

INTERVENCION OF THE EDUCATION INSPECTION IN FP CENTRES IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY. TOWARDS A NEW MODEL?

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Abstract

The changes that are taking place in the environment of Vocational Training in the Basque Country are causing a change in its social perception, associating it with high levels of employability and a quality offer. A real commitment is being made to expand this VT offer, understanding that vocational training provides the talent that any economic system needs, but it is also necessary that this offer has all the guarantees of a good educational system. The education inspectorate must also ensure the quality of a new VT, and perhaps, in order to carry out its function, it will need to review what the most appropriate intervention should be and propose the necessary updates.

Keywords: Vocational training, educational quality, professional competence

INTRODUCTION

The evolution experienced by Vocational Training (hereinafter FP) in recent years could be described as an unstoppable rise in all the Autonomous Communities, but perhaps, due to its strong tradition, especially in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (hereinafter ACBC).

Not only has it become consolidated as an educational stage that offers many possibilities to all types of students, both young and old, workers and unemployed, but this recognition is changing the social image that FP had not so many years ago. It has become a source of quality employment, which enhances its utilitarian value, as well as an opportunity to remain in the education system for those students who do not fit into the more traditional pathway, without limitations on their lifelong learning possibilities, or an opportunity for the unemployed and workers to qualify and requalify.

The country's commitment to these studies, the recognition of the economic boost that having suitably qualified workers provides to the regions, or being able to improve the professional skills of young people who want to enter the world of employment, as well as the versatility of the offer that is made, make FP, at this time, a territory of opportunities, in which not only does the path not end, but it is a possible transit towards very different scenarios, both academic and professional.

The EU has made it clear that the lack of suitably qualified people, especially in the field of mid-level technicians, may be one of the difficulties that many of its members will encounter, and companies will only be able to face their future by investing in people's talent, talent that must be channelled in order to adapt to the changes that, it seems to many, are still unknown and are yet to come.

Therefore, investment in quality vocational training can be a determining factor in achieving economic growth, while at the same time contributing to the promotion of innovation and the transformation of the productive fabric.

As Asegurado and Marrodán (A. Asegurado and J. Marrodán, 2022) point out, "it seems clear that FP is not only an educational issue, but a development and innovation strategy that should not belong to one ministry but should be planned and developed from an

integral perspective that involves different agents from the public administration and the productive world...".

EDUCATION INSPECTION AND FP

Although everyone, some more than others, has heard about FP and the transformation it has undergone in recent years, the truth is that this stage is still largely unknown both within and outside the education system itself.

To a certain extent, this is also the case for the education inspectorate, which, as a technical teaching body, must also fulfil its role in FP centres. It must evaluate, supervise and advise the centres, just as it does in other stages, but given the specific characteristics of FP and the fact that it also has a different and detailed legislation, this is not the scenario in which the generalist profile of the inspectorate feels most comfortable.

If to this certain lack of knowledge, in some cases, we add that there have been major changes such as the incorporation of dual training, with approaches that fully include the company, new teaching-learning methodologies and the relevance that entrepreneurship and innovation have gained in the curricula, it is understandable that there is a certain fear of not being up to the task of what the FP centres may need, simply out of professional respect.

However, aware of this situation, great efforts are being made to ensure that the inspection competence is as adapted as possible to the profiles of the institutions in which each intervention is carried out, including specific actions in the inspection plans, especially in the field of vocational education and training.

THE CONTEXT OF THE BASQUE FP

In order to understand properly the conditions in which this binomial inspection-FP is related, it is necessary to contextualise the immediate past and present of FP in the ACBC, of Basque FP, which has become a brand synonymous with success and know-how.

