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Key competences for people 50+

REPORT



The state of education in terms of key competences and the needs of the target group (people aged 50 and over) in Spain

Project result 1 - Methodology of training courses
"Key competences for people aged 50+" (part 1)

Free publication

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Project result 1 - Methodology of training courses "Key competences for people aged 50+" (part 1)

Report The state of education of key competences and the educational needs of adults, including people aged 50+ in Spain

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1. Educational situation in Spain and key competences

The European Commission first approved the establishment of the eight key competences for lifelong learning in 2006 in order to establish a recommendation that would allow individuals to enhance their skills, whether in the personal, professional or social contexts. The reinforcement of these competences through education and civic training promotes the resilience of the population at European level and its consequent capacity to adapt to changes that may occur in any area of their lives over the years.

In 2018, a new revised model of competences was adopted, as an update of the recommendation was considered absolutely necessary due to the increasing regularity of changes in the world we live in, so it could be said that Spain is a country open to change in which many people work for intellectual development and have full confidence in the capabilities of human resources. The following sections will provide a more detailed analysis of the educational situation in Spain and the presence of the eight key competences.

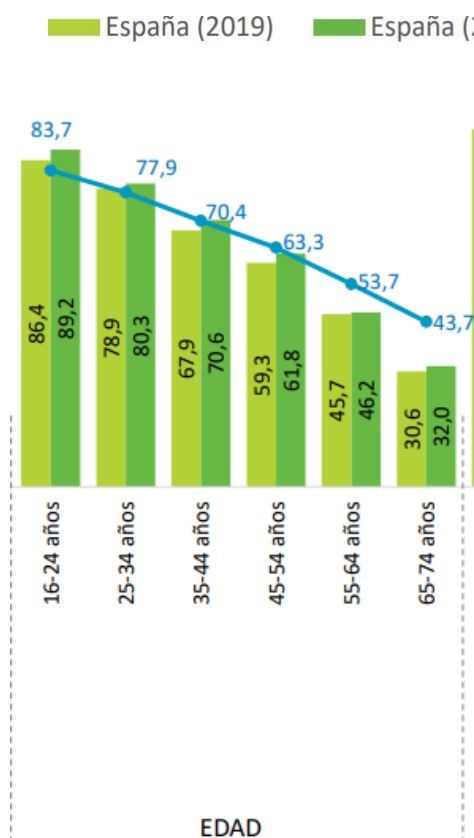
2. Deficits in the area of key competences and comparison according to age

The incorporation of key competences in Spain took place through the proclamation of the Organic Law of Education in 2006, although this learning perspective was already known in the decade of the 1990s. More recently, a Project of Curricular Integration of the Key Competences was determined with the aim of prioritising the European objective of optimising education and guaranteeing support between educational agents, equality in teaching or the evaluation of its effectiveness, among many other aspects.

Regarding **digital competence**, the comparison is notably unequal between young people and adults. The National Observatory of Technology and Society (ONTSI) has carried out a socio-demographic study based on different social groups that can be divided into adults and young people. The use of ICTs is much more widespread among individuals aged 16 to 24, students and college students, in all cases exceeding 70% of their members. On the other hand, there is a huge drop in digital proficiency among people over 55 years of age. The following graph shows the aforementioned contrast according to age.



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The population aged 25-34 years has a higher level of training in **scientific and technological competence**. This is particularly influenced by the quality of education received by different population groups and the development of historical events that may have shortened the training period, with adults aged between 55 and 65 achieving substantially lower scores. Currently, there is a wide range of studies showing how the acquisition of scientific literacy translates into a higher probability of employment and increased wages.

Linguistic communication is the subject of a controversial debate on the comparison between young people and adults. Some statistics show that one in four adults has a significantly lower level in areas such as reading comprehension, but there are many experts who support the imminent immersion of young people in linguistic poverty. In this sense, **multilingual competence** is also important, since, just as knowledge of different languages is becoming commonplace nowadays, the language itself may tend to be neglected. The use of neologisms, pet words and abbreviations, or the repetition of the same word instead of using its synonyms, can be understood either as a way of enriching a language or as a way of gradually eroding it. Some adults consider that polite expressions are used less and less, and thus run the risk of being lost, while some young people maintain there are outdated expressions that can be avoided in order to optimise language and receptiveness. Moreover, the socialisation of young people takes place to a



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large extent through social networks, which slightly neglects orality. Issues such as gestures or tone of voice bring a great deal of information to language exchange, and the decline in listening or speaking can make it challenging for young people to practise it.

