



Education Reform in Democratic Spain. Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Pamela O'Malley, eds. New York: Routledge, 1995. 265 pp.

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This book provides rich insights into universal reform dilemmas, the textured fabric of contexts, and different approaches to democratizing and modernizing education. This is the third volume in the series, after Germany and France, designed to inform scholars and policy makers on the realities of implementing reforms that appear feasible in their ideological and formal versions but that can unravel in operation. It gives an "insider view of the issues and arguments that characterize contemporary debate" in education (p. ix). In Spain's post-Franco era experience, we see how sociocultural, economic, political, and environmental factors shaped the legacy of inequality and regionalism, and how they influence democratic reforms and their implementation.

The pace of Spanish reform has been rapid. Since inception of the 1970 Ley General de Educación (LGE), Spain has modernized education on a scale that took other European countries over a century. The intensity of change from "autarky to modernism" (p. 1) has been significant in reversals of repression and underdevelopment. Spanish grassroots initiatives fueled educational reform and influenced mainstream politics, inspiration for those who despair that grassroots initiatives cannot contribute to the overhaul of a larger system.

Some of the contributors to this book were among the architects of educational reform; others were active participants. The editors contribute chapters, introductory passages, and some postscripts. They assert, rightly, that what is lost in translation is compensated for by the benefit from emic perspectives and authentic accounts.

As a lesser-developed European country, Spain is interesting to compare with France and Germany, for instance in vocational training reforms. In the European Community, Spain has to reconcile internal needs with participation in the larger region. However, this topic is given weak treatment. Brief comparisons with Turkey, Portugal, Canada, and the United States are offered in the introductory chapter in a statistical summary (pp. 3-5).

Like most countries, Spain defies simple explanations of its complex reforms. The resistance activities preceding the overthrow of the Franco regime can be illuminated by conflict theory. Yet the LGE policies conform well to equilibrium model explanations of reform.



Centralized education systems are interesting in their resistance to decentralization. Spain is no exception. The 1990 Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE) is presented in chapter five, with its slogans of flexibility, participation, and consensus. In chapter six, Boyd-Barrett summarizes the reform goals: democratization, decentralization, "comprehensivization," curriculum standardization, vocationalization, multiculturalism, and professionalization. He compares the Spanish versions with those in the United Kingdom, where "comprehensivization" was subverted by streaming (i.e., tracking) and state support of private schools, and predicts that similar evasions will emerge in Spain.

Among chapters on teachers' perspectives, the dilemmas of evaluating reforms, and many other issues, Boyd-Barrett's treatment of language issues is a foremost contribution of this volume. He considers Spain's attempts to preserve linguistic and cultural traditions both through and in the teaching of community languages. Castellano is the majority language and the official language, tied to the concept of "national character" (p. 207). Contemporary policies strive for a "plurilingual state" (p. 205) incorporating the community languages of Catal n, Valenciano, Gallego, and Euskera.

Attention to social inequality is interspersed in most chapters, as in O'Malley's account of pupils in schools (pp. 27-29). The most explicit treatment of Spain's attempts to correct inequalities is Boyd-Barrett's examination of the language issue. A concluding synthesis is lacking. However, the richness of insight in this anthology prevails.

This volume is a gold mine of insight into the influence of contextual factors on Spanish educational reforms. It documents the multidimensionality of educational reform; the need for multisectoral considerations; and the comparative advantage derived from investigations of universal reform issues in particular national contexts. The scholarly community, policy makers, and practitioners will benefit from additional volumes in this series.

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