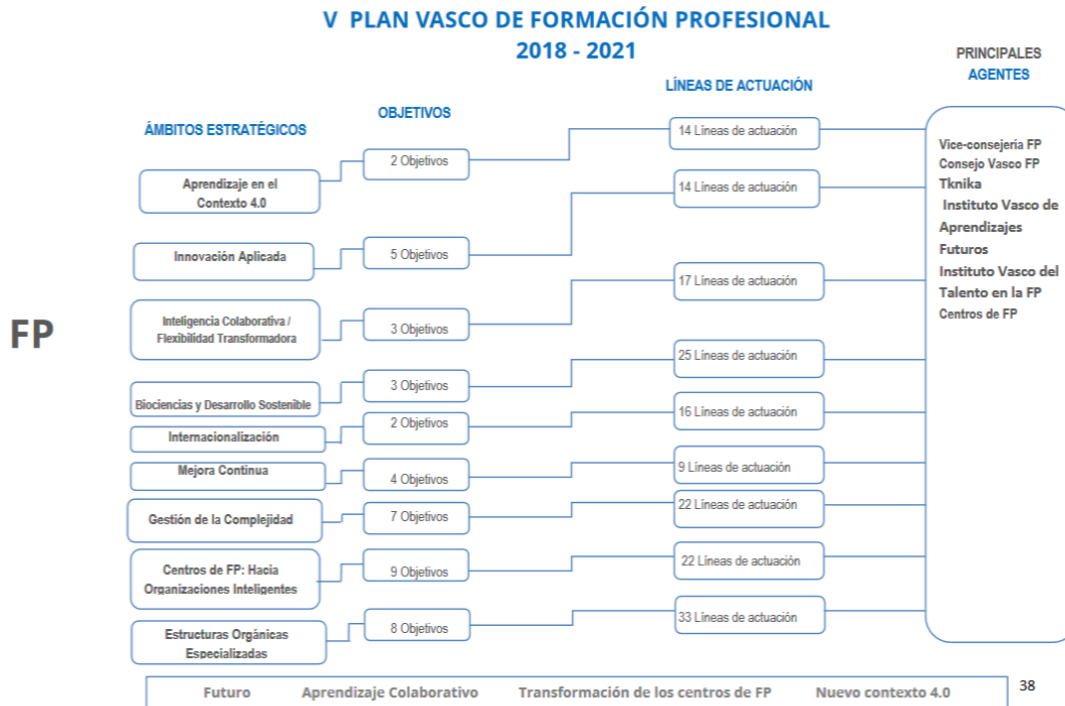
From an organisational point of view, the Regional Ministry of Education of the Basque Government has its own Vice-Ministry of Vocational Training. This structure already shows the importance given to this stage of the education system. Two directorates report to this Vice-Ministry, namely:

1. Centre management and planning.
2. The management of technology and advanced learning.

We could say, in a way, that there is one direction for what is real and another for dreaming about what is to come...

But this commitment to anticipate, to foresee what companies' needs will be in the future, is one of the reasons why the Basque Country's vocational training has even been recognised in Europe. And proof that more needs to be done than said, the Basque Institute for Future Apprenticeships has recently been created (Decree 62/2022 of 17 May). This technical body will be responsible for "defining the new professional profiles and the training necessary to respond to present and future learning needs. In other words, the aim is to identify and analyse future trends that will influence the competitiveness of companies and the employability of individuals".

This body is the latest to be created under the 5th Basque FP Plan, in which the agents that will make its development possible are indicated, and of which we highlight, together with Tknika, in addition to the centres, the Basque Centre for Applied Innovation in FP (which is taking on a new dimension) and the Basque Institute for Talent in FP (replacing the former Institute of Knowledge):



Source: www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/fpgeneral/es_def/adjuntos/V-PLAN-FP-CASazk.pdf

This V FP Plan, which is now finalised and will give way in the coming weeks to the VI Basque FP Plan, established the strategic lines which were to mark the future of vocational education in the Basque Autonomous Community.

It also indicated a series of principles on which actions were to be based, such as:

