

LA INSPECCIÓN EDUCATIVA ACTUAL EN LAS COMUNIDADES AUTÓNOMAS: UNA VISIÓN COMPARATIVA

THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL INSPECTION IN AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES IN SPAIN: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

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Abstract:

The educational inspection has its starting point in article 27.8 of the Spanish Constitution and in the Education Law, currently the LOE, modified by the LOMLOE. However, each of the autonomous communities has specific legislation to regulate the inspection function in their respective territorial area. In the normative elements that regulate the organization and operation of the educational inspection in the autonomous communities, variations of some importance can be found, which are useful to understand the differences in the way in which the tasks of educational inspection are carried out. For this reason, this review of the regional legislation regarding educational inspection has been prepared. The aspects that have been evaluated include some of the most interesting among those that orbit the work of the educational inspectorate, from the very functions and attributions of the educational inspectors to aspects of the organizational structure of the Inspection in each of the autonomous communities. The final objective of this review is to present a general overview of the educational inspection in Spain to be able to make a comparison of the

aforementioned aspects, related to the organization and operation of the Inspectorate.

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Keywords: Education, educational inspection, inspection, educational supervision.

1. LA INSPECTION IN THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES

The general framework of the Educational Inspection rests on the Spanish Constitution (hereinafter EC), which in its Title I (Fundamental Rights and Duties) and more specifically, in the second chapter (Rights and Freedoms), in the first section, deals with fundamental rights and public freedoms. Article 27 establishes the right to education and freedom of teaching and, within it, in section 8, it is established that:

The public authorities shall inspect and homologate the educational system to ensure compliance with the laws.

Thus, the EC itself provides for the existence of the inspection of the educational system, which is intended to ensure compliance with the laws. On the other hand, the LOE, as amended by Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), establishes in Article 148 (Inspection of the educational system) that:

- 1. The inspection, supervision and evaluation of the educational system is the competence and responsibility of the public authorities.*
- 2. It is the responsibility of the competent public authorities to order, regulate and exercise educational inspection within the respective territorial scope.*
- 3. Educational inspection shall be carried out on all the elements and aspects of the educational system, to ensure compliance with the laws, the guarantee of the rights and the observance of the duties of all those who participate in the teaching and learning processes, the improvement of the educational system and the quality and equity of education.*

The different statutes of autonomy of the different autonomous communities (hereinafter CCAA), regulated by an organic law, establish that the Autonomous Community in question is responsible for the legislative development and execution of education, with the expression that this will normally be done in all its extension, levels and grades, in accordance with the provisions of article 27 of the Constitution and the organic laws which, in accordance with section 1 of article 81 thereof, develop it, and without prejudice to the powers attributed to the State by number 30 of section 1 of article 149 and to the high inspection for its compliance and guarantee.

Each of the ACs has a legal instrument—decree, order, resolution, etc.—regulating aspects related to the organization and operation of the Educational Inspection Service in those ACs, detailing aspects such as the functions and attributions of the SIE, issues related to the specification of these aspects of organization and operation by means of an Action Plan, specific issues on the organization of the SIE (Head Office, districts, coordination areas) or other issues related to the operation of the SIE.

2. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL INSPECTION IN THE CCAA

It is well known that, in Spain, in its current territorial model, the different autonomous communities have been assuming the competencies in education since the transition until essentially the end of the 1990s. Thus, each of the 17 communities legally develops aspects related to the legal framework that the State reserves for itself, thanks to Article 149 of the Magna Carta. This is so by virtue of the thirtieth of the matters listed in said article, which establishes that the State is responsible for regulating the conditions for obtaining, issuing, and homologating academic and professional degrees and basic standards for the development of article 27 of the Constitution—which refers to the right to education—to guarantee compliance with the obligations of the public authorities

in this area. However, although there are differences, in essence, what has been happening is that the autonomous communities do not generally establish too many innovations in their specific regulations for the legal development of the State bases, and even, in many cases, some practically reproduce what others indicate—for this we need only compare the inspection decrees of some communities and others, so that the coincidence, even textually, is very high. This is the case with many of the aspects that will be pointed out—those chosen as key and defining aspects of the organizations and functioning of educational inspections in the autonomous communities—and which will be discussed below.

3. DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL INSPECTION IN THE CCAA

In this section, the aspects to be developed and compared in the current panorama of the different autonomous communities are as follows:

- The functions of education inspectors.
- The powers of the education inspectors.
- The inspection visits.
- The consideration of inspectors as public authority.
- The principles of action of the educational inspection.
- The specialization and stages of centers that inspectors attend.
- Structure, organization, and dependence of the educational inspection.
- Coordination and advisory bodies in educational inspection.
- Action plans (general and provincial, if applicable).
- The training of inspectors.
- The evaluation of educational inspection.
- Working conditions, access, and communications in the inspection services.

3.1 The functions of education inspectors

It is well known that the functions of education inspectors are defined in article 151 of the LOE. When the LOE was modified in 2013 through the enactment of the LOMCE, nothing related to Title VII of the LOE was varied, that is, nothing related to the inspection of the educational system, which implies that the functions of the educational inspection, contained in Chapter II of the aforementioned title, did not suffer any variation either. However, the same cannot be said of the legal modification of the LOE with the approval of the LOMLOE in December 2020, since on this occasion some of the functions of education inspectors were modified in the law, although not extensively. Specifically, the functions of letters a) and h) of article 151, which defines them, were changed.

