

Second Chance Programmes: A Response to Educational Needs in Compulsory Education. (Se puede encontrar en el número de Marzo, del 2008)

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## **Abstract**

In this article the authors ask whether the integrated training provision offered through the different Spanish Second Chance Programmes (SCPs) constitutes a valid response to the educational needs and deficits which exist among those young people who do not satisfactorily complete the Compulsory Secondary Education stage (ESO). The objectives of the current Social Guarantee Programmes (SGPs) are examined, as are the characteristics of the young people who participate in them. The Programmes of Initial Vocational Qualification (PCPI) envisaged in the most recent educational legislation (LOE, 2006) are also discussed.

Beginning with a review of current research into Second Chance Programmes, the article then goes on to examine the objectives and methodology of these programmes as applied in the Spanish context. The characteristics of the programmes as currently offered and their user profile are outlined and a summary of the daily experiences of the teaching staff involved is presented.

Having identified the key factors which influence the effectiveness of these programmes in addressing the educational needs and training deficiencies of the young people involved, a number of proposals are presented in connection with the training needs of teaching staff. Finally the article offers some suggestions for ways in which the challenges which arise in the PCPI context may be better addressed.

**Keywords** Second Chance Education, Initial Vocational Qualification Programmes, learning communities, educational needs, transition to adult life, vocational training, educational policy.

**Introduction: Getting To Grips With a Complex and Difficult Situation, and the search for alternatives.**

The Work-School Research Group (Equipo de Investigación Escuela Trabajo, ERET) based in the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Barcelona has carried out a number of studies concerning Second Chance Education in recent years, and all of the studies were conducted in the Spanish Autonomous Community of Catalonia, more specifically in the provinces of Lleida and Barcelona.

Given the growing concern in many parts of the learning community as to the functioning and effectiveness of Second Chance Programmes, and in an attempt to move the present debate forward, the ERET group carried out an initial study in Barcelona (Sanchez Asín et al, 2004) which was followed by a second study in Lleida (Boix, 2005). We find it worrying that Spain, jointly with Iceland, Portugal and Malta, currently is to be found at the tail end of the European classification of school dropouts by country. In Spain 25% of children drop out of school before satisfactorily completing the Compulsory Secondary stage. These young people are at some considerable disadvantage in the labour market due to their low educational level, and their lack of formal qualifications. As a consequence they run the risk of being subject to social exclusion processes. (European Commission DG EAC, 2005)

The recent passage into law of a new framework for compulsory education (Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2006) offers the opportunity to reflect a little on the current situation, and to examine what the new Programmes of Initial Vocational Qualification (PCPI) have to offer in relation to the Second Chance Education Programmes.

We are of the opinion that the knowledge we have obtained of the current situation in Spanish Secondary Education and in the Second Chance Programmes should not only serve to preoccupy us, it should also act as a stimulus to examine the kinds of educational and training programmes we are currently offering, as well as to identify examples of current good practice and the emerging educational needs of the entire school population. For this reason it is worth asking ourselves the following question: is the education and training provision contained in the Second Chance Programmes a valid and sufficient response with which to address the educational needs and deficits of this population?

### **Educational need from an inclusive perspective**

The extension of special education provision to children with learning difficulties, social adaptation problems or as a response to the rapid increase in cultural diversity which is taking place in the Spanish school has meant that the traditional discourse which was characterised by terminology like “special education” and “special educational need” has been replaced by one where terms like “attention to diversity” and “the inclusive school” occupy a leading role.

The concept of diversity covers a number of additional dimensions like cultural and linguistic diversity, social and gender related constraints on access to knowledge, constraints often associated with a series of factors, both “intra” and “extra” personal, while the idea of special educational needs is normally associated with handicaps, learning difficulties, gifted children, and children and adults with functional problems of vision, mobility, hearing and cognition. That is to say diversity is inherent to being human, and the human being is a multi-dimensional and

complex one.

This evident reality notwithstanding, the term diversity continues to be used in a reductionist way when it is applied to children who are significantly below the standard performance level in comparison with their peers, or when it is used to validate educational practices employed in the context of children with learning deficits who need responses which differ from those laid down in the standard curriculum, responses that are normally delivered by specialist staff. Such a conception runs the risk that it may itself reinforce exclusion mechanisms in that difference is often not seen as a positive educational value, but rather as a reinforcement for the idea that different children need to be taught separately, since differences are observed in level, capacity and competence (Ainscow et al, 2004; Jové et al, 2007)

This approach would seem to deny the existence of different rhythms of evolutionary development and concentrate on the idea that diversity is associated with the presence of deficits, rather than with the presence of inadequate psycho-pedagogic practice, or situations of disadvantage, cultural deprivation, socio-economic disadvantage, or being a member of a given ethnic minority.

For this reason we favour the inclusive school, where the classroom offers a space which guarantees that those children with special learning difficulties feel themselves recognized and accepted as equals, and where what each has to offer to the community is recognised whilst, at the same time, the classroom environment offers a guarantee of the curricular modifications and support which are necessary to produce satisfactory learning outcomes.

In particular Stainback (1999) draws attention to the fact that these learning contexts need to foster attitudes of paying attention to the needs of others, and to create among all children a feeling of being at home, respected by peers, a growing sense of self-esteem and worth and of having something to offer society.

