

WHO HAS CARRIED OUT EDUCATIONAL INSPECTION IN SPAIN OVER THE LAST TWO CENTURIES?

A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

¿QUIÉN HA EJERCIDO LA INSPECCIÓN EDUCATIVA EN ESPAÑA EN LOS ÚLTIMOS 175 AÑOS?

BREVE RECORRIDO HISTÓRICO

Without them the administration sees nothing, knows nothing, and can remedy nothing

Preamble of the Royal Decree of 30 March 1849

Guillem A. Amengual Buñola

Francisco García Moles

Miguel Ángel Tirado Ramos

Education inspectors in the Balearic Islands.

Resumen

El artículo tiene como objetivo analizar cómo se ha accedido a la inspección educativa en España desde la creación de los primeros inspectores de primera enseñanza. Para ello se examinan la forma en la que se han seleccionado a los inspectores de educación a lo largo de estos 175 años de historia, desde la creación, en 1849, de la figura del "Inspector de escuelas" en cada una de las provincias, hasta la actualidad. A tal efecto, se analizan las diferentes disposiciones normativas que han regulado esta cuestión, se exponen las características de los sistemas de ingreso que se han establecido en diferentes períodos de la historia de la inspección educativa, se detalla cómo se ha nombrado a los inspectores y, finalmente, se recogen y aportan las fuentes primarias para su consulta.

Palabras clave: *Inspección educativa, historia, acceso, métodos selectivos, concurso, concurso-oposición*

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse how educational inspection in Spain has been accessed since the formation of the first inspectors of primary education. To this end, it examines the way in which education inspectors have been selected throughout these 175 years of history, from the creation, in 1849, of the figure of the "Inspector of Schools" in each of the provinces, to the present day. To this end, the different regulatory provisions that have regulated this issue are analysed, the characteristics of the competitive examinations that have been established in different periods of the history of educational inspection are described, as well as how inspectors have been appointed in the absence of this system of access and, finally, the primary sources for consultation are collected and provided.

Keywords: *educational inspection, selection of inspectors, future of educational inspection, educational legislation, history of educational inspection, evaluation of the educational system.*

Introduction

How have education inspectors been selected over the last two centuries? The answer to this question is the main objective of this article. Knowing where we come from is fundamental to understanding where we are going. This principle applies in many areas of life, but it is perfectly applicable to education inspection. Knowing our history helps us to understand the *raison d'être* of a body of civil servants that is so relevant to the education system. In this context, it is crucial to analyse the way in which, in different historical periods, the inspectors in charge of overseeing the proper functioning of schools have been appointed. What entry systems have been the most commonly used? How has this function been appointed when there have been no competitive examinations? What requirements have allowed access to this corps of civil servants? The answers to these questions will undoubtedly allow us to know how the inspection function has been conceived at each historical moment.

Each historical epoch generates an atmosphere of thoughts, beliefs and customs that influence behaviour and, in turn, are influenced by it. For this reason, the concept, characteristics and functions of education inspectors have evolved with the times, in all their facets. Access to the corps of education

inspectors is not an exception, but a corollary of this rule, as it reflects how the perspectives, attitudes, visions and models that the legislator has in mind when regulating such a fundamental aspect as the one dealt with in this paper have changed.

The aim of this article is to analyse how educational inspection has been accessed in Spain since the creation of the first primary school inspectors. To this end, we have examined the different regulatory provisions that have governed school inspection. This analysis began in the years prior to the creation, in 1849, of the "school inspectors", and has covered all periods of Spanish history up to the present day. The organisation by sections has no other purpose than to contribute to a better understanding of the different systems of entry to the inspectorate and of appointment in the absence of inspectors. A brief overview is given of the forms of access to the inspectorate during the period of democracy and the foreseeable future of the inspectorate, whose main function is to safeguard the right to quality education. Finally, we discuss the foreseeable future of admission to this body, whose main function is to ensure the right to quality education.

NOTE: In the transcription of historical documents, their original spelling and orthography are scrupulously respected, even when they deviate from the current rules governing the grammar of the Spanish language.

