become more specialized, more suitable to the needs and demands of the economy and society, and of higher quality. They have confidence in ANECA and other quality assurance agencies. But in the country these agencies are more controlling than changing the university into a more internationally competitive system. Innovation and competitiveness are still low. Student participation is low, and so students express themselves mainly through anti-Bologna movements, not in the real government and management of the institutions. ECTS (European credit transfer system) is being implement, but mainly as window dressing, as a change of names, but with no real substance. ECTS favors student and staff mobility, but the official reports never give real data about the amount of real mobility of graduate students and faculty.

Spain has few international students, attracting mainly Latin American students, but very few Spanish students go to Latin America. About 42% of international students in Spain are from Latin America, and 44% are from other European Union countries. For Latin Americans, Spain is the entry door to Europe. The mobility of Latin American students is low, lower than expected to the United States, and to Europe, but they concentrate in going to Spain. The country has six times less proportion of foreign students that the United Kingdom, five times less than Germany or France. One of the reasons is that Spain has no university programs in English, in contrast to many other European countries. But the problem is not only that Spain attracts few foreigners. Inflow rates are low, but outflow rates are also low. Spain should triple the number of students abroad. The university system in Spain seems paralyzed, except for the popularity of the Erasmus program. Many of foreign Erasmus students in Spain do not attend classes, some do not even go to examinations, but they have a good time in Spain, accommodating themselves, quickly, to the local patterns of drinking and partying.

Internationalization is also the Bologna Process. For Spain the Process of Bologna is very important, because the tradition in the country—and the higher education system— has been of a certain intellectual isolation from the world, from Europe, and even from the Latin American inheritance. Franco’s dictatorship isolated universities from the world, and censored books, knowledge, and even teachers from the democratic world. But now, the Bologna Process is mainly rejected by students fed up with promises of reform from the different Governments (both central and local ones). However, internationalization, an increase of outflow rates of students, Europeanization, and the creation of world-class universities are the correct policies. In the year 2009 the Government organized a competition for Campus of International Excellence (campus de excelencia internacional) and five projects got the nomination, and so extra-funding. In the year 2010 there is going to be another competition. The Government, almost for the first time, wants to differentiate the 50 public universities, making three different groups of universities: local, regional, and global. But perhaps these policies are proposed too late. There has been almost three decades of a “modern” university system (1983-2013), but the system seems stagnant. Universities, teachers, and students are hardly international. Internationalization activities and goals are weak. The number of foreign students in graduate programs—an indicator of the quality of the institutions in an open market—is low. The inflow rate is a good indicator of the success of the new policies in the future.
Priorities

The OECD defines ten priorities for the higher education sector in Spain. They appear on Table 2, on the left side (“priorities according to the OECD report”). The experts consider that they should be implemented in the immediate and near-term future. They do not say if these ten are in order of importance. On the right side of the table there are ten priorities proposed by us. They are not ordered in pairs with the OECD decalogue: both lists reflect different issues and a different rank order. Our priorities (in the right hand side of the table) are not at random. They reflect the objective of arriving at the benchmark of the average of the OECD countries. Economically speaking, and also based on many other indicators of economic and social development (like GDP per capita), Spain is around the average of the OECD. Therefore, it makes sense that the higher education indicators should also be near that mean. Our priorities — chosen carefully among many indicators— present the OECD average as a practical ideal. However, if Spain takes a long time to implement the policies stated here, and to obtain the desired results, probably at that time OECD will be in a better situation, and Spain would be lagging behind even further. So Spain needs to catch up quickly. Time, speed, and efficacy are therefore important. Our ten proposals are like a puzzle, as all of them are interconnected. However, we tried to write them here in a rank order of importance. There is a general and important objective to be obtained if our ten priorities are implemented: a higher social equity system, which really decreases social inequality, and where talents are not lost. But this priority—more equality— is difficult to establish, as it is mainly a consequence of previous reforms of the system. But the goal is stated clearly: we need measures to monitor the progress of higher education to become a more equal system, and to contribute to a growing equality of society.