Needs may present themselves at any point on a continuum which extends from slight to severe difficulty, and may be either permanent or irreversible (Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo, 1990; Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2006). Hegarty (1988, p. 83) refers to how those students who experience severe difficulties may require a “general curriculum with specific modifications.”

Up to the present time, and via a process based on Individual Curricular Adaptation and other such specially adapted programmes, many young people who have not successfully completed the Compulsory Education Stage and who have participated in Second Chance Programmes have been in receipt of educational provision designed to facilitate access to the standard curricular outside of the normal educational system. From now on these programmes will form part of the final stage of compulsory education itself, since the objective is to offer a response to the both common needs of the group and to the differences which exist within the group, establishing in the process both

minimums and maximums which offer an educational itinerary for all the educational needs, styles and interests which are to be found within the group.

The child who experiences some or all of these difficulties is in need of some kind of additional support, whether this take the form of non-specific or decontextualised curricular contents, or the application of systematic teaching-learning strategies associated with textual comprehension, improvements in oral communication and written expression, calculation, social, or emotional and life, skills.

When we refer to teaching-learning strategies, we define these as processes which serve as a basis for being able to verbalise intellectual tasks.

Such abilities are composed of a series of skills which may be used in order to achieve a given objective and implemented with the aim of facilitating the acquisition, storage and appropriate application of information (Nisbet and Schucksmith 1987; Pozo, 1990).

At the same time it is necessary to stress the importance which should be attached to vocational competences which, as emphasised by Levy-Leboyer (1996), may be considered as repertoires of behaviour (incorporating attitudes, personality traits and knowledge) which some individuals are better able to exercise than others, and which make them more effective in a given situation.

We would also like to stress the desirability of including such strategies within the concept of the “inclusive school”, since it is through this idea that a response is given to the presence, participation and performance of all the children in all the schools across an educational district, an ambition which does not simply focus on the needs of one or more risk groups. “Inclusion” here is understood as an essentially transforming concept, and as such requires the optimum use of all available resources in order to improve norms and practices.

At the same time, from a perspective which is more oriented towards the skills and competences of the child, Flecha and Tortajada (1999) stress the following: education, in addition to facilitating training based on the acquisition of knowledge, has to allow for the development of those skills which are necessary for participation in the information society. Skills such as the selection and processing of information, autonomy, decision taking capacity, working in groups, polyvalency and flexibility are all essential in different social contexts: the labour market, cultural activities and social life generally. Teachers should promote not only the competences of privileged groups, but also socially required competences, and this from the viewpoint of all that the child needs to know .

For children in Compulsory Education, and especially for those who have participated in a Second Chance Programme, progress has been conditioned by the kind of strategies used when they study, and this has special importance when it becomes necessary for them to remember information contained in written texts. One of the

main learning problems faced by those children who do not achieve the objectives laid down in the Compulsory Education stage originates in the accumulation of reading comprehension deficits which become evident when it is necessary to process information. This deficit creates a distance from their peers and in particular in the context of work involving extended comments and synthesis and, perhaps most importantly of all, at the time of examinations. (Ester et al, 2000; Eurydice, 2003, Sánchez Asín et al, 2004a). The detection and correction of inadequate teaching and learning strategies constitutes a key step on the road to improving the textual comprehension of these children, and would help in the identification of those key concepts and necessary facts which make it possible to understand the totality of a given subject. As such this process should be one of the core objectives of the PCPI.

It has been observed that when the child's attitudes towards and relations with the relevant teaching-learning strategies are in harmony, then this improves motivation, and the child no longer feels the same anxiety towards study, and indeed the child may well start to believe in his or her own possibilities as indicated in the PISA report (OCDE: 2003).

All too often teachers have extensive knowledge of their subject area, but lack awareness of the importance of reflective and critical attitudes towards the evaluation of their own procedures; it is necessary "to learn to learn from differences" (Ainscow et al, 2004, p. 57) from the perspective of an inclusive practice. When speaking of attitudes towards study and the implications of these for educational policy, what is being referred to here are the repercussions that such attitudes have on the methods used by and the need for the "continuous training" of teachers, a topic which has been a constant theme in all our research (Sánchez Asín et al, 2004; Boix, 2005; Jové et al, 2007). Thus "we consider that in relation to the attention shown to diversity, the needs of the teachers are determined by the challenge of achieving the successful qualification and attainment of access to cultural and vocational training on the part of all the children in their care, with the objective of achieving the transition from one educational stage to the next or, in terms of the socio-cultural environment, their full participation in civic life as citizens. (Jové et al, 2007 p.213),

### **3 FROM SECOND CHANCE PROGRAMMES TO INITIAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION PROGRAMMES: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

The new Spanish Organic Education Law (LOE, 2006) brings with it the initiative known as Initial Vocational Qualification Programmes (PCPI). These programmes are a response to the existence of educational deficits. The objective of such programmes is to attain a situation where all children achieve the key vocational competences associated with the first level of the National Catalogue of Vocational Competences (2007) and thus acquire the academic certification necessary to demonstrate what they have achieved and, in this way, improve their

possibilities of labour market placement and social integration.