With respect to these functions, the variation in letter a) broadens the supervision, evaluation, and control that the inspectors carry out to clarify that they also do so on the projects that the centers develop, indicating the autonomy of the centers in the exercise of the inspection work. The variation of letter h) is broader and responds to a clear trend in educational inspection in recent times, as it adds guidance to management teams in different aspects (coexistence, participation of the educational community, conflict resolution, mediation), although these tasks had been carried out in practice in most educational inspection services.

Having said the above, it is normal that when the functions that the different autonomous communities assign to inspectors are reviewed, there is normally no mention of projects or advice to the management team, given that the enactment of the LOMLOE that introduces such changes is very recent and there have been no new decrees in the different autonomous communities that incorporate these novelties. But it is true that the communities could have included it previously, since in the original wording of the functions of the LOE—before the modification of the LOMLOE—it was established that the educational administrations could, within the scope of their competencies, add new functions to their inspectors. The truth is that this reality has disappeared with the modifications introduced by the

LOMLOE and, therefore, the added functions of the communities, which were expanded under the protection of letter h) of article 151 of the LOE, no longer have that legal coverage.

Thus, given that the functions that each community highlights will be indicated in a table, another table is included with the literal text of the eight functions that the LOE currently and after the modifications of the LOMLOE has.

Table 1.

Inspectors' functions included in the LOE after the modification of the LOMLOE.

Text of the article of the LOE	Article
To supervise, evaluate and control, from the pedagogical and organizational point of view, the functioning of the educational centers, as well as the projects and programs they develop, respecting the framework of autonomy that this Law protects.	151.a)
To supervise the teaching practice, the directive function and to collaborate in its continuous improvement.	151.b)
To participate in the evaluation of the educational system and its components.	151.c)

To ensure compliance, in educational centers, with the laws, regulations and other provisions in force that affect the educational system.	151.d)
To ensure compliance with and application of the principles and values contained in this Law, including those aimed at promoting real equality between men and women.	151.e)
To advise, guide and inform the different sectors of the educational community in the exercise of their rights and in the fulfillment of their obligations.	151.f)
To issue the reports requested by the respective educational administrations or that are derived from the knowledge of the reality of the educational inspection, through the regulatory channels.	151.g)
To guide the management teams in the adoption and monitoring of measures that favor coexistence, the participation of the educational community and the resolution of conflicts, promoting and participating, when necessary, in mediation processes.	151.h)

Table 2.

Functions of the LOE-LOMLOE and its reflection in the regulations of the CCAA.

Source: own elaboration.

	Andalusia	Aragon	Principality of Asturias	Canary Islands	Canary Islands	Cantabria	Castile and Leon	Castile-La Mancha	Catalonia	Valencian Community	Extremadura ^a	Galicia	C. of Madrid	Murcia	Navarra	Basque Country	La Rioja	Ceuta and Melilla*	
Art. 151.a)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 151.b)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 151.c)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 151.d)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 151.e)		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Art. 151.f)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Art. 151.g)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 151.h)						✓			✓									

In the table we have pointed out the coincidence, when this is the majority, in the definition of the function that the community makes with respect to the one indicated by the LOE. In general, the functions of the law are usually included in the regulations of the communities, but there are some issues that deserve to be highlighted, which are:

In Andalusia, with respect to the function of letter a), the reference to the evaluation of projects and programs is omitted, while in the function of letter b), the reference to the control of educational centers is added.

In the case of Asturias and Catalonia, they do the same regarding the function of letter a), since both omit the reference to the exercise of said function "from the pedagogical and organizational point of view".

In the Balearic Islands, also with respect to the function of letter a), what refers to the control and evaluation of the centers is omitted, although the rest of the functions are mostly unaltered, except in the case of the function of letter b), where the aspect referring to supervision is not indicated.

In the regulation of the other archipelago, the Canary Islands, it is observed that, also with respect to the function of letter a), the reference to the exercise of control therein is omitted.

In Murcia, with respect to the function of letter a), the supervision and evaluation of the text defining the function is omitted. In the function of letter b), the task is referred to as "advising and guiding the teaching staff".

It turns out that even in the territory managed by the Ministry, that is, in Ceuta and Melilla, with respect to the function of letter a), there is an omission, which refers to evaluation, although it should be noted that the normative regulation of the Ministry is prior, from 1996, a decade no less, to the enactment of the LOE in 2006.

Thus, it can be seen that the functions of the inspectors in the autonomous communities are not very different and in fact are very similar to each other. There are communities that, for example, Cantabria, adhere to the functions of the LOE, although as the reference is prior to the LOMLOE, but does not develop the article, but refers to it, it could be concluded that, as it is still in force, although article 151 of the law has been modified, the regulation of these communities—in the case exemplified, Cantabria—includes this modification incorporated in the new text of the LOE. In addition, in this case, it adds other functions.

3.2.- The powers of education inspectors

The variation suffered by the LOE in its article 151, in the regulation of the functions of the educational inspection, has been mentioned before. The same has happened with the attributions of the education inspectors, which were not varied with the LOMCE of 2013, but with the LOMLOE, such that they have been expanded, from four to six.

It could be said that the previous attributions have been maintained, as follows:

- The attribution of letter a) has been extended, in the sense of changing from "knowing" the activities of the centers to also supervising and observing them.
- The attributions of letters b), c) and d), have remained unchanged, although that of letter d) has now become that of letter f), since two new attributions have been added, now contained in letters d) and e) of the new article 153 of the LOE.

- The two new powers mentioned are those contained in letter d), referring to the possibility of participating in meetings of collegiate and coordinating bodies; and in letter e), referring to the submission of reports, issuance of requirements and taking of minutes.

Proceeding in a similar way to the functions, given that the attributions that each community highlights will be indicated in a table, another table is included with the literal text of the six attributions that the LOE currently has and after the modifications of the LOMLOE.