1. Universalization, reaching a GER of 80%. The most important problem of higher education in Spain is that each year there is a fewer number of students. So instead of increasing the system to reach 80% - 85% of gross enrollment ratio of youth, it is stable or even decreases. Spain is the country of the OECD in which the number of students is decreasing more. In the contemporary society that is dangerous, because advanced countries are reaching, and even over-passing that benchmark. The recommendation of the UNESCO is to consider the universalization of higher education (although not necessarily “university” education). To have a higher GER it is probably necessary to increase the number of universities in the country. That is also a need, because Spain has, together with Italy, the largest universities in Europe. Using this datum is clear that Spain should increase the number of universities, dividing them, and also creating new ones. The 77 universities, 27 of them private—although they have 184 campuses—are not enough for the necessary expansion of university education to 80% of the population. Universalization increases equity, including more lower classes, minorities, and disabled population.

2. Increase higher education expenditures (relative to the GDP) by 40%. Second to the expansion of enrollment, the problem is the lack of resources. That is not a minimal problem, as everything depends from the overall amount of resources, measured as a percentage of the gross domestic product. The country is very low in the list of the advanced countries of the world. It is true that the system is mainly public (78% of higher education expenditure is public), but the total amount of resources, both private and public, are insufficient to develop a higher education system of quality. Obviously one solution is to develop private resources, but that means increasing tuition fees in the public sector, or allowing for a big increase of the number and/or size of private universities. Another solution is to concentrate more public resources in a few public universities “of excellence”. Both systems are of dubious efficacy: privatization is hardly a solution, and the concentration of resources —when public expenditure is so low— is difficult to achieve. In the global budget for higher education, Spain is the 23rd country out of 28 OECD countries, which is definitely a problem that should be resolved soon.
3. Decrease the number of dropouts by half. Perhaps the lack of resources is the main cause of the very low productivity of the system. In rough numbers, out of one hundred students that enroll at the university there are only fifty who graduate after double the years of their studies (so, eight to ten years later). In the case of doctoral students the rate of success is only one (sometimes two) every ten students. Spanish students—especially males—are famous for not going to class, not attending examinations, failing courses, completing studies in many more years than the normal program, and abandoning the career. The country has also a very high rate of dropouts in primary and secondary education, which indicate that the selection process has already been done in the secondary education. But the selection (failures) continues in higher education. The productivity of the university system is so low, that it needs to be reformed urgently.

4. Increase by 2.5 times the economic aid to students. Everything is related: total expenditure is very low, and dropout rates are high. The only system of avoiding the lost of talents is then increasing economic aid—from the State—to students at least to the average level of OECD countries. That means to increase between two and three times the money of scholarships and loans. That way 8% of the total expenditures in higher education can grow to 19%, which is the OECD mean for students’ economic aid. A very low expenditure in economic aid produces a high dependency of students from their parents, and decreases geographical mobility, and so there is no competition among universities. In addition, dropout rates are high, and the abandoning of talents is high. Even the best scholarships offered now by the central Government are less than 300 € per month. The Ministry of Education makes repeated promises to enlarge that amount “up to” 600 € per month, in some cases. That is, again, insufficient.

5. Duplicate R&D funding. Expenditure on research in the universities is very low, half the average of OECD, and even lower that some other countries that lead in R&D in the world. The number of researchers is high, but this is false as they are considered as a proportion (around half) of all teachers, whether they are producing research or not. The paradoxical fact is that there are more researchers at the university than the number of teachers holding a doctorate. The whole rate is a statistical invention. However, the problem is not researchers but the very low funding of research, which needs to be doubled or more. During the crisis (2008-) the budget for R&D lowered. It is a secular problem in the country, expressed in the cynical phrase: “¡Que inventen ellos!”

6. Stop in-breeding in teaching and staff, and their precariousness. The present situation is that the country has many teachers, more than necessary if they had full time dedication. But many of them are in part time teaching jobs (by contract or in reality), their salaries are low, and the conditions precarious. But the worst part is that the system of selecting the staff—both teachers and non-academic staff—suffers from a very high in-breeding. Staff is selected from within the university, at all levels. This endogamy has produced that teachers are not selected in terms of quality and excellence, or real research credentials, but fidelity to the authority, and not opposition to the professors with power within their departments. There is not a national academic market, as regions are autonomous, and even institutions keep their autonomy not to compete for students, teachers, and researchers. Mobility of staff is very low; the same that geographical mobility of students (because the lack of scholarships). So due to different causes, Spain lacks a real national academic market, and also the internationalization of its universities.