<p>PRINCIPIO 1 Aprendiendo sobre el futuro</p>	<p>Estamos convencidos de que no es suficiente aprender del pasado, las organizaciones inteligentes también deben ser capaces de aprender sobre el futuro. Los centros de formación profesional deben adquirir capacidades para imaginar el futuro y desarrollar una comprensión profunda de las tendencias que ocuparan el espacio competitivo del futuro.</p>
<p>PRINCIPIO 2 Afrontando los retos de la 4ª Revolución Industrial</p>	<p>La necesidad de gestionar el futuro con eficacia, hace imprescindible desarrollar nuevos modelos de capacitación que integren conocimientos, habilidades y destrezas, en nuevas áreas referidas a las tecnologías avanzadas, la digitalización, la conectividad, los entornos virtuales, la impresión 3D, el internet de las cosas, el desarrollo sostenible y los valores 4.0 entre otras.</p>
<p>PRINCIPIO 3 Haciendo frente a nuevos contextos de incertidumbre y complejidad</p>	<p>El mayor desafío para la sociedad vasca es generar capacidades efectivas en las personas para afrontar la cambiante, incierta y compleja realidad en la era digital. Queremos conducir a las personas hacia la apertura de nuevos caminos, la formulación de nuevas alternativas de solución que gestionen la complejidad de nuestro entorno respondiendo a las condiciones de evolución de la sociedad.</p>
<p>PRINCIPIO 4 Impulsando el aprendizaje colaborativo</p>	<p>Creemos que los esfuerzos cooperativos garantizan el éxito a largo plazo. Las dinámicas de aprendizaje deben posibilitar el intercambio de ideas, el desarrollo de habilidades sociales, la interacción con otros, y en consecuencia, el logro de metas a través de la participación y la responsabilidad compartida.</p>
<p>PRINCIPIO 5 Transformando los Centros de F.P.: Centros de Alto Rendimiento</p>	<p>Se contempla la evolución de los centros de formación profesional como organizaciones orientadas al futuro. Organizaciones inteligentes que impulsen proyectos colaborativos e integren equipos polivalentes, potenciando la innovación y el saber hacer de las personas como su valor principal.</p>
<p>PRINCIPIO 6 Promocionando la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres en la F.P.</p>	<p>La igualdad de oportunidades entre mujeres y hombres debe imbuir el desarrollo de los objetivos y líneas de actuación que el Plan ha diseñado, para remover los obstáculos existentes que impiden que mujeres y hombres desarrollen sus trayectorias formativas y profesionales en igualdad y diversidad de opciones.</p>

Source: www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/fpgeneral/es_def/adjuntos/V-PLAN-FP-CASazk.pdf

This FP Plan, as the other ones, responds to a living strategy, which can adapt to the new times, and at the same time aims to be able to meet the needs of companies, and in the case of the Basque Country, especially SMEs.

The Basque Competitiveness Institute, in its 2019 report, points out that:

A distinctive feature of this period (2016-2019) to achieve the involvement of small enterprises that deserves to be highlighted, in addition to the work of the cluster associations, is the turn of the local development agencies (as disseminating agents of the activities of the steering groups) and the network of vocational training centres coordinated by Tknika (in the fields of training, entrepreneurship

and support for non-I+D based innovation). In this regard, the Tkgune programme deserves to be cited as an example, as it focuses on non-I+D based technological innovation carried out by SMEs (it is a programme financed through the Innovation Fund managed by Lehendakaritza). During 2017-18 it facilitated the contact of 1,600 companies with vocational training centres to carry out around 400 innovation projects and improve them. (Aranguren *et al.* 2019).

In this scenario of experimentation, strategic priorities and niches of opportunity, and in order to provide regulatory support for all the initiatives that were proposed, the Basque Country Vocational Training Act (Act 4/2018, of 28 June, on Vocational Training in the Basque Country - BOPV of 5 July 2018) was enacted. This law states in its preamble that it is necessary to "break with previous schemes and evolve..." and proposes, among other innovations:

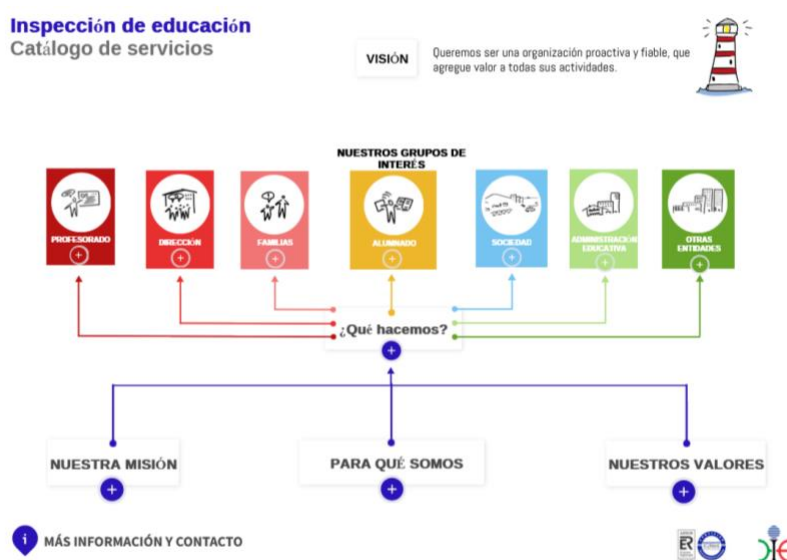
- Move towards a combined model, in which entrepreneurship and applied innovation take on special relevance.
- Endow the centres with greater autonomy in management and organisation, considering new organisational structures, more specific if necessary.
- Advance in general research or in the field of advanced learning, digital environments, intelligent systems, or sustainability.
- Favour the versatility of the educational offer and the fact that it can be modified in an agile manner according to the needs detected.
- Move towards flexible, agile, reliable and, above all, efficient approaches.
- Encourage the participation of social and labour agents to improve the FP system.
- Periodically evaluate the system itself through its own bodies or even international committees.