The innovative attitude characteristic of young people is closely related to **entrepreneurship**. As mentioned above, the internet enhances the creative capacity in terms of youth language codes, and motivation for new ideas leads to greater entrepreneurial vision. The study *Future Potential: a GEM Perspective on Youth Entrepreneurship (2015)* provided by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) shows how 18-34 year olds have a higher entrepreneurial spirit and a more open mind towards the business world, probably due to the challenging employment situation in today's world.

In the **personal** domain, the competence of "learning to learn" is defined as self-management and organisation of time in order to achieve certain learning objectives. Emotional intelligence is particularly involved here, as it is essential to know one's personal traits and behavioural patterns in order to get the best out of them, as well as to take one's own limits into consideration. In general, young people regularly reflect on the self, which enables a normalisation—and consequent contextualisation—of emotions. In this way, it is possible to reach higher levels of introspection and to acquire strong abilities to verbalise feelings. However, some research reveals that it is easier to handle emotions from the age of 60 onwards. Thanks to a study by the AFEMCUAL association, it is possible to know that older people should focus especially on issues such as emotional intelligence, critical thinking and judgement or decision making. Thus, young people demonstrate a greater capacity for self-reflection compared to adults, who develop the means to take on realities and adapt to them, avoiding attachment. Current developments and tools make it possible to make the most of these competences for life in society and personal learning.

Along the same lines, **civic competence** is identified as awareness of the environment or understanding of the structures that make it up. It mainly focuses on social responsibility and awareness of human rights in order to facilitate social coexistence. Young people must be willing to understand how the world they live in works and to adopt an ethical duty. It is possible to distinguish a high percentage of young people who know and identify the main civic competences, although, paradoxically, they do not have sufficient capacities to face certain obstacles or to apply the competences in a given context.



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Due to increasing globalisation, young people regularly operate in diverse environments and communicate with individuals from different cultures. **Cultural awareness and expression** have evolved over time through various developments, and indeed, young people are seen as one of the key drivers in promoting a transformation of the cultural perspective. However, it would not be wrong to state that there is now a new collective identity known as "youth culture". This revolution brings new forms of ethnicity whose gap is not so much between different countries but between different ages, making today's youth more hermetic compared to adults in this field.

3. Key competence deficits of the people aged 50 and over

The direct target group of the research is adults, especially those over 50 years of age. As mentioned above, there are certain disadvantages in adults' skills compared to those of young people, but they also have strengths such as life experience, which have to be considered and exploited. Competences need to be applied in one way or another depending on the social group they are aimed at, so it will be necessary to identify the deficits of adults and address them.

Digital competences seem to be the most pressing, as this is something relatively new for older people, but not so much for young people, who have been born in the midst of this technological revolution and have been built as "digital natives". An improvement in scientific knowledge may not be such an urgent need, as it is usually focused on job search and future projection, although it should not be neglected in order to better understand reality and achieve an enrichment of everyday life. On the other hand, linguistic communication and multilingualism are essential in order to adapt to new teaching or learning methods. Reading is an essential skill to be insisted on for the optimisation of language competence in adults, but there will always be differences between generations, as language evolves as a person evolves, even more so when virtual spaces are involved.



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Entrepreneurship is highly convenient when it comes to the world of work. There are many adults who have lost motivation or interest in working, either because of monotony or because of personal concerns and uncertainties. It is difficult to avoid some problems at a certain age, but the development of this competence facilitates their management and optimises the way to deal with them. In addition, self-reflection, the identification of strengths and weaknesses and the management of one's own learning translate into a certain emotional maturity and independence.

Life experience is a clear advantage for adults, something that is definitely helpful in terms of cultural competences and appreciation of their surroundings. People over 50 may not be as open-minded as someone in his youth, but the fact is that the situation is getting better and better and multiculturalism is becoming the order of the day. Tolerance and respectful dialogue are paramount in terms of cultural competence, but also in terms of civic one.



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4. Educational needs of the target group

It is evident that teaching and learning methodologies are exposed to continuous changes, so that factors such as social inclusion, active citizenship or personal development have become basic aspects for the achievement of a state of well-being in both personal and professional spheres. The European Union has agreed on these competences, which the target group must become accustomed to and aware of. The collaboration of adults is usually voluntary, and this willingness to improve is key to the success of this educational project.

Each social group has particularities to be taken into account when selecting the working methodology, as it must always be adjusted to the needs of the target group. The first training starts with the teaching staff, which is only possible through guidance and counselling methods after prior examination of their most common and usual teaching techniques. Once the possible aspects to be modified in order to project optimal results have been identified, the construction of the most suitable teaching model for adults over 50 years of age begins. This is the beginning of the transformation.