7. Apply the Bologna Process correctly. Nothing changed really in the academic sector in Spain because of the Bologna Process, simply because it was applied late, in an incomplete manner, and mainly as a change of names and window dressing. The philosophy of Bologna is not really applied. Firstly, the country needs to change to the system of 4+1 organization it has now into a system of 3+2 (three years bachelor, two years master). Secondly, the number of careers in the first three years should be drastically decreased, and the content should be generalist. All important changes of Bologna should be finally applied. The longer average duration of undergraduate studies in Spain is going to be a problem. Also the explicit European dimension
is still lacking in undergraduate education. Other changes has been adopted (like the ECTS European credit transfer system, the diploma supplement, systems of quality assurance, student geographical mobility, and lifelong learning processes) but with limited success. Since the year 2000 Spain is the most popular country for foreign Erasmus students, but one with the lowest rate of foreign students in graduate programs. Spain is a good destination for “vacation” but not for serious studies.

8. **Triple the number of graduate students abroad (not Erasmus programs)**. Spain is a strange country: very popular for foreign Erasmus students, but with very few foreign students really coming for a degree program: master or doctorate. Spain strongly attracts Latin American students. Not only inflow rates are low, but also outflow rates are also low. In order to change the quality of teaching the country needs many more young people going abroad for a more developed training, but also having policies so many of them can return later to the country. The solution is not increasing *brain drain*, but especially *brain gain*. The country needs more fellowships to go abroad, and also jobs or research grants for the ones that are willing to return. The Spanish higher education system can be changed only with well-trained scholars, educated in world-class universities, and returning to the country. We can estimate that the outflow should be at least triple the present rate, to reach the OECD average. The Ministry of Education has very few pre-doctoral fellowships to go abroad, and that should be expanded. The rates should be tripled. In our priorities we should add some specific measures that are important to apply. One is to reach a proficiency in English for all teachers and most of students. The present higher education system in Spain is lacking a good knowledge of English among teachers, and students (when they begin their undergraduate studies), so they can read materials in English, and have courses in English. The foreign language level of university students is very low.

9. **Reform doctoral programs so there are less students and more obtaining their degrees**. Contrary to a generalized opinion, Spain has many doctoral students, because most (all) universities have doctoral programs, with in-breeding training. As there is no national academic market, and even little relationship between universities, higher education is concentrating too many doctoral students. The system is of a very low productivity (one or two doctoral dissertations approved every ten students). But even when the system is a big failure, the country has many doctors. Proportionally speaking Spain produces more doctors than United States. Presently the Spanish doctors do not have work, and that increases the in-breeding and corruption practices within some universities.

10. **Stop the privatization trend (2.4 times in the last decade)**. Privatization is small in Spain, if it measured by the proportion of students in private universities. But the proportion duplicates every decade. New universities are mainly private: 50 public and 27 private universities at present time. If that trend is not stopped the country is going to have a small public university system for the lower classes, and a developed and technologically up to date private university sector attracting middle and higher classes. That is already happening with the business schools. Some of the private universities (and schools) are in the hands of the Catholic Church, often the Opus Dei (a conservative branch of the Catholic Church), and other right-wing groups. In addition to the privatization trends of “private” universities, there is an increasing privatization of programs and services in public universities. An appropriate policy would be to stop the increasing trend of privatization, of both private and public institutions of higher education. This should include non-university higher education, which is even more privatized. To allow for an increasing privatization of higher education, while allowing for a degradation of the public system is not a solution. This is the least important of the ten priorities, simply because it would not be needed if the nine above are implemented correctly.

All these ten priorities can be measured against the mean of the European Union, or better the OECD average. They can also be compared with a similar country (France), a country with world-class universities and excellent research (United Kingdom), and also with United States as the international point of reference. Some basic statistics can be seen in **Table 3**. These data
are quite complicated to collect, because sources vary, and they belong to different years. But the ones presented here are clear, and support our priorities. The figures, mainly percentages, have no decimals. Here we do not need a detailed exactitude (that can be consulted in the OECD, UNESCO, and The World Bank databases) but to see the differences of Spain with the average of OECD, and three leading countries.