In summary, it could be said that this framework law opens the door to scenarios in which it is possible to experiment, test, design and, above all, transfer and share between centres (both in the public and private networks) and with companies and other agents. It is, in short, a tool for the Basque Government, and where appropriate, the FP vice-counselling department, to be able to adopt the most appropriate measures, with

total flexibility and speed. It is a law that is clearly in line with, and in a certain sense a precursor to, the new FP law, as many of the new features that are proposed are perfectly recognisable.

INSPECTORATE INTERVENTION IN FP CENTRES

The intervention to be carried out by the Education Inspectorate of the CAPV has recently been reviewed and defined in order to draw up its Catalogue of Services, where it is expressly stated that it aspires to "be a proactive and reliable organisation, which adds value to all its activities".



Source: <https://view.genial.ly/60f6b9b108cc870dc7c90e56/interactive-content-catalogo-de-servicios-inspeccion-de-educacion>

The challenge, therefore, in terms of intervention in FP institutions, is to determine whether the education inspectorate is able to provide value in its actions, whether it proactively intervenes in a trustworthy and reliable manner. In order to achieve this, it will probably be essential to improve the visibility of the inspectorate's work and the knowledge and recognition of what is happening in these institutions.

The inspection plans themselves include among their objectives the need to expressly monitor the strategic lines proposed by the Vice-Ministry of FP, with special attention to the ETHAZI methodology (acronym for High Performance Cycles) and DUAL training. In

this sense, a systematic monitoring has been carried out for several years in which it was verified:

- Compliance with regulations in the selection of students, project development and coordination with the company.
- Guarantee of acquisition of competences both at the centre and in the company: analysis of documentary evidence and records used for assessment, both at the centre and in the company.
- Actions carried out by the centre and the teaching staff involved for the correct monitoring of students.
- Integration between the implementation of new learning methodologies and Dual training plans.

Likewise, in the latest Triennial Plan 2020-2023, the possibility of carrying out new actions in the new areas of the world of FP is included as an opportunity. In the 2020-21 Annual Plan, for example, the possibility of identifying *Good Practices* that are developed in FP centres in order to assess their possible transfer to other educational stages is proposed. In short, the inspectorate is well aware that it must try to identify and specify its intervention in FP institutions. In order to expressly address the needs expressed by these centres, a working team specifically dedicated to FP was created, which has become a permanent Commission, made up of a person from the head office and inspectors from the three territories, who act as a chain of transmission of the agreements or issues worked on in each territory.

Although many of the interventions carried out coincide in spirit with those carried out in other stages, there are some that take on a special character, considering the current context mentioned above. As Racero and Castillo (Racero, F.C. & Castillo, M., 2022) point out, models should not be transferred without an assessment and contextualisation to the specific reality of each territory, but rather it is necessary to adopt proposals for action adapted to the needs of each place.

Examples of these differential interventions in FP in the Basque Country could be the implementation of new learning models and the evaluation of the management function.

