

Paper 2/5 - Perceptions and practices around ESL in schools. Reflections from a qualitative approach in Catalonia

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The high rate of ESL in Spain needs to be understood within the framework of an education system that made schooling until the age of 16 compulsory only 20 years ago, as a result of a thorough comprehensive reform (LOGSE) that raised unprecedented public debates, and has been already modified and substituted twice in the same period, depending on the political colour of the subsequent governments. Moreover, national and regional policies have focused on preventing school failure and dropout rather than on specific measures to address and reduce early school leaving as defined by the EU and the Lisbon strategy. Although the general and explicit aim of current education and employment policies is to better prepare young people for the labour market, data show that successful trajectories in post-compulsory education are directly related to lower youth unemployment, in spite of the quality of available jobs and the profiles required to obtain them. Drawing on data gathered in intensive fieldwork in four high schools that included document analysis, interviews and focus group discussions with students, teachers and parents, this paper will explore and analyse the perceptions and practices around ESL in the implementation of both school-wide and student-focused measures to prevent it, as well as the educational ideologies and expectations held by these diverse actors in different schools in relation to the socioeconomic composition and immigrant background of the student-body. The paper will also reflect upon the methodological tools developed in an extensive survey carried out within the same project in a previous stage of the research by exploring the relation between the students' profiles based on the perceptions of the social and teacher support they have access to and their later education development as documented through a qualitative approach.