The activities and the dynamics are decisive and have to be adjusted as precisely as possible to the demand. The type of exercises should move towards something more active and abandon the passivity of the participants, as well as being based on the internalisation of competences. The important point is not to demonstrate their knowledge, but rather to learn how they work and internalise them in order to perform competently and in a natural way. The three dimensions of key competences cannot be ignored: cognitive, instrumental and attitudinal. Cognitive skills refer to the ability to understand reality and the information stimuli perceived on a daily basis. The instrumental, as its name suggests, deals with the instrumentalisation of the information that has been assimilated for its subsequent implementation. Finally, the attitudinal dimension refers to problem solving and the attitude adopted towards the different events or results obtained.

Deepening self-reflection can be of great help to the participants to understand themselves and to face the resolution of their problems. It is essential to pay special attention to new technologies and to avoid the rejection that may arise due to the lack of knowledge on the part of adults, as they are very recent tools. They are one of the most common forms of socialising for young people, so if they are taken advantage of, they can be highly beneficial. A presentation on what social networks are and how they can be used, as an example, would be a good first step in learning about their use.



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5. Educational offer available in Spain

The measures taken by the country with regard to key competences training for adults are essential in order to initiate a change. Spain offers some possibilities to start this process, especially regarding digital competences, such as the free course called *Alfabetización digital para mayores: reduciendo la brecha digital*, a project promoted by the Government of Navarra whose target group is adults over 60 or pensioners. Both the virtual and face-to-face modalities can be chosen, and it is possible to preview the calendar and the different activities to be carried out, as well as their structure and the results to be obtained.

The regional government of Extremadura also collaborates in this project by offering different face-to-face courses to obtain key competences, which are accredited by the European Union and give access to certificates of professionalism focused on adult education.



Consejería de
Educación y Empleo

**Programas específicos de formación dirigidos a personas
en riesgo de exclusión social (Proyecto Ítaca).**

Objetivo Temático 9.1.1: Mejorar la inserción socio-laboral de personas en situación o riesgo de exclusión social,
a través de la activación y de itinerarios integrados y personalizados de inserción.

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Language courses are very popular in Spain, and not only for young people, but there are also some courses specially designed for adults. The *Speak & live* website offers numerous proposals for language immersion courses in different cities in Spain, which, taught by native speakers, include conversation and expression classes and even the possibility of spending a weekend with a family. The flexibility of timetables is essential in order to combine the training with the professional calendar.



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Focused on Human Resources and personal development, the Cegos organisation offers a wide variety of courses such as *Desarrolla tu resiliencia*, *Desarrollar la inteligencia emocional* or *Comunicación y habilidades de relación interpersonal*, all of them aimed at people interested in strengthening their communication skills, analytical skills or the recognition of their own emotions. The Community of Madrid also presents courses on business creation or entrepreneurship, among many others.

6. Educational differences between people aged 50 and over and young people

Spanish education has been exposed to major changes over the years and has been influenced by the different changes in political regimes. The historical, political and cultural environment has a direct impact on the education system, so that each generation is marked by particular characteristics. Aspects such as gender differentiation or the privatisation of schools are also determinants, although to a lesser extent. The proclamation of the four organic laws of education was a turning point in the educational panorama along with the arrival of democracy, so it is of great importance to understand that the contextualisation of the different periods is crucial for the understanding of educational systems, teaching techniques and the needs of the time.

In the past, education was largely focused on the teacher, and the content was much more static. The learner and the way he acts are nowadays the protagonists. There is a great dynamism in the content and structure of the activities, so that memory, which was essential in the archaic methodology, has taken on a rather secondary role over time due to a new approach: the putting into practice of learned skills and the demonstration of acquired competences.

The most glaring change lies in the relationship between teacher and student. What was once seen as intimidating with a higher level of demand has become something collaborative. The teacher has become a facilitator and stimulator for the learner, whereas before it was much more independent and rigid, with fewer opportunities to verbalise issues beyond the subject.



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There was a culture of responsiveness to actions and a great deal of responsibility on the part of the learner, although there was not as wide a range of teaching tools or as much knowledge about the different behaviours that the student might adopt or their background, nor was there as much consideration given to.

Finally, the advent of cooperative learning stands out, something relatively new which was previously replaced by individualism reduced to the content of a book, without allowing for much exchange of ideas between students. The projection of the future is also a much-repeated issue in today's classrooms, which generates some tension, not to mention the lack of opportunities and labour market competition faced by young people.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

European Union member states have to be active participants in the project, although it is true that each brings different approaches due to cultural diversity. Most commonly, competences are introduced through curricula and presented as interdisciplinary in order to generate critical thinking in participants in order to develop and improve their attitudes towards citizenship, employment and self-identity. For this reason, it is essential to take into account key competences and invest in resources for their optimisation in order for the population to achieve a state of well-being at both national and European level.



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