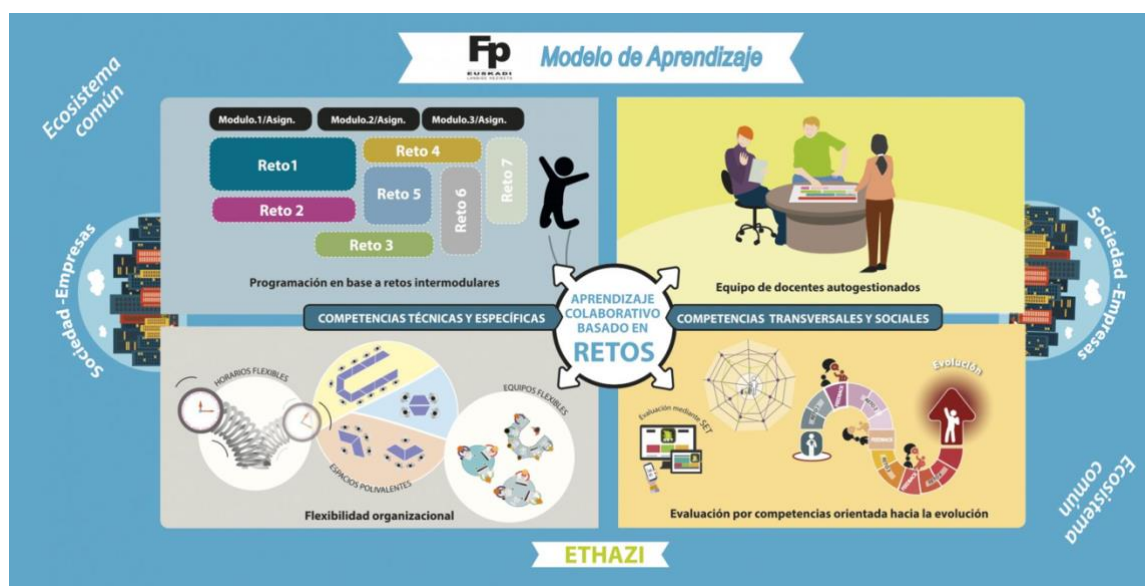
Implementation of new active-collaborative methodologies

For more than 10 years, a collaborative teaching-learning model based on challenges has been explored, implemented and established in the centres of the CAPV.

The origin of this change stemmed from the need to incorporate into the explicit curriculum all the transversal, personal and social competences that make a worker a better qualified and, above all, versatile employee in the face of growing uncertainty in almost all professional sectors.

Based on this concern, an attempt was also made to establish an approximation to the real world, so that the learning would have a direct application and a clear connection with what would later become their professional development field. On the other hand, we could not leave out other issues, also of a cross-cutting nature, but which define a society, such as values, and specifically gender equality, sustainability, for example, and not forgetting creativity.

The result was the Challenge-based Collaborative Learning model, whose distinctive elements are expressed in the following infographic:



Source: <https://ethazi.tknika.eus/es/contexto/>

After testing with five schools, the model was gradually extended, with the participation of the teachers themselves and under the guidance and supervision of Tknika.

The good results and credibility achieved allowed the proposal to be extended little by little, respecting the rhythms and possibilities of the centres and based, at all times, on a strong investment in teacher training.

While this model was being installed in the schools, the inspectorate carried out an accompanying role, with little interventionist supervision. After a few years in which its progressive implementation was noted, it was decided to collaborate more decisively, more proactively, providing regulatory support for all the actions that were being carried out and collaborating with the vice-counselling department, for example, in the drafting of instructions to this effect. It was also decided to invest in two types of training:

- On the one hand, more general training, aimed at all the inspection staff, in order to find out first-hand what the FP centres were doing and the context in which the 5th Basque FP Plan was being developed.
- On the other hand, more specific training for all the people assigned to FP centres, with special attention paid to new methodologies and innovation projects that were being carried out in order to be able to carry out a more adapted supervision of the centres.

Some of the steps that have been taken in this process have not been without difficulties, especially in the area of evaluation, but there is a significant degree of satisfaction with the results. Both in the analysis of the results and in ensuring that the modifications are sufficiently solid and traceable, the inspectorate is able to provide professional advice, as it has the technical training to do so.

During visits to schools, the inspectorate has come across different programming models with an expanded curriculum, with forms of teaching organisation that vary from the traditional FP and to which it was not accustomed, and even the combination of this model with FP. Dual but we cannot ignore the fact that the inspectorate also has to adapt its actions to the changes and new realities that arise.

Establishment of new organisational structures of the centre

To be able to do things differently, as the Basque Country's FP Law proposes, different structures and formulas are required to those currently in use in order to be able to evolve. New needs require new figures, new groupings and new ways of working. In

short, it is a question of Managing Complexity and being able to drive the necessary change in organisations.