In the same way, the LOE (2006, Art.12,1) makes explicit the orientation of education towards the educational needs of the child insofar as *“The diversity related measures in this stage will be oriented towards a response to the concrete educational needs of the child and the achievement of the basic competences and objectives of compulsory secondary education which may not, under any circumstance, involve or imply a discrimination which impedes their attainment of these same objectives together with the corresponding qualification.”*

The child who, for whatever reason, enters the educational system later than normal should not be marginalised and dispatched to a group of “hopeless cases”; the LOE (2006) has as its explicit objective the avoidance of circumstances where the child is deprived of his or her basic educational rights, and establishes the means for recovering lost time, by offering the child both the time necessary for maturation and the support of specialist resources, and this always from within an inclusive perspective.

The PCPI aim to equip the child with *“the vocational competences associated with a level one qualification in the present structure.....together with the possibility of obtaining a satisfactory work placement whilst at the same time expanding their basic competences in a way which makes it possible for them to continue their studies in the relevant area”* (LOE, 2006, Art. 30.2).

The PCPI are directed towards children over the age of 16 and who have not achieved the qualification of Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education. This age may, with the agreement of the child and parents or tutors, be reduced to fifteen in some specific cases. *“In this case the child will acquire the obligation of studying the models referred to in section 3.c of this article.”*

The child who enters PCPI may receive either specific training or graduation modules of a voluntary character. These modules should be developed as part of the curriculum, which is defined as *“the set of objectives, basic competences, contents, pedagogic methods and evaluation criteria which form part of this stage”*. (Art. 6)

## **STUDIES ON SECOND CHANCE PROGRAMMES (SANCHEZ ASIN ET AL, 2004; BOIX, 2005; SANCHEZ ASIN ET AL, 2006)**

### **General objectives**

Those children who - on completing the Compulsory Education Stage – have not achieved the standard certification may enter the Second Chance Programmes which provide a framework in which they can address their outstanding

educational needs and achieve the transition to adult life, either through direct entry to the workplace or through participation in the Intermediate Level Training Cycles (CFGM).

The research which we present here:

- Analysed Second Chance Centres in order to identify:
  - The children using these programmes.
  - The environment in which the programmes were organised and the professional staff involved.
  - The level of success achieved, bearing in mind the objectives proposed, the satisfaction of the children and the level of subsequent work placement.
  - Intervention proposals which may help to improve the efficacy of the training activities associated with the Second Chance Programmes.
  - Proposals based on the identification of limitations in the earlier model, which can help make the Initial Vocational Qualification Programmes more effective.

## **Methodology and design**

Research was carried out by Sánchez Asín et al (2004a) in Barcelona and the surrounding area and by Boix in the area of Segriá (Lleida Province) using a quantitative methodology, in “ex post facto” mode, principally by means of a survey. Additional data was also collected using a “self-completed” questionnaire.

The Boix (2005) study was compared using a qualitative methodology which centred on one single location, the Secondary Education Institute in Alcarrás.

## **The sample**

The ERET team carried out their initial study in the Province of Barcelona. The sample used came from children and teachers in the Second Chance Programmes in educational centres administered by the Education Department of the provincial authority (the Diputació de Barcelona), by the municipal authorities and by the private sector. The Boix (2005) sample was drawn from children and management team members from a variety of centres including Compulsory Education Centres (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria), Mixed Curriculum Centres (Unidades de Escolarización Compartida) and Second Chance Programmes Centres in the area of Segriá (Lleida province).

In both studies the decision about sample populations was justified using criteria of accessibility, proximity and available resources. Subsequent to the initial invitation process the number of participation acceptances was considered sufficient to obtain a reasonable descriptive knowledge of the operation of Second Chance Programmes as perceived by those working in them.

The Barcelona sample was composed of 300 children and 90 teachers, and the sample from Segriá came from 23 centres, with members of the management team from every centre participating together with a total of 387 children

### **The Information gathering instrument: the questionnaire**

In both studies a self-completed questionnaire was used since this format was considered to be in general harmony with the research objectives, which were to explore the day to day working of Second Chance Programmes in order to describe their operation and compare the findings with those obtained by other researchers.

In the Barcelona study two questionnaires were applied. One of these was directed towards teachers and analysed the following dimensions:

- Individual data: education and training, work experience, professional position.
- Evaluation of the Second Chance Programmes and their relation with the world of work.
- Teaching resources.
- Evaluation of the children.

The questionnaire applied to the children also evaluated four dimensions:

- Personal and family data.
- Academic performance in Compulsory Education.
- Relation between Second Chance Programmes and the world of work
- Leisure activities

In the Lleida study the questionnaires contained five thematic groups:

- Data related to the objectives of the study.
- Resources and strategies directed towards the diversity of the child population, and knowledge and evaluation of the Second Opportunity Programmes.
- Characteristics of the children: personal and cognitive, academic aspects, affective and relational aspects, social and family aspects.
- Data concerning the education centre.
- Other items raised from within the centres themselves.

The questions asked varied greatly in character, and the classification system used to order them was an attempt to incorporate a number of different criteria. The types of question asked varied from the very circumscribed (or precodified) to the completely open. In the main closed questions (dichotomies, or in need of a binary choice) and

attitude or Likker scales were used. The questionnaires were validated using two strategies: expert judgement and pilot studies.