Table 3.

Inspectors' attributions included in the LOE after the modification of the LOMLOE.

Text of the article of the LOE	Article
To know, supervise and observe all the activities carried out in the centers, both public and private, to which they will have free access.	153.a)
Examine and verify the academic, pedagogical, and administrative documentation of the centers.	153.b)
To receive from the remaining officials and persons in charge of the centers and educational services, public and private, the necessary collaboration for the development of their activities, for the exercise of which the inspectors will have the consideration of public authority.	153.c)
d) To participate in the meetings of the collegiate or educational coordination bodies of the centers, respecting the exercise of the autonomy that the Law recognizes them, as well as to form part of commissions, boards and tribunals, when so determined.	153.d)

e) To submit reports and make requirements when non-compliances are detected in the application of the regulations, and to draw up minutes, either on their own initiative or at the request of the corresponding administrative authority.	153.e)
f) Any other duties attributed to it by the educational administrations, within the scope of its competencies.	153.f)

Table 4.

Attributions of the LOE-LOMLOE and their reflection in the regulations of the CCAA.

	Andalusia	Aragon	Principality of Asturias	Canary Islands	Canary Islands	Cantabria	Castile and Leon	Castile-La Mancha	Catalonia	Valencian Community	Extremadura	Galicia	C. of Madrid	Murcia	Navarra	Basque Country	La Rioja	Ceuta and Melilla*	
Art. 153.a)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 153.b)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 153.c)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Art. 153.d)	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓				✓					
Art. 153.e)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

It is worth mentioning that the communities do not mention in their legal texts, as they were prior to the legal modification of the LOMLOE, the attributions in the way they are now mentioned in the law. However, there are some particularities in the communities, such as the fact that, in Andalusia, the visit is expressly mentioned as such, although it is also true that this reality is directly derived from the attributions. This was also pointed out by Aragon in its regulations, as well as other communities; Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha, La Rioja and Valencia, and the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla. It is also noteworthy that, in the latter community, the attribution of supervising and observing the centers was already mentioned, which has been added by the LOMLOE. Also, with respect to documentation, a wide range of possibilities were included in the powers of the inspectors. It is true that the possibilities of intervention in the centers were reduced in the case of private centers, which is now reduced with the new law.

In addition, regarding the meetings of the collegiate bodies, some communities went further than what the current law has provided, and pointed out that the inspectors were empowered to convene, hold and chair these meetings (Andalusia, Aragon, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Extremadura, Galicia, Navarra and Valencia) or at least hold the meetings, even if they are not chaired or convened (Asturias, La Rioja and the Basque Country).

Also, in relation to the function of letter e), regarding minutes, requirements and reports, many of the Autonomous Communities had moved forward, granting this attribution to the inspectors in full (Andalusia, Asturias, Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Ceuta and Melilla, Extremadura and Murcia) or in part (Aragon, La Rioja, Madrid and the Valencian Community).

It could be stated that, in view of the powers that the communities have added throughout the period 2006-2020, that is, in the fourteen years between the approval of the LOE and its last modification by means of the LOMLOE,

comparing them with the powers of the consolidated LOE after the LOMLOE, it is the law itself that has added powers that the communities had already incorporated mostly to their regulations, so that in this sense, they do not represent an addition to most of them.

3.3.- Inspection visits

Anyone with a minimal knowledge of the educational system, educational centers, and even the education inspectorate itself, will have no doubt that the officials who carry out inspection work in educational centers—they also do so in programs and services—have a characteristic that differentiates them from other officials in the education sector, which is none other than a constant and direct attribution that they have, that is, to visit and know firsthand what happens in the centers. In addition, as the inspectors, before performing educational inspection tasks, have previously been teachers and officials of other bodies (this is a requirement for access to the corps of educational inspectors), they are well prepared for what they do, which, as was seen in the functions, are many and diverse actions carried out, and it can be understood that they culminate in advising the management teams in order to achieve an improvement in the operation of the centers that also results in an overall improvement in education.

In this sense and in relation to the inspection visit, it is of great interest to point out the lapidary and widespread phrase, well known for this reason, which appeared in the preamble of the Royal Decree of March 30, 1849, on Normal Schools and Inspectors of Primary Instruction (Published in the Gaceta de Madrid no. 5315, of April 2, 1849) which said: "Without them the administration knows nothing, sees nothing, and can remedy nothing".

Thus, the inspectors are considered the eyes of the administration in the centers, so it is not surprising that it is generally indicated that the visit is the usual system of work of the inspectors.

In some communities there is a very specific regulation of the inspection visit. This is the case of Andalusia, which specifies aspects such as that normally the visits to turn will be made known to the directors of said centers beforehand. Andalusia also establishes, regarding these visits, the effects to be pursued with them.

Other issues are also pointed out in some normative regulations, such as the following¹:

- The inspector may require the identification or reason for their presence to the people who are in the school, by the inspector.
- That the inspector may be accompanied during the inspection visit by the staff of the educational center that is deemed necessary for the best development of the inspection function (Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha).
- That a record of the inspection visit must be made in the corresponding Educational Inspection Visits Book. In certain communities it is expressly indicated that it must be electronic (Andalusia, Canary Islands, Asturias).
- That with each visit, a summary of the visit must be recorded (Andalusia, Asturias, Castile and Leon, Madrid, Murcia) or a record to be registered (Cantabria).
- That the visits are scheduled with adequate time and with a frequency that is normally weekly (Andalusia, Castile-La Mancha, Castile and Leon, Extremadura, Madrid), although there are other periods (Canary Islands establishes it on a fortnightly basis).