The numbers of this table support most of our priorities. Spain has around 30,800 GDP per capita (in USD) which is close to the average of OECD 32,700, and also of the European Union (30,700 GDP per capita). So, the higher education rates should be close to that average, and not far from France and the United Kingdom, which are merely 10% and 15% richer than Spain. United States is quite different, as it is 52% richer. The original problem in Spain is that secondary education is not working well, has many dropouts, and so many youth cannot reach university. The country has a comparatively low rate of young adult population with upper secondary education. It needs to increase that rate (which is 65%) by at least 20%. That means an effort that cannot be done by the higher education sector alone. It needs to be done as soon as possible to avoid growing inequality in education. So the education in Spain is suffering from both extremes: lacking youths in education, and also lacking older students. LLL means enlarging the proportion of mature students perhaps to double or tripled the actual number. Spain is the country in OECD with the biggest decrease of university enrollment. Since 1995 the absolute number of youths in the general population decreased. The university enrollment increased a few years more, but in the year 2000 it began to decrease. That means that smaller cohorts decreased the number of enrollments at the universities, not being compensated by an expansion of the system. In the year 2013 the 18-cohort will stabilize, and afterwards around 2015 it will grow again. But the university system should expand growing to a universalization model of 80% of youth—or more—enrolled in higher education.

Spain has too many university teachers, perhaps because the number of students decreased, but the contract of new teachers was kept bigger than the retirement of old teachers. Those new teachers are not necessarily part-time teachers (profesores asociados), as the proportion of faculty with tenure has not changed. There are many teachers, but they are badly paid. Feminization of the university is a fact, but not among faculty, with only 39% women. It is true that the university is increasingly for women (124 women/100 men among students), but the feminization trend is lower than in other countries. So while it looks that there are in Spain many women at the university—especially in public universities—the fact is that the proportion is lower than in other advanced countries. So there is still some room for a further feminization of the university, especially among teachers.

Spain has changed from a country with few university students—it was half the expected rate in 1970—to one of the European countries with more students enrolled. However, there are many university students in the country because completion rates are long, and many students fail courses and repeat academic years. From one hundred students beginning higher education they finish about half of them. The productivity is lower among doctoral students, finishing only one or two each ten students. So the optimistic data about GER need to be considered more as a failure of the system. In addition, the country has still many engineers, and few older students, being two of the imbalances that also need to be resolved.

The main problem is the universalization of the university, but related to that funding is very low. Spain should increase at least 40% its expenditure in higher education. The growth in the last decade is positive, but still 14% slower than OECD, which has a much higher expenditure. Many things depend from this lack of expenditure in the Spanish higher education. Public expenditure is similar to other countries, and only a little short of the OECD average. It is true that private expenditure should expand, but not tuition fees in the public higher education institutions. That means that to look more European, or more OECD-like, Spain could try to privatize universities: creating new private universities, or privatizing some programs and services in public universities. Spain is doing both at present time, but not at a rate that could
make the sector comparable, and not in a planned rational way. These things are happening, not planned. The increase of private expenditure is lower than other countries. The institutions spend most of their budget on paying teachers, who concentrate a high proportion of the current expenditure. This is because there are many teachers, and very little of other current expenditure. The spending on other (non-academic) staff is quite reduced: they are few and badly paid.

The lack of money is even clearer in economic aid to students. Scholarships and loans together should increase by two or three times. This is one of the worst indicators of the whole higher education sector in Spain. It is creating high levels of dependency of youth from their parents. The subsidy of private entities (among them families) is very low in Spain, and needs to expand three or four times more. Everything in higher education is asking for more money and resources. But the case of research (R&D) is one of the clearest. The national expenditure should at least double, and at the universities (which concentrate most of the R&D resources) it should grow by 25% or more. The number of researchers should increase by 30%; even the expansion should be seen more in the business enterprises sector. Students, libraries, and research are the weak points in the higher education budget. In the future the country needs to develop a national market of universities, with world-class institutions. The market now is fragmented, and geographical mobility is low. This system is kept by two strategies that are cause-and-effect of the fragmented system: (1) not enough scholarships for students that would allow them the freedom to choose university and programs; and (2) a high rate of in-breeding in the selection of teachers within each university. The Government needs to open new public universities, to create a national market, to increase geographical mobility of both students and teachers, to decrease in-breeding, and to favor the creation of a few world-class universities. The new idea (2010) of Campus of International Excellence, five so far, is an ideal. The city of Madrid plays, de facto, a central role with 19% of students from other regions, and 5% of foreigners. But this central role is not creating world-class universities yet. The Ministry of Education is thinking now to structure public university into three groups: local, regional, and global universities. The solution is to classify them in a different way, but also to include real changes in structure, teaching, and research.
Table 1  
Chronology of higher education in Spain

13th-15th century  Creation of the first medieval universities.  
Mainly a royal creation.  
Salamanca (1218), Valladolid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Santiago, and Valencia (1500).  
Expulsion of Jews.