In the second stage of the Lleida study (Boix, 2005) a qualitative analysis was carried out. This was very similar to the one proposed by Texch (Valles, 1997) who tried to establish an equilibrium between structural and interpretative analysis, and this equilibrium affects the analysis in terms of apparent and underlying structures, category identification, connections between categories, as well as frequencies, regularities and singularities. To achieve this objective the Delphi technique and focus groups were employed.

**Results:**

### **analysis and comparison of secondary schools with respect to second chance programmes**

A significant percentage of children over 16 (35%) do not obtain the standard qualification on completing the Compulsory Secondary Education stage. Given this situation it is frequently the case that Secondary Education schools who are aware of the presence of Second Opportunity Programmes evaluate these in order to orient those who are at risk of not achieving a qualification. Those children who show interest in such programmes are oriented towards them by tutors and educational psychologists, and this orientation normally occurs in the process of determining which is more appropriate, entering such a programme or entering directly the labour market. The principal grounds for recommending participation in Second Chance Programmes are the presence of motivation loss towards conventional academic study and, in a more positive direction, the fact that these programmes promote vocational orientation via their work experience component.

There are however significant differences between Secondary Schools and Second Chance Centres (see Table 1 and Chart 1 below).

Table: 1. Factors which influence decision taking

Some 80.6% of the children entering Second Chance Programmes in the province of Barcelona choose this route because they wish to learn a skill or trade with the objective of entering the labour market, whilst 30.2% enter such programmes because they wish to improve their curricular competences as a means of gaining access to the Intermediate Level Training.

Chart 1. Reasons for entering Second Chance Programmes.

The overwhelming majority of children who enter Second Chance Programmes in Segriá (Lleida) come from Secondary Schools. The remainder come either from other Second Opportunity Programmes, or are school dropouts or unemployed. Only a small percentage are from migrant families, or from child care centres, or are oriented towards the programmes by labour market placement agencies (see Chart 2).

Chart 2. Participation by origin in Second Chance Programmes in Segriá (Lleida)

Study of the typical profile of children entering Second Chance Programmes in the Province of Barcelona reveals that 45.5% had repeated a year in Secondary Education, 21.6% come from Modified Curriculum Centres, 15.9% had received an individually Modified Curriculum in a Secondary School, and 12.5% come from Shared Education Centres

It was noted in the focus groups held in the Alcarrás Secondary School that the children generally considered the Second Chance Programmes as a “last resort” training option since they tended to be associated with the presence of children with severe behavioural problems.

On the other hand, the children participating in Second Chance Programmes considered the learning they were receiving there to be significant, and as being highly relevant to their perceived daily life and work search needs.

### **Second chance programmes: what have they attempted to do?**

Teaching staff recognised, in both studies, that the children who participate in Second Chance Programmes generally attribute a relatively high value to these programmes in terms of their influence on their future work plans and on their level of social participation.

The success rate of these programmes, in terms of the percentages of students who complete the programme and find work placement, is high. In Segriá (Lleida) 80% of the participants achieved this outcome, and in Barcelona 60%.

The management teams in the Second Chance Programme Centres in Segriá (Lleida) considered their principal objectives to be: labour market placement and the development of vocational skills, the development of personal autonomy, autonomy of action in the immediate environment, and the avoidance of social exclusion. In addition

they felt it important to overcome the negative stigma attached to Second Chance Programmes in both Secondary Schools and the traditional training sector.

The children studied by the ERET team in Barcelona considered the Second Chance Centres to be valuable both for their methodology and for the type of study offered (68%). They also indicated the importance they attributed to learning the skills associated with a particular occupation. They valued the general learning climate and the way they were treated as adults, as well as the economic benefits that such learning might bring them in the future and the possibility of access to the intermediate training level.

The importance attached to each of the programme areas is closely related with the priorities indicated above.

Table: II. Importance attached to areas and interests

In terms of their evaluation of the techniques used by their teachers, the most positively rated was the use of the computer (50.8%), followed by the study of practical cases, debate, and the use of video, theory classes, and lastly the individual tutorial.

On the other hand, the management teams in the Second Chance Programme Centres in Segrià (Lérida), despite the existence of a wide spread of different opinions, considered the key elements which determine the level of success of a programme to be: the location of the centres, the training of the teaching staff, the relevance of the teaching offered to the future life course decisions facing the children in the vocational and personal areas, the quality of the centre, the duration of the programme, and whether or not the education and training offered is sufficient to consolidate the learning process, the quality of resources available, and lastly the quality of the work placements.

The experts who participated in the application of the Delphi technique summarised the fundamental aspects of the Second Opportunity Programmes under three headings. Learning should take place in centres where:

- Basic vocational competences are developed. In order to achieve this outcome it is essential that the centres have an adequate supply of human and other resources.
- Young people achieve personal and vocation maturity via a methodology which combines conceptual, procedural and attitudinal components.
- The child achieves a successful work placement thanks to a rapid transition to adult life, and for this to take place a comprehensive network of interaction between the educational and employment worlds is essential.

For this reason they proposed, as a general objective, the recovery of the child's own self-esteem in order to be able to design a life project which includes active participation as a citizen and enables them to acquire the energy, motivation, strategy and resources which are necessary to achieve this.