¹ In parentheses, in each of the aspects, some of the communities that expressly refer to this aspect are indicated, without the intention of being exhaustive, but only as an example.

- That there will be a follow-up of the visits carried out and the scheduling of those programmed, normally in the forum of the area team or equivalent.
- That the presence of education inspectors in the centers will be carried out by superior order, ex officio or at the reasoned request of a member of the educational community, which is indicated in most of the autonomous communities in this or a similar way (Aragon, Castile-La Mancha, Navarra, Basque Country, Valencian Community).
- That the types of visits are classified as initial, habitual, follow-up, specific, incidental, evaluation, etc. (Extremadura, Galicia, Valencian Community).

The case of the autonomous community of the Canary Islands deserves special mention in this regard, since the Canary Islands regulation establishes a serie of issues that define the purpose of the inspection visit, such as the use of the so-called key operating procedures (KOP) for data collection and information analysis.

The Valencian Community also deserves special reference as of expressing a certain restriction with respect to the number far as the visit is concerned, since this community), despite expressing a certain restriction with respect to the number of weekly visits to be made (it indicates that normally up to two weekly visits are made), makes a more extensive specification and development than other communities comparatively do, such as with aspects on the definition of the visit, the consideration of this as an instrument of inspection, its relation with the attributions, the principles that the visit must respect, the planning of the hearing, the way in which the inspection visit will be carried out, etc.

3.4.- The consideration of inspectors as a public authority

The concept of public authority emanates from article 550 of the Penal Code, which essentially protects agents, officials and authorities in the exercise of their functions and establishes penalties -prison and fines, as the case may be- when they are attacked, distinguishing special protection for members of the government (including that of the State, autonomous communities or local corporations), as well as representatives of the people and members of the judiciary.

Thus, education inspectors are considered a public authority according to article 151 of the LOE and this implies a degree of protection in the development of their activity that is not unimportant.

Regarding this aspect, the following issues are pointed out:

- That they will receive from the different members of the educational community, as well as from the other authorities and officials, the help and collaboration necessary to carry out their work. This is indicated in each and every one of the autonomous communities, without exception², even with exactly the same text, in many cases.
- That it is specified what is considered to be obstruction to the exercise of the inspection function, which is found in the normative regulation of the communities of Andalusia and Aragon.
- That it is indicated that the inspectors will have an accreditation for the development of their functions in the centers, which is expressly reflected in the regulations of the educational inspection of the communities of Aragon and the Basque Country, only.

² Although it is not considered an exception in the sense of its contemplation, in the case of the Principality of Asturias, the way in which the consideration of inspectors as public authority is referred to is very elusive, since it appears only in section c) of the list of attributions indicated for the inspectors in that territory, with the expression that these professionals must receive help and collaboration from the rest of the civil servants.

- That legal warnings are expressed about the non-compliance of collaboration with education inspectors, which is reflected only in the regulations of the Canary Islands community.
- That education inspectors, in the development of their inspection work, enjoy a presumption of veracity, which is expressly stated in the regulations of the educational inspection of the communities of Andalusia and Murcia only.

3.5.- Action principles of the educational inspection

The principles of action indicated in the autonomous communities with respect to educational inspection are diverse, although many of them coincide. Thus, the following are some of the most frequently used principles:

- Repeatedly and commonly used by all the autonomous communities, without exception, as in the case of the **planning** principle (although Galicia and Catalonia do not expressly specify it in their principles, but their organization is based on it),
- Mostly by almost all the autonomous communities, as in the case of the principles of **hierarchy** (only Catalonia does not mention it in its decree), **specialization** (present in all except Aragon, Castile and Leon, Catalonia and Madrid, which do not expressly mention it) and **teamwork** (all the communities except Aragon, Castile and Leon, Catalonia and Madrid).
- On a minority basis by some of the autonomous communities, as is the case of the principles of **effectiveness** (present in Aragon, Andalusia and Valencian Community), **objectivity** (Aragon and Andalusia), **responsibility** (Aragon and Andalusia), **impartiality** (Andalusia, Aragon, Madrid and Castilla y León), **confidentiality** (Aragon and Catalonia), **evaluation of**

results (cited in Asturias, Ceuta and Melilla, Murcia, Navarra, Basque Country, Cantabria and Valencian Community), **unity of action** (only in the Canary Islands and Castile-La Mancha), **participation** (only in the Canary Islands, Basque Country and Valencian Community) and **autonomy** (only in the Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha, Extremadura and Valencian Community).

- Singularly by a single autonomous community, as in the case of the principles of **integrity** (only in Aragon), neutrality (only in Aragon), **transparency** (only in Aragon), **exemplarity** (only in Aragon), **accessibility** (only in Aragon), **honesty** (only in Aragon) and protocolization of procedures (only in the Canary Islands).

3.6.- The specialization and stages of the centers that the inspectors serve

It is common for educational administrations to organize inspection services according to specialization criteria. This specialization usually translates into specific working groups on certain subjects, given that education inspectors, given their high degree of involvement in very diverse tasks, have difficulty in knowing and being specialists in each and every one of the issues in which they intervene because of their work, since a vast horizon of subjects is open to them (general didactics, organization of centers, educational evaluation, disciplinary regime, management and leadership, professional guidance, conflict resolution, administrative aspects, attention to diversity, and a long etcetera). Thus, some communities have focused the specialization of the inspectors on certain centers for the type of education they provide, although they are the fewest. Thus, Asturias, Ceuta and Melilla, La Rioja and Murcia are the only territories in which it is established that education inspectors attend, in practice, centers specifically by stages, and therefore a distinction is made between primary and secondary inspectors. It is true that not in all the communities it is indicated normatively or it is not completely closed, as is the case of Murcia, which indicates that all the inspectors exercise the same functions and have identical attributions, and this

implies that they all have the same professional qualification, are equally empowered to supervise all the centers, teachings, stages and levels, as well as the generality of the educational services and programs, then at the normative level it is not established the obligation to be organized as primary and secondary inspectors.