Although the aforementioned Law 4/2018 does not yet have the corresponding regulatory development beyond the Resolutions at the beginning of the academic year, different pilots have been carried out with regard to the new figures that needed to be incorporated into the management of the centres, with new organisational structures. Thus, transversal departments have been created with the aim of generating synergies with the rest of the centre's structures, but focusing on a specific purpose:

- Department of information and vocational guidance.
- Applied Research and Innovation Department.
- Strategy Department.
- Operations Department.
- Internationalisation Department.

As can be seen, this structure is perfectly aligned with the objectives set out in the FP Plan and only with new figures is it possible to face new challenges, especially if we consider the overload that school management has to deal with on a daily basis.

Although the Basque Country's education inspectorate has a very detailed rubric for dealing with the assessment of the management function as rigorously as possible, and an adaptation had already been carried out with the characteristics of this educational stage in mind, it is clear that the incorporation of new figures will require a review of the assessment model used in public FP centres, as well as of the tools used for this purpose. Logically, and prior to this, all the changes will have to be included in the corresponding regulations, but this should not prevent the inspectorate from anticipating what we know is to come.

CHALLENGES FOR THE INSPECTORATE REGARDING THE NEW FP LAW

La The new FP Law 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of FP, introduces important new features in the organisation of the stage, but we will first

highlight the express reference to the functions attributed to the education inspectorate in Article 110.2:

"All public administrations with competence in the matter shall ensure the quality of all the actions and services of the Vocational Training System, especially **vocational guidance, the training provided in the two regimes, in all their learning environments and in all their modalities, and the accreditation of professional competences**. To this end, the High Inspectorate of Education and the Education Inspectorate will be involved in the inspection, supervision, and evaluation of the Vocational Training System, under the terms established in Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education, and without prejudice to the competences of other bodies".

The challenge facing the education inspectorate is no small one, given that, in addition to all the organisational changes proposed, we must add the new scenarios in which, until now, the department of education was not usually involved, but rather the department of labour, such as training for employment, with the integration of the two subsystems into one, or the field of accreditation of competences.

In line with the promotion of anticipation, the CAPV has been experimenting with some of the novelties which will be incorporated with the regulatory development of this law. Thus, for example:

- Attempts have been made to test the possibilities for all first-year students to undertake in-company training, with mixed results, but which allow them to be prepared to resolve the difficulties detected. The inspectorate, for its part, has monitored these pilots more closely.
- Training for employment has been incorporated into normal teaching practice, and has even been considered a public service, which has allowed the inspectorate to include it in its supervision.
- More inclusive and adapted proposals have been explored, such as 3-year Basic FP, and the inspectorate has collaborated in drawing up instructions for its development, as well as the corresponding supervision. Similarly, the inspectorate has collaborated in the general regulation of specialisation courses.

But there are many challenges on the horizon for the future... Education administrations will decide, in application of their competence, how the new law is to be developed and applied, but until then, the education inspectorate should reflect on certain issues, such as the following::

- The new role of the inspectorate in a collaborative context with other entities, bodies and institutions that participate in the development of a new FP model.
- The re-definition of the functions to be carried out by the inspectorate in the new FP environment, with a special focus on "ensuring the quality of all its actions and services", as stipulated in the new law.
- Consequently, the competence profile of the inspectorate should be reviewed in order to be able to undertake these tasks, as well as the training plan necessary to acquire it.
- The possibility for the inspectorate to be present in those forums in which the FP system is evaluated, such as the Basque FP Council.

At the same time, if, as stated in its Strategic Vision, the education inspectorate aspires to add value to all its activities, what could it do to achieve this?

- Perhaps it could improve its knowledge of the professional sectors linked to vocational training cycles and the technical reports that carry out surveys in this respect?
- Take on a didactic role with the schools, so that they better understand the implications of the standard...
- Adopt a role of facilitator and transmitter of good practices among the centres, seeking synergies that facilitate teamwork, applied innovation, optimisation of material and, above all, personnel resources...
- Promote a culture of evaluation in the centres so that the changes ensure real innovation and maintain the quality of the system...

A new and uncertain scenario is opening up for FP and, therefore, for the Education Inspectorate. Collaboration and accompaniment will be useful tools for both parties in the new path that is beginning, and in the midst of all the uncertainty, let us not lose

what gives meaning to education inspection: contributing to the improvement of the education system.

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