16th century  Three new universities: Seville (1505), Madrid (1508), Granada (1531).

17th-18th century  Decadence of Spanish universities.  
Creation of few new universities: La Laguna University in 1701.

1857  **LIP, Ley de Instrucción Pública**, know as “Ley Moyano”.  
Only one central university (Madrid) with 9 regional university districts.  
Around 9,000 university students in the country.  
Creation of the first private university in the country, Deusto, in 1886.

1900  Creation of the **Ministerio de Instrucción Pública**.  
Illiteracy around 60% of the population.  
About 8,000 university students in the country (60% of them in Madrid).

1930  José Ortega y Gasset publishes the book **Misión de la Universidad**.  
Second private university (Comillas, in 1935).

1936-1975  Three years of civil war, and Franco’s dictatorship.  
Third private university (Pontificia de Salamanca 1940).  
**LOUE, Ley de Ordenación de la Universidad Española** (1943).  
A very centralized model, with total control from the State.  
Universities at the service of the dictatorship.  
Heavy ideological censorship in all education institutions.  
Rectors (presidents) and deans designated by Franco.  
Revolt of students in 1957.  
Opus Dei’s university (Navarra 1953) in Pamplona.  
Creation of 3 “autonomous” universities in 1968: Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao.  
Creation of a national open university, UNED (in 1972).  
Death of Franco (November 1975).

1977  General (democratic) elections.  
Increase of university students (1970-1980 tripled the number).

1977-1982  Five years of **UCD government** (center-right party).  
Constitution (December 1978):  
It includes academic freedom, university autonomy, and education as a right for the population.  
But not higher education reform in this period.  
Discussion about a possible **LAU Ley de Autonomía Universitaria** (1979-1982), never approved.

1982-1996  Fourteen years of **PSOE government** (socialist party).  
**LRU Ley Orgánica de Reforma Universitaria** first democratic reform (1983) of the university system, following the LAU project. It takes eight years to be issued.  
The geographical decentralization process begins, ending by 1992.
A new system of Departments to substitute the authoritarian cátedras system.
Encouraging the combination of teaching and research.

LODE, Ley Orgánica Reguladora del Derecho a la Educación (1985) on compulsory education.


For the first time 51% of undergraduate students are women (1990).

Law allowing for the creation of more private universities, Expansion of the private sector.

LOGSE, Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (1990) with the new bachillerato, and compulsory education up to 16 years.

In 1994, maximum of 18 years olds in the country. The cohorts begin to decrease (until 2013).

From the year 2000 on the number of university students in the country begin to decrease.

1996-2004

Eight years of the PP government (right party).

2001 LOU, Ley Orgánica de Universidades. It takes five years for the rightist government to reform the LRU.

2002 Vocational training law.

Creation of ANECA (national quality assurance agency).


2004-

PSOE government (socialist party).

2006 LOE, Ley Orgánica de Educación including vocational and specialized education.

2007 LOR-LOU, Ley Orgánica de Reforma de la LOU, from the leftist government in the third year of legislature.

2009 Nomination “Campus of International Excellence” (5 campuses).

2010 First debates about a national political pact on education to avoid continuous party reforms, led by Minister Angel Gabilondo (a non successful pact).

“Strategy University 2015”.

Law of Science (to be approved tentatively in 2010).

2010

77 universities (50 public) with 184 campuses, 1.4 million students.

80 scientific and technological parks.

Plan to divide universities into three types: local, regional, and global.

Plans to increase the scholarship-salary from the present 300 € per month.

2015

The cohort (18 years old) of eligible university students begins to grow again.