In other communities, it is not clearly established at the regulatory level either, but the role of general inspector is used in practice and for the development of the service. Examples of communities that operate in this way, but do not explicitly state this aspect in their regulations, are Cantabria, Catalonia, and Extremadura.

3.7.- Structure, organization, and dependence of the educational inspection

Structurally and organizationally, the educational inspectorates of the different communities are organized in a very similar way. Communities with several provinces usually have central services (General Inspectorate, General Inspection Subdirectorate or Inspection Directorate) and provincial or territorial inspection services. The General Inspectorate is usually headed by the Inspector General, assisted by the Central Inspectors and, in some cases, by other inspectors (as in Madrid or the Valencian Community).

In each of the provincial or territorial inspectorates (or the only one in the case of being uniprovincial), the services are usually organized around districts, demarcations, or inspection areas, to which the inspectors are assigned. In addition, in a transversal way, it is common for work teams to be organized.

They are called inspection zones in certain communities, such as Andalusia, Navarra, Valencia (or circumscriptions), the Basque Country and the Canary Islands. In others they are called districts, as in Madrid, Castile and Leon, Cantabria, Asturias, Murcia, Extremadura, and Aragon. Less common, but used, is the term of demarcations (Valencian Community and Balearic Islands).

Regarding the filling of inspection positions, it is usual for the positions of Inspector General, Central Inspector and provincial or district chiefs to be appointed by free appointment. In some cases, these are appointed among officials of the corps of education inspectors; in all cases, the number of years of experience required or the definitive destination in the autonomous community is determined.

Among the communities that indicate the requirement of belonging to the inspectorate to hold the position of Inspector General or equivalent (Director of Inspection, Deputy Director General of Inspection or Head of Service in uniprovincial communities) are Asturias, Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha (must have definitive destination), Catalonia (Deputy Director General of Inspection), Ceuta and Melilla (specific case that have a chief inspector each of them, but a Deputy Director General of Centers, Inspection and Programs that is located in the central services of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, in Madrid), Community of Madrid (Deputy Director General of Inspection), Community of Valencia (Inspector General, with a minimum of 4 years of experience and permanent assignment), Andalusia (with four years of experience and permanent assignment), Aragon (called Director of the Education Inspectorate), Castile and Leon (Head of the Central Education Inspectorate), Balearic Islands (Director of the Department, who is required to have 5 years of seniority and to be a civil servant in the corps), Extremadura (with three years of seniority and a permanent post in the community). On the other hand, Galicia does not specify this requirement for the Inspector General, La Rioja (head of service, with 4 years of seniority and a civil servant of the corps), Murcia (head of service, with 3 years of seniority and a civil servant of the corps), Basque Country (freely appointed, but a public call is made among the civil servants of the CIE).

The case of Catalonia is unique in the sense that there are chief inspectors in certain areas (chief inspector of planning and coordination, chief inspector of

supervision, assessment and evaluation of centers, services and projects, chief inspector of supervision, assessment and evaluation of the teaching and management function, chief inspector of promotion and coordination of the work in educational networks, chief inspector of training and evaluation of the inspection), appointed for four years and by free designation.

Regarding the requirement to occupy the position of Central Inspector, there are communities that impose the requirement of being an official of the corps of education inspectors, such as the Canary Islands, Cantabria (called Deputy Chief Inspector and there are two, of which one must meet the requirement of belonging to the corps), Castile-La Mancha (there will be at least two) and Andalusia (with four years of experience and definitive destination), Aragon (they are called Autonomous Inspectors), Castile-La Mancha (they are called autonomous inspectors) and Andalusia (with four years of experience and definitive destination).

The provision of Central Inspector posts in Extremadura deserves attention due to its singularity since access to these posts is configured in the staff in a structural way and the post is accessed by transfer competition and even on an accidental basis. The General Inspectorate is in Merida —where the Central Inspectors are stationed— and does not coincide in this case with either of the two territorial inspectorates (one in Cáceres and the other in Badajoz).

To hold the position of territorial or provincial head of inspection, it is a requirement to be a career civil servant in the inspectorate in most communities, such as: Canarias, Castile-La Mancha, Community of Valencia, Castile and Leon, Andalusia (with four years of experience and definitive destination in the corresponding province), Catalonia (requirement of four years of experience), Extremadura (with three years of seniority and with destination in the community), Galicia, Basque Country (singularity it has is that a merit-based competition is

called to assign these positions and the candidates must have definitive destination in the territory).

Support for the Inspector General or similar position by Central Inspectors is provided in communities such as the Canary Islands (one Central Inspector), Castile-La Mancha (at least two central inspectors), the Valencian Community and Castile-La Mancha, Andalusia, and Murcia.

Special mention should be made of the case of the Valencian Community, which has the figure of the Inspector Secretary, which does not exist in other communities, and requires a CIE official.

As for the dependence of the inspectorate, there is variety, since some communities depend directly on the minister (Asturias, La Rioja), while others depend on the vice-minister (Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha, Madrid, Basque Country), on a general directorate (Castile-La Mancha, Balearic Islands) or even on the General Technical Secretariat (Murcia, Aragon, Castile-La Mancha). Normally, this dependence is functional, since provincial or territorial inspections usually depend organically on the corresponding territorial directorate or delegation (or on the territorial area directorate, in the case of the inspections of the Madrid TADs, for example).