### **The second chance programme user profile**

The common characteristic shared by all the children who participate in Second Chance Programmes is the presence of educational deficits: these are children with educational needs. The young people who participate in these programmes also demonstrate a clear attitude of rejection towards the established educational system. The persistence of educational failure throughout their school careers has resulted in a low appreciation of their own personal worth and that of the school, and, as a consequence a low motivation to continue study. It should also be noted that there is no clear correlation between social background and participation in these programmes, although there is a relation between level of family support and participation. Thus the combination of the two factors, social deprivation and lack of family support, may well have some explanatory power.

The results obtained by both Sánchez Asín et al (2004) and Boix (2005) are in agreement with earlier studies by Auberni (1995), Díez (1995), Funes (1997), Redondo (1999), Sánchez Asín and Jurado (2001), Casals (2002), Gleeson (2002) in that the children are found:

- To have not developed basic competences.
- To lack personal work and study habits.
- To give evidence of having self control problems.
- To reject the norms of communal life associated with the school.
- To have low expectations for the future.

All of this is also in harmony with the findings of an earlier study by Oster et al (2000), which was conducted in fourteen European cities using a variety of Second Chance Programme models, where similar causes were found to influence participation. In particular failure at school and the fact of not having achieved the minimum compulsory schooling qualification were found to be important, as well as difficulties encountered in the transition to adult life and social exclusion. The latter was itself the product, in part, of the lack of a relevant qualification with which to achieve adequate labour market entry.

There are also clear similarities between the present findings and those of Verner Ljung (2002), who studied the Danish Production Schools and found that Second Chance Programmes tend to offer a useful itinerary to young people who fail to demonstrate interest in the education offered them by the traditional system, and who are searching for a rapid access route to an adult working life at the end of their period of compulsory education. The

Danish production schools constitute one alternative for these young people. In the same way we can only agree with Barbara Brodigan (2002) when she says that we have here young people who have either found themselves excluded, or have excluded themselves from the educational paths followed by the majority of young people of their age.

The majority of the children (94.6%) who participate in Second Chance Programmes do not achieve the end qualification associated with Compulsory Secondary Education, and this problem is aggravated by the fact that many of them – in Segriá 47.3% - do not even have certification for the primary stage. However very few of these children were found to have followed any kind of Special Individual Curriculum (only 4.1%) during their school career. This finding is surprising insofar as, in theory, such children should have the back-up of learning support and Special Curriculum Units, factors which might have helped produce a different outcome. However the dynamic achieved by these children and the change in their attitudes was highly evaluated by the management teams in the Second Chance Programme Centres, who observed that 79.5% of the children achieved the programme objectives, and that levels of absenteeism were insignificant.

Among the reasons advanced by the children for their failure to complete their secondary education the expressions “we didn’t like to study”, the material studied “was boring”, “we would rather work”, “I wasn’t happy at school” and the “teachers didn’t pay attention to me” all stand out. It is clear, as can be seen in the phrases used, that these children did not feel either involved in or fulfilled by their school experience, and that they implicitly question the didactic approach used by their teachers. On the other hand the family-education centre relationship deteriorated in proportion to the extent to which the family failed to take an interest in the activity of the Compulsory Education Centre.

Chart 3. Reasons for non completion of the compulsory secondary stage.

In both studies a clear improvement was noted in the child’s education profile on completion of the Second Chance Programme. In particular, in Segriá (Lleida) more than half the children improved their level of self-esteem; 66% achieved the basic vocational competences required of them; 70% recovered a curiosity for learning and developed personal work habits while only 19.6% remained completely apathetic towards the learning process.

In this way we can gain some measure of the success of the Second Chance Programmes in Segriá, especially when we take into account that 87.22% of the children who commenced the programmes achieved the objectives set.

82.11% obtained work placements as either apprentices or auxiliaries, occupying work positions related to the profiles which the programmes had attempted to develop.

Finally 70.9% of the students in Second Opportunity Programmes were advised to seek placements in the labour market while 16.9% were counselled to seek further training at the intermediate level.

### **The teachers: the current reality and future proposals**

Teachers working in the Second Chance Programmes in the Province of Barcelona are a heterogeneous group of professionals who were, in the main, aware of the underlying problem of educational deficits before they started to work in these programmes. Typically they had previously worked in positions associated with education such as vocational training, training workshops, school-work transition programmes, Compulsory Secondary Education and, although to a lesser extent, in Primary Education, Adult Education, Vocational Education, etc. Despite the evident heterogeneity, they all had one thing in common; their working situation which was characterised by the absence of contractually based job security.

The education and training background of these professionals was in the first place that of graduates (42%), followed by those possessing diplomas, those who had vocational qualifications and those with apprenticeships. The majority (73.9%) had participated in some form of continuing education in order to enter the Second Chance Programmes. This education was composed of methodology (40.9%), teaching strategies and, to a lesser extent, conflict resolution, new technologies, special curriculum, educational planning and evaluation.

The motives for entering the SCPs revealed a high level of professional awareness given that 54.5% stated that they had entered the area due to “personal interest” and to a lesser extent, due to the fact that it was in harmony with their personal background and professional qualifications.

When asked what sort of profile professionals responsible for the education process in the SCPs should have the experts who participated in the Delphi technique (Box, 2005) were agreed that the staff team should be composed of teachers from a workshop background, other teachers, persons coming from the world of work and business, and educational psychologists, although the principle unifying characteristic was felt to be that they should be highly motivated professionals with experience.