Notes: (a) “Ley Moyano” by the name of the Minister of Fomento, Claudio Moyano Samaniego.
Table 2
Priorities for Spanish higher education in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>According to the OECD report:</th>
<th>More realistic priorities (by order of importance):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A comprehensive and coherent vision.</td>
<td>1. Universalization, reaching a GER of 80%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Integration of higher vocational education.</td>
<td>2. Increase higher education expenditures (relative to the GDP) by 40%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Diversification (i.e.: privatization).</td>
<td>3. Decrease the number of dropouts by half.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Institutional autonomy.</td>
<td>4. Increase by 2.5 times the economic aid to students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Higher tuition fees, and more scholarships.</td>
<td>5. Duplicate R&amp;D funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Quality assurance.</td>
<td>6. Stop in-breeding in teaching and staff, as well as their precariousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Making more prominent equity issues.</td>
<td>7. Apply the Bologna Process correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Public/private knowledge flows.</td>
<td>8. Triple the number of graduate students abroad (not in Erasmus programs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Modernization of the academic career.</td>
<td>9. Reform doctoral programs so there are less students and more obtaining their degrees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Internationalization.</td>
<td>10. Stop the privatization trend (2.4 times in the last decade).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: For the left side of the table in Paulo Santiago et al., OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education: Spain (Paris: OECD, 2009), pp. 133-135. The right side of the table is our own contribution.

Notes: GER, gross enrollment ratio.
Higher vocational education is FPGS: formación profesional de grado superior.
Dropouts refer to: failing grades, cutting classes, long completion rates, and abandoning the studies.
GDP gross domestic product, per capita.
Table 3
Higher education indicators in Spain in comparative perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators:</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>OECD</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (in millions, 2009)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita, in thousands of USD (2009)</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure in higher education as % of total expenditures in education (2004)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (25-64) with higher education (in %)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of young adult population (25-34) with upper secondary education (in 2007)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of youth 15-19 in education (2007)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of youth 20-24 in education (2007)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education students, in millions (2007)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in higher education, in thousands (2007)</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in the number of students (% increase 1995-2005)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students by teaching staff (2007)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students per 100 males (2007)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of female teachers (2007)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrollment ratio, GER, in 1970</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER (2007)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER of females</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of private students (2007)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of engineering students (2006)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students graduating in engineering (2007)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of students aged 35 and over (2003)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD graduation rate (2007)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure as a proportion of the GDP (2006)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in total expenditures (increase 1995-2005)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditure as %GDP (2006)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private expenditure as %GDP (2006)</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of private expenditure (%) in 2006</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household expenditure (%) in 2006</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase (2000-2006) of private expenditure</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of direct public expenditure on public institutions</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditure on teachers as % of current expenditure (2006) | 60 | 43 | 52 | 42 | 28 |
Expenditure on other staff as % of current expenditure (2006) | 21 | 24 | 28 | 30 | 36 |
Annual expenditure on higher education per student, in thousands of USD (2006) | 11 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 25
---|---|---|---|---|---
Financial aid to students (as a % of total public expenditure in 2006) | 8 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 13
Student loans as % of total public expenditure (2006) | 0 | 9 | ... | 21 | 18
Subsidies for education to private entities as a % GDP (in 2006) | 0.08 | 0.27 | 0.10 | 0.29 | 0.44

R&D national expenditure as % GDP | 1.1 | 2.2 | ... | ... | ...
R&D expenditure of higher education institutions as % GDP | 0.32 | 0.40 | ... | ... | ...
Researchers per 1,000 total employment (2007) | 5.7 | 7.3 | ... | ... | ...
Expenditure in R&D by business enterprises as a % from the total | 54 | 68 | ... | ... | ...
Researchers in business enterprises as a % of total researchers in the country | 32 | 64 | ... | ... | ...

Inflow: foreign students as % of all students (2007) | 1.2 | 9.6 | 11.3 | 14.9 | 3.4
Outflow: students abroad as % of higher education students (2007) | 1.2 | 4.0 | 2.5 | 1.1 | 0.3


Notes: GER in the world in 2007 is 25%; 108 females per 100 males.
USD: United States dollars, converted using PPPs.
(a) For the year 2005, unless indicated differently.
(b) The average GDP per capita in the European Union is 30.7 (thousands USD). The OECD datum is from 2007.
(c) Privatization in the European Union (EU19) has increased 208% in this period (2000-2006).
(d) Here the inflow and outflow rates of students do not include Erasmus students (one of two semesters exchange programs).
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De Miguel, Jesús M., Jordi Caïs, and Elizabeth Vaquera (2001) Excelencia: Calidad de las universidades españolas. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Colección Academia, 506 pp. It includes the first ranking and evaluation of Spanish universities using one hundred indicators. The final Ranking 2000 appears in page 335, in Table 4.6. See also Tables 4.4 y 4.5.


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