3.8.- Coordination and advisory bodies in the educational inspection system

Another recurrent aspect in the educational inspections of the different educational administrations of the autonomous communities is that of the forums in which the coordination of the actions of the educational inspectors is carried out, or in which support and advice is provided to the person in charge of the inspection service.

It is true that there are peculiarities in this regard, but for the most part the same form of participation, advice and coordination is repeated in the educational inspections of the different administrations.

It is common to have a collegiate body to advise the General Inspectorate (or the corresponding position), normally called the General Inspection Council or a similar term, which is made up of the General Inspector who presides over it and the concurrence of other inspectors with positions in the structure of the inspection service, such as the central inspectors and the chief inspectors of each province —this model is used by Andalusia, the Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia (it is called the inspection advisory commission), Extremadura (Regional Council), Galicia (Board of service chiefs), Madrid (Coordination Council), the Basque Country (interterritorial coordination commission) and the Valencian Community)—. In the case of Madrid, the Coordination Council may be attended by other inspectors or other officials, so that they may advise on a given subject. Communities with only one province hold these meetings down to district chiefs or equivalent, as is the case of Murcia and Navarra.

In the case of the Balearic Islands, meetings chaired by the chief inspector are held to advise him.

In addition, in the pluriprovincial autonomous communities, a provincial coordination team is constituted —with this or another name— which is made up of the chief inspector of the province or territory and the coordinating inspectors into which that province or territory is divided, as is the case in Andalusia, the Canary Islands (Territorial Inspection Councils), Castile-La Mancha, Extremadura (Provincial Councils), Galicia (provincial coordination board), the Basque Country (territorial commission in each province) and the Valencian Community (Territorial Commissions of the education inspectorate).

There is also another coordinating body made up of all the inspectors of the corresponding province or territory, which is constituted as a plenary session. In some cases, it is called Provincial Council of Education Inspection (as in Andalusia) and in others, Provincial Boards of Inspectors (Galicia, Spain).

There are also communities that present the possibility of other coordination methods, as is the case of Aragon, with the proposal of meetings that the coordinating inspectors can propose to the chief inspector of the province.

There is even the case of communities in which the bodies do not exist as such, although coordination meetings are held, as is the case of Asturias, which holds meetings at various levels (district, inspection headquarters, etc.), as well as Castile and Leon, La Rioja and Cantabria, which do the same.

However, there is the case of the autonomous cities' inspectorates and the Ministry's own central inspectorate, which does not carry out this coordination work as such, and there is no coordination or advisory body in this regard.

3.9.- Action plans

The action plans of the education inspection services are usually conceived in a very similar way in the different autonomous communities. It is usual for a multi-year General Action Plan to be drawn up and for this to be followed by an Annual General Plan, which in turn can be specified in provincial or territorial plans, as the case may be.

The so-called multi-year General Action Plan, which normally sets the priorities of the Regional Ministry, is usually established for periods of 3 or 4 years.

Thus, we find communities that establish it for a period of 4 years, as is the case of Andalusia (Plan 2019-2023), the Canary Islands, Catalonia, the Ministry for Ceuta

and Melilla and Central Inspection and the Valencian Community. However, others establish it for a three-year duration, such as Aragon and the Basque Country. It is less common to have a biennial duration, as is the case of Castile and Leon. There are also communities that indicate that they will be multiannual in nature, without specifying their specific duration. (Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra) or even without specifying La Rioja, normally on an annual basis).

Thus, it can be observed that, although the planning system and the concreteness of these plans, which include the usual actions of the inspectors, are similar in the different communities, the periodicity is not always preserved.

There are several cases of provincial plans:

- That they do not exist because they are in a uniprovincial community and there are no subdivisions in them (La Rioja, Murcia, Cantabria, Asturias, and Navarra).
- That they exist and coincide with the provinces, so there will be provincial plans, as in Castile-La Mancha, Castile and Leon, Aragon, Galicia, Andalusia, Basque Country, Valencian Community and Extremadura.
- That there is only one province, but several specific plans, as is the case in Madrid, given that it is administratively divided into Territorial Area Directorates, each of which functions as if it were a province for these purposes.
- That there being several provinces, there are no plans coinciding with them, but with other territories, as is the case of Catalonia, which has a total of ten territories.
- The case of Ceuta and Melilla, which is governed by the Central Inspection Plan, which devotes part of it to Ceuta and Melilla, and part to the inspection of centers and programs abroad.

As well as the aforementioned, there is a possibility of specifying singular action plans, and that is that, in the Valencian Community, in the event that needs are detected that indicate the need to be carried out, plans may be drawn up for each of the inspection zones.

3.10.- Training of inspection personnel

This aspect is common to all educational administrations, so that they point out and agree that training is a duty and a right of the inspectorate personnel. An exception to this is the community of the Principality of Asturias, which with a mere mention of the task of coordinating the management area by entrusting it with the training and improvement of the educational inspection service, fails to regulate this aspect in its weak normative regulation on educational inspection.

In addition, most of the communities indicate that they will facilitate training actions for inspectors, as well as their training and attendance to them (Balearic Islands, La Rioja and Murcia) or their intention to promote activities in this sense (Navarra), while others link it to a necessary continuous improvement of the service (Castile and Leon).

Some communities even establish specific training plans for education inspectors (Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, Castile and Leon and the Valencian Community), while others include it within the action plan itself (Andalusia, Extremadura, and Madrid).