These same experts considered that the psycho-pedagogic training of the professionals who are responsible for Second Chance Programmes should be complemented by technical competence, knowledge of personal and participative methodologies. This latter was felt to be important in that it would enable them to become better involved in the tasks of orientation, improving self esteem, the creation of a positive atmosphere in the classroom

and in generating interaction and relationship bonds among the children, together with empathy, patience, perseverance and communication.

In summary, professionals in Second Chance Programmes should:

- Be enterprising and able to motivate their students and increase their confidence and self-esteem.
- Have a flexible attitude and be able to adapt to student needs, worries and possibilities.
- Accept the necessary level of teaching commitment with the young people in order to be able to overcome difficult situations with tolerance and understanding.
- Demonstrate patience and dialogue.
- Create feelings of hope and realism among young people.

## Conclusions

Second Chance Programme Centres exist to develop capacities and competences related with the habits and skills associated with the world of work. Their objectives are: to promote personal autonomy; to facilitate the transition to adult life through work and vocational placement; to facilitate access to further vocational training; and to meet the need many children have of obtaining a new opportunity, with the objective of directing their energies and hopes towards studies which have a strong practical content and to acquire skills which are widely sought in the labour market.

Planning and need provision, as well as the general environment, the location, the quality of resources and the access paths offered are not always adequate, and this is important since these centres need to avoid being converted into poles of attraction for children fleeing the Compulsory Education System or into simple compensatory measures for children lacking formal educational qualifications.

The various programmes on offer stimulate a high level of expectation among participants due to the fact that the majority of the young people who enter complete their programme and achieve their objectives. It is possible to say that the impact of the methodology used and the desire to find work, together with the positive environment generated all constitute factors which are able to unleash attitudes and energy which are a far cry from those which typified the earlier negative trajectory of these children in Compulsory Secondary Education.

The majority of those who participate in Second Chance Programmes improve their self-image and level of self-esteem, and reduce their educational deficits. At the same time they recover their desire to learn and develop personal work habits. They become involved in their training process and normally do not exhibit disruptive behaviour. Even their bonding with the centre improves.

As far as teaching staff goes, it is clear that their continuing education is based on teaching experiences which are closely related to the content areas which form the core of the Second Chance Programmes, and this is a highly positive factor which directly links theoretical training with professional practice. The level of interest of teaching staff for curricular innovation and evaluation was, however, found to be on the low side, and this is significant given the importance which is to be attached to the growing diversity and heterogeneity of the child participants. In general terms the positive response of the teachers to the creation of a dynamic where the importance of group work in learning is stressed was noteworthy.

Family environment, peer group influences, or the inability of the family to reorient the child once the problem becomes evident are all factors which were found to impact negatively on the ability of the child to become motivated and develop positive personal and academic expectations.

### **Alternatives and new challenges for Improvement**

Provision for children who participate in Second Chance Programmes has been seen as a “last resort” measure, one which is indiscriminate, and which serves to obscure many of the malfunctions which exist in the modern education system. As stressed throughout our research it is important to introduce corrective measures from the very earliest years of Compulsory Education in order to reduce insofar as possible the level of “school failure” which has become so evident in the education system, as has been indicated by the OECD in the PISA report and by UNESCO (2004). The externalisation danger which can be derived from programmes which favour the overcoming of educational deficits is real enough. We are convinced that the programmes under review here need to grow and be strengthened until they become, more than a second opportunity, an opportunity without comparison for the children involved to recover their own feeling of worth and to recover the strength necessary to awaken the desire to proceed with a continuous training process which enables them to situate themselves in the society of the 21st century.

At the present time, and with the new educational law as a backdrop (LOE, 2006), the Initial Professional Qualification Programme proposals require a new impetus to transform the different programmes into a structure of educational provision worthy of renown, and in the process, to remove their current association with compensatory education. We do not think that such programmes have, to date, achieved this objective, and we thoroughly reject the conception and image of them as last resort remedies, doing this from the perspective of inclusion which should inform the entire culture of integrated programmes.

We take the view that the contents of these programmes are best organised in four areas and related to the four classes of knowledge proposed by Delors (1996). These should be interdisciplinary and global in character, since

what has to be offered is a multiple option provision, one which has rather a role of orientation than one of specialisation (Boix, 2005).

As Brodigan (2002) argues, the child should be the author and manager of their own learning, and be empowered and capacitated to control their own progress, making it appropriate to their work rhythm and accompanied by a constant mentoring process on the part of the tutor.

It is necessary to prepare these children to challenge the negative expectations which surround them, even when such negative expectations are based on experiences of negative performance, which come from evaluations, or IQ and other tests.

Teaching and learning strategies, from the curricular vantage point, should rethink and re-examine existing norms and the use of teaching resources in order to improve on viability and efficacy by means of the introduction of new enriched curricular elements, which may be seen as optimising the existing ones, through their stronger support in information and communication technologies in order to produce: intelligent tutorials, access to online databases for document and employment search, access to digital networks, improvement in the use and operation of software for text manipulation, design and technical drawing (Sánchez Asín et al, 2004a; Sánchez Asín, 2004b).

The stable canon of knowledge of the past has now been replaced by a permanent need to refresh knowledge; the learning, production and transmission of knowledge is now no longer the exclusive concern of a group of specialists, but rather the responsibility of whole groups of people (Levis, 1998).