Specific mention should be made of the reference made by the Basque Country with respect to the compulsory nature of attendance at the training activities contained in the training plan. There are also mentions of other possibilities related to the training of inspectors, such as exchanges with other inspectorates (Basque Country).

3.11.- The evaluation of educational inspection

Another recurrent aspect is the evaluation of educational inspection. Although it is true that it is regulated in all the educational administrations of the communities, it is usually done in a not very determined, generalist way, without depth. In other words, it does superficially, but without taking the risk of not committing itself, usually a shallow evaluation, much less an external one.

The evaluation of educational inspection services is conceived and designed in different but similar ways. Some communities establish specific plans for the evaluation of the educational inspection service, as is the case of:

- Andalusia does it to evaluate the fulfillment of the functions of the inspection.
- Cantabria indicates that this evaluation must be carried out -it is established in its own education law- and the results must be included in the annual report.
- Castile and Leon indicates the possibility of carrying them out, with the corresponding distribution of responsibilities.
- Catalonia is oriented towards improving the quality of the service provided.
- Valencian Community establishes a service evaluation plan with observance of the objectives prefixed therein.
- Ceuta and Melilla: with the aim of assessing the functions entrusted.
- Extremadura only indicates the possibility of carrying out the evaluation, to assess the service and propose improvements in it, with express mention of certain indicators for carrying out the evaluation.
- La Rioja only indicates the mere possibility of evaluation by means of specific evaluation plans for this purpose.
- Madrid: with the indication that external evaluation plans could be carried out.

- Murcia also establishes in terms of possibility, the inspection of both the inspection service itself, as well as the task of the education inspectors themselves.
- Basque Country: with an imposition of the implementation of internal evaluation and a possibility of implementation of external evaluation, as well as the reference to the evaluation of the inspection function.

Other communities barely establish anything in this regard, as is the case of Asturias, which only indicates that the action plan will be monitored (it does not really establish evaluation as such), Navarra (without a very exhaustive regulation, it indicates a monitoring system for the educational inspection with regard to its objectives) and Galicia (which does not indicate anything about the evaluation of the educational inspection as such).

At the opposite end of the spectrum, more decisive, are communities that have established the mandatory nature of the specific evaluation of the inspection, as is the case of the Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha (which do it both internally and externally), Catalonia (which indicates that there will be a commission for this evaluation purpose of the inspection), Spain (which indicates that there will be a commission for the evaluation of the inspection of the education system) and the Canary Islands (which indicates that there will be a commission for the evaluation of the inspection of the education system, as well as a commission for the evaluation of the inspection of the education system).

3.12.- Working conditions and access

In this section we have sought to highlight some aspects that are considered relevant for educational inspection and that have not been dealt with in the previous sections, such as the composition of the tribunals for access to the corps of educational inspectors, the regulation of the inspectors' working day and

schedule, as well as the communications that they make within the educational inspection service.

Regarding the first of these aspects, that of the **tribunals that are to judge the selective processes of access to the corps of educational inspectors**, it is very common for the educational administrations to freely appoint the president, drawing lots for the rest of the members that make up the tribunal, that is, the other four members. However, there are differentiated indications regarding the requirements that the civil servants called to participate must meet, as follows:

- That the members of the board are civil servants of classification group A1, without specifying that they must be from the corps of education inspectors, which is the case in Andalusia (it is said that they must be mostly from the Corps of Education Inspectors or from CISAE, but it is not required that they all be), that the president is a civil servant of classification group A1, without specifying that they must be from the corps of education inspectors, which is the case in the Balearic Islands and Galicia.
- That it be established that the president of the tribunal be an education inspector of the corps, as in Extremadura.
- That the members of the board be officials of the inspectorate, chosen by lot, as in Galicia.
- In other communities nothing specific is specified in this regard, as in Asturias, Aragon, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia (although its decree specifies a chapter on access, nothing is indicated regarding the composition of the tribunal), Castile and Leon, La Rioja, Murcia, Navarra, Valencian Community and the Basque Country.

The case of Ceuta and Melilla deserves special attention, whose decree, from 1996, indicates the composition of the tribunals, which is currently not feasible

given that the number of personnel in Ceuta and Melilla is only six (five on staff) in each of the autonomous cities. In addition, the Ministry has not called selective processes for access to the corps of education inspectors in its area of competence since the transfer of education to the autonomous communities was completed, i.e., it has not done so for Ceuta and Melilla.

Another specific and striking case is that of the Community of Madrid, which establishes in a specific decree on the tribunals for access to the corps of education inspectors that the members are appointed by the administration (both the president and the four members), of which at least three of them must belong to the corps of education inspectors. It is worth mentioning that the usual drawing of lots for the members, although not mandatory, has been used in the last selective procedures for access to the corps of educational inspectors in the Community of Madrid.

Therefore, it is observed that in twelve of the seventeen communities, the aspects related to the composition of the selection board for access to the corps of education inspectors are not specifically established, which leaves very open— from the legal point of view— the possibilities of composition of the mentioned boards, without prejudice to what has been pointed out about the usual procedure, which is to appoint a tribunal president —most of the cases it is an education inspector although not always (serve the example of Murcia, which in its selective process of 2015 for example, appointed a professor at the University of Murcia for the presidency of the tribunal)— and proceed to draw lots among the officials of the corps of inspectors posted in the convening region, the four members to integrate the tribunal together with the president.

Regarding the **regulation of the inspectors' working day and schedule**, this point deserves attention in the sense of the ambivalent condition of these

personnel, since being teaching staff³, performs its functions within the administration and usually has the conditions of the civil servants of the administration of the community.