None of the above is easy to achieve, indeed it is rather difficult; the elaboration of strategies which can be advantageous in the context of a child population who has accepted or been lead to accept failure when faced with problems is forcing professionals to search for strategies which are able to motivate such children and move them towards learning contents which are more life and work oriented, and which may lead to either their successful placement in the employment context or to their return to academic study.

On the other hand entry into the world of work requires ever higher qualification levels, and as a result, this group of children needs, in addition to the measures mentioned above, a basic education in order not to be at a disadvantage.

The Second Chance Programmes need to offer the child the necessary mechanisms to be able to manage instrumental learning (reading, writing, mathematics), to exercise initiative, to discover themselves and others, to learn to look for resources, to develop capacities to look for work and orient themselves towards a professional profile which combines flexibility with polyvalency, without detaching from this the level of support which many parents may offer as monitors in company with teachers, work placement professionals, employers and others as guides and mentors, and facilitators of new initiatives.

Nor can we allow ourselves to ignore the point made by UNESCO (2004, p. 29) in reference to how the ongoing dialogue over education policy should naturally lead us towards a set of relevant and balanced objectives which set out what those in the education system should be learning and why they should be learning it. The development of cognitive, creative and social competences is a constant, but so is the concern and attention which need to be shown towards the development of universal values – human rights, the environment, peace and tolerance – or towards the more local context, as in the case, for example, of cultural diversity.

The authors of this article would like to see the system of Compulsory Secondary Education prepare itself to find ways to overcome the obstacles which present themselves in the path of the education of each and every child. We would promote security rather than insecurity in our own effectiveness since there is not the least doubt that failure and the behaviour associated with failure are also learnt. The fact of the matter is that one part of the school population behaves in conformity with the negative expectations which are placed on them, since “many times the instrument of prediction becomes more important than the achievement itself and, instead of recognising that something is wrong with the test, we reach the conclusion that there is something wrong with the person who is in receipt of it”. (Sternberg, 1997, p. 25).

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### **Legislación:**

Ley Orgánica 1/1990, del 3 de octubre de 1990, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo, LOGSE (BOE núm 23, del 04/10/1990)

Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo de 2006, de Educación, LOE (BOE núm. 106, del 04/05/2006))

Real Decreto 163/2006, de 29 de Diciembre (BOE. 4 de Enero de 2007)

RESOLUCIÓN de 30 de juny de 2006, per la qual s'aproven les instruccions per a l'organització i el funcionament dels centres educatius públics d'educació secundària per al curs 2006-2007 (Full de disposicions i actes administratius d'educació, núm. 1104).

Social Guarantee Programmes	Secondary Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having achieved the objectives laid down, which are associated with a learning process with a strong manual dexterity component.</li> <li>• Inability of the secondary school teachers involved to adequately reorient these children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Such programmes facilitate access to continuous training processes.</li> </ul>

Table: 1. Factors which influence decision taking

	Maximum	Average	Minimum
<b>Personal autonomy</b>	4	3.44	1
<b>Autonomy in immediate environment</b>	4	3.44	2
<b>Avoidance of Exclusion</b>	4	3.44	1
<b>Breaking the negative stigma mould</b>	4	3.11	2
<b>Vocational skills</b>	4	3.56	1
<b>Labour market placement</b>	4	3.67	2
<b>Other</b>	4	1.60	1

Table: 2. Importance attached to areas and interests

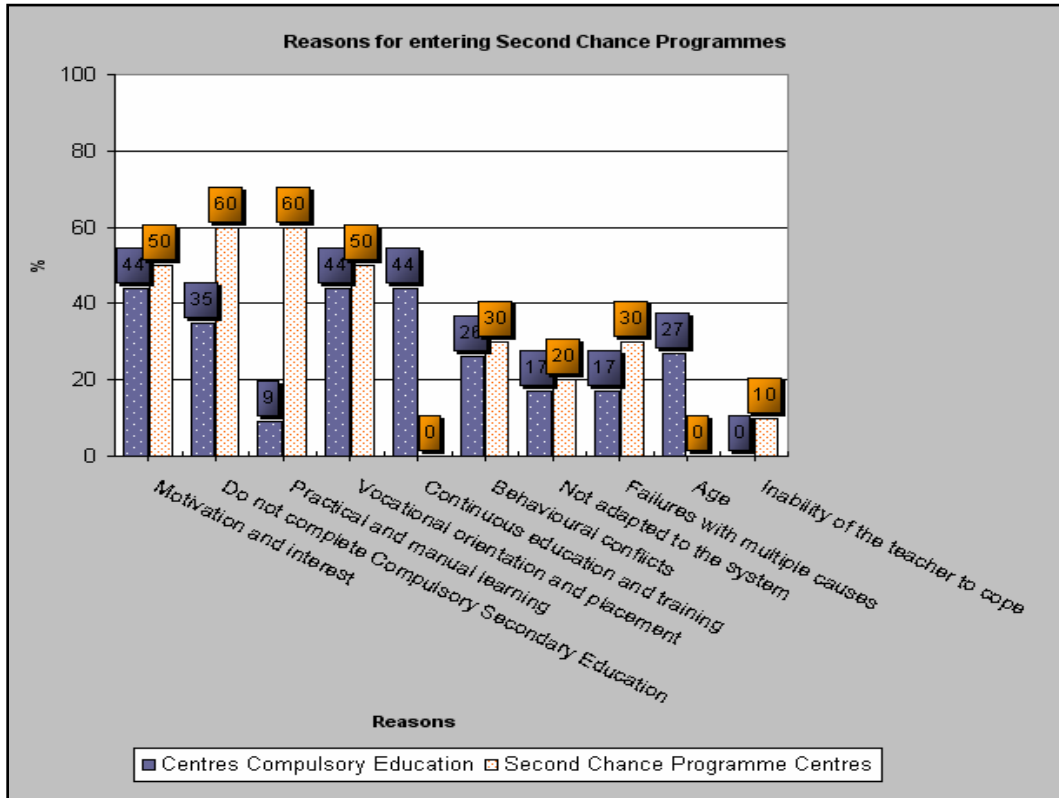


Chart 1.

Reasons for entering Second Chance Programmes.

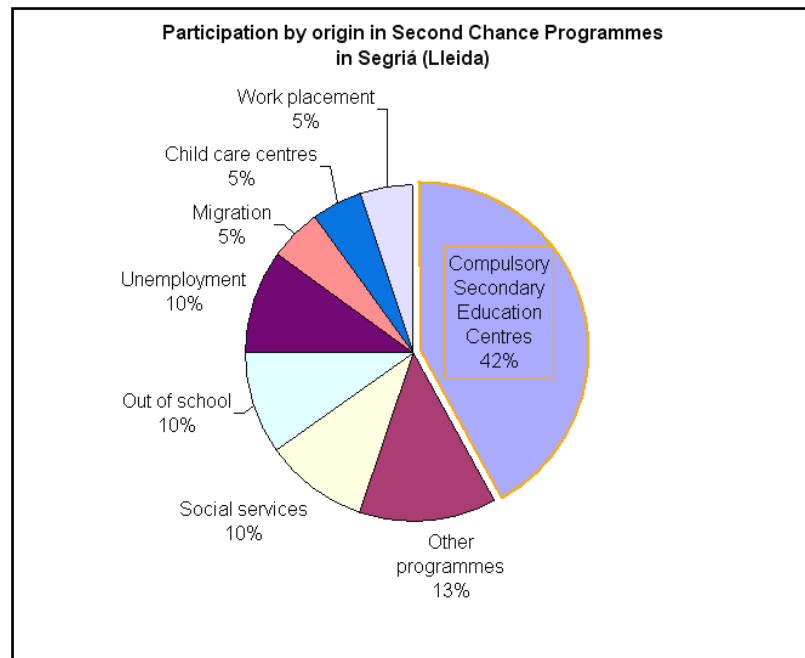


Chart 2. Participation by origin in Second Chance Programmes in Segrià (Lleida)

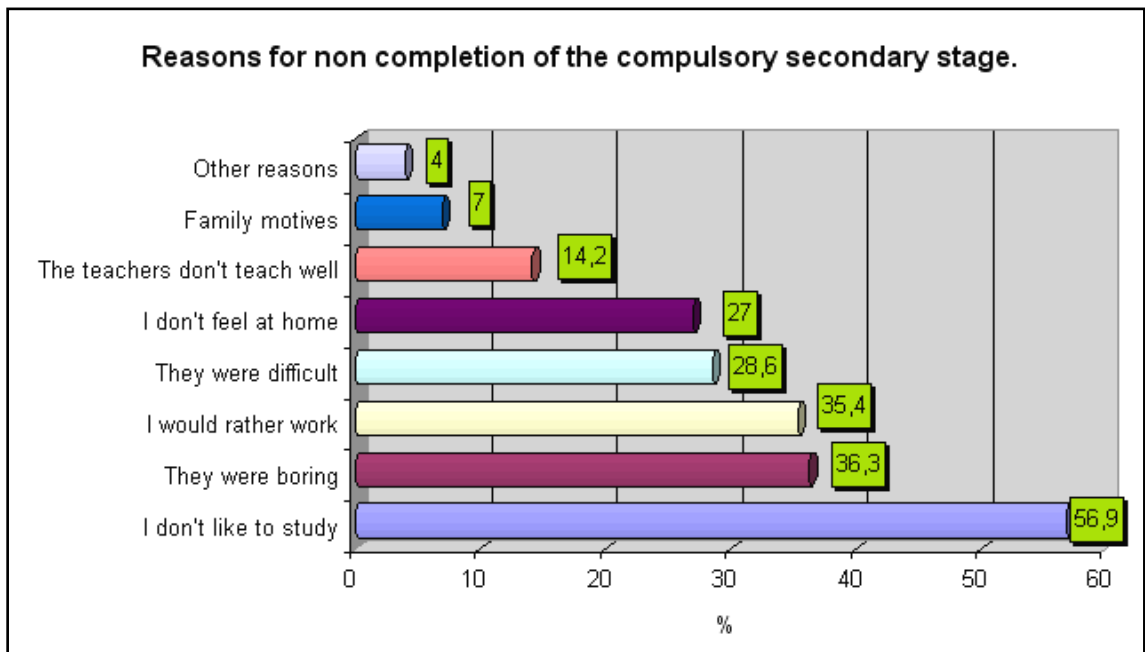


Chart 3. Reasons for non completion of the compulsory secondary stage.