In this regard, there are communities that do not establish anything specific in their organization and operation decrees, nor in their development norms (Aragon), while others establish certain specific issues (Andalusia establishes the weekly working day at 35 hours; the Canary Islands establishes a weekly working week of 37.5 hours with an indication of the necessary flexibility of this schedule to the needs of the centers; Extremadura contemplates teleworking and establishes the necessary flexibility for the attention to the centers; Galicia appeals to the flexibility of the working day of the education inspectors) and in others they are governed by the norms of working day and schedules of the rest of the non-teaching personnel of the administration (Valencian Community, Cantabria, Castile and Leon, Asturias, Ceuta and Melilla, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra, Catalonia and the Basque Country).

It is worth mentioning the hybrid system of Castile-La Mancha, which has a teaching calendar regime similar to that of the management teams and with a compliance of guards in the distribution of available days of the vacation period (normally 5 or 6 days).

We wanted to point out an interesting aspect, which is the **communications that inspectors make** and the guarantees they have in the issuance of their reports or other communications of their services, and it is that in general, communications are possible for inspectors with due guarantees of registration of these. In this sense, some communities indicate that it is possible for inspectors to make these communications (Andalusia), others —the majority— do not establish anything in this regard (Aragon, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Mancha, Ceuta and Melilla,

³ Education inspectors are part of one of the bodies that make up the public teaching function, according to Additional Provision 7 of the LOE, specifically in point 1, letter i).

Extremadura, Galicia, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra, Asturias, Balearic Islands and Valencia), while in others an official means of communication is established (Canary Islands and Basque Country, etc.).

4. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

It is true that it is common to hear that there are seventeen educational inspectorates. It is also true that these statements are usually motivated by differences among them, which of course exist, but nothing could be further from the truth, to be able to think that normatively, the inspections are substantially different from each other, but rather the contrary, and, as we have seen, they have many more coincidences than aspects that separate them.

Reviewing the different aspects, it is observed that the functions and attributions, legally established in the education law, are reproduced by the communities, and there are few differences, sometimes only testimonial or of expression.

In the communities there are some differences on the conception of the visits, because while some give it a capital importance, others relegate it to a lower level, but all of them point out and conceive this as an essential task, in the end, of the education inspectors, because the inspectors are, after all, the eyes of the administrations in the educational centers.

All the communities establish the figure of the education inspector as a public authority, and the vast majority are governed by common principles, although in some cases some of them are not explicitly stated, although they can be explicitly inferred from the normative developments of the organizational and operational regulations that have been previously described.

Indeed, in some communities there is a change of conception in the role of inspectors, in some they play a generalist role, while in others they specialize in specific stages—primary, secondary, vocational training—, this being perhaps the most significant difference between one inspectorate and another.

In terms of organization and functioning, although there are differences in the structure and, above all, in the dependencies of the inspectorates with respect to the administrative apparatus, they do not introduce major differences in the operational and functional aspects.

Some difference can also be noted regarding the capacity to weave a more or less stable structure of participation in decisions through collegiate participation and coordination bodies, as well as advisory bodies. However, the effect on the model does not seem to be so relevant, or at least, it does not seem to be structural.

Nor are there excessive differences, except for some autonomous communities that regulate more decisively or are more committed—depending on how you look at it—to some specific aspect, such as the training of inspectors, or the evaluation of the inspection or the inspection function itself.

Therefore, with respect to the idea that there are seventeen different inspectorates (or even eighteen, if the latter corresponds to the scope of the Ministry of Education and Professional Training), this does not seem to be supported at least in the normative regulation of the inspection of the communities themselves—understanding and recognizing the differences between them, which obviously exist.

Moreover, other studies, such as the one by Galicia Mangas (2016) are heading in this direction, since among its conclusions it points out aspects such as that:

On the basis of the verification and study of the existing Inspection models, in accordance with the regulations of the State and the Autonomous Regions, we can reach the conclusion that in our country, due in part to the common origin or trunk from which the different Inspectorates are born, and in part to a certain normative and working inertia, there are not different Inspection models (as many as Autonomous Regions, in addition to the possible State model for Ceuta and Melilla), but a uniform and fairly homogeneous model, without prejudice to the logical differences in the working and organizational systems. This conclusion is supported by a comparison with other comparative law models, such as those existing in Germany or the United Kingdom, where clear differences can be seen in relation to functions, organization, recruitment, access, and training systems. However, in our country, the inspections of the different CCAA have a similar organizational and organizational structure, almost identical principles of organization and operation, identical working mechanisms (visits, reports, minutes, etc.), a common model of access, and almost common functions and attributions, regulated in the State educational legislation.

One cannot agree more with this conclusion, as well as with that of the problem that educational inspection constantly faces in its daily task: the interference of political power and the evolution that this has had in recent times in the work of educational inspection personnel. Galicia Mangas (2016) also points out among the conclusions of his study that:

Through the study of Spanish historical law, the opinions expressed by the different associations of inspectors, the comments of the inspectors themselves, and even the content of recent reports of the State School Council, I have been able to confirm and reach the conclusion that the

political power has traditionally sought to use the Education Inspectorate as an instrument of control of education, even on occasions of ideological control. This control has been exercised in many ways, such as the free appointment of the people who carried out inspection tasks, trying to make technical or institutional and political models of inspection compatible, giving specific instructions to specify the criteria, principles, or values to be respected, or controlling aspects such as the mobility of inspectors. At present, this control is more subtle, and is developed through the instructions and priorities for action established in the periodic plans of action of the Inspectorate, proposed by the political management bodies of the Inspectorate.

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