1. Before the creation of the inspectors of primary education, who inspected schools?

The first regulation published in the field of education after the approval of the political [Constitution](#) of the Spanish monarchy promulgated in Cadiz in 1812 was the [Reglamento General de Instrucción Pública](#) [General Regulations for Public Instruction], decreed by the Cortes on 29 June 1821, article 92 of which established that the inspection of all public education corresponded to the *Dirección General de Estudios* [Directorate-General for Studies]. In 1938, the government of the time was authorised by Doña María Cristina de Borbón, Queen

Regent and Governor of the Kingdom, on behalf of Doña Isabel II, to provisionally draw up a plan for primary education ([Gaceta de Madrid, No. 1381, 28 August 1938](#)), Title VIII of which was devoted to the authorities responsible for the inspection and government of primary schools. In this title, it was specified that the person in charge of supervising, at least annually, all primary education establishments in the province, reprimanding teachers who failed in their duties or proposing to the Government the means of attending to and improving education in the province, was to be a member of the primary education commission (presided over by a '*jefe político*' [political figurehead]). This commission was composed of a member of the provincial deputation, a decorated ecclesiastic and two other enlightened persons, although the commission could also appoint someone from outside the commission. In each town where there was a school, a commission was also to be set up, subordinate to the provincial one, presided over by the mayor and composed of a councillor, a parish priest and two other "zealous and learned" persons appointed by the town council, which was to be responsible, among other functions, for supervising the conduct of teachers in private and public schools.

However, it was not until 30 April 1841 that an Order of the provisional Regency specifically regulated the way in which the provincial commissions for primary education were to appoint inspectors. This order not only established how the appointment of inspectors was to be carried out, but also gave crucial importance to the visits (Order of the provisional Regency, 1841, pp. 193-194):

(...) these commissions are authorised to appoint inspectors from within or outside their ranks to visit the schools at least once a year; it is now necessary that this be done as a general rule and as soon as possible. The poor state of education in various towns of the monarchy, and the difficulty of remedying this serious evil without a scrupulous and detailed visit by intelligent people, are circumstances which make the prompt execution of this measure advisable.

Moreover, the order laid down precise instructions on how the visits were to be carried out, step by step. Given the importance of the role of the inspector, his appointment was considered of great importance (Order of the provisional Regency, 1841, p. 194):

(...) such posts should only be entrusted to persons capable of carrying them out; it is also in the best service of this interesting branch of the administration that they should be remunerated for this work in the terms that the present state of funds allows.

Specifically, it was stated that, for the appointment of these posts, the commissions would give priority to those who had completed their courses of study at the court's teacher training seminary. Failing this, the option was given to commission accredited teachers or other persons of their choice. In any case, the appointments were of a temporary nature, and had to be renewed (or maintained) after carrying out the visits in the designated territory. In addition, an Order of the provisional Regency of 15 March of the same year established the possibility that students who had completed their studies at the *escuela normal seminario de maestros de la corte* [court's teacher training college] could act as inspectors when it was impossible to fill this post.

2. In 1849, inspectors of primary education were created: how were they selected?

The monograph in which this article is included celebrates the 175th anniversary of the Education Inspectorate in Spain and, therefore, the commemoration of the [Royal Decree which the Minister of Commerce, Instruction and Public Works, Juan Bravo Murillo, signed on 30 March 1849](#) and which the *Madrid Gazette* published on 2 April. The justification given in the preamble to this decree for the creation of inspectors of Primary Education is well known: "Without them, the administration sees nothing, knows nothing, and can remedy nothing" (Preamble to the Royal Decree, 1849, p. 1). This preamble specified the need for specialised officials, as in other branches of public service, who had the knowledge to "observe many things that can only be discovered

with the eyes of people who are skilled and trained in this type of investigation". Thus, it was emphasised that the creation of **primary education inspectors "will give life to primary education and will be one of the means that will contribute most to improving the education of the people"**. It is important to note that at no time did it refer to the group of inspectors as a corps of civil servants (as we shall see, it was not until 1885 that it was constituted as such), although it is undoubtedly a key Royal Decree because it established that "in all provinces there will be an Inspector of schools appointed by the Government", i.e. it created the staff as a prelude to the creation of the corps of primary education inspectors.

Given this need for specialisation, what requirements did the Royal Decree establish in order to be able to exercise such an important function? Article 47 specified that in order to be eligible for the post, it was necessary to have completed three years at the central school or at any of the higher schools and to have worked as a teacher for at least five years. In addition, all principals and teachers of existing or abolished teacher training colleges were given the option to apply for the inspectorate. However, how were these officials to be selected? Access to the post was subsequently established in the *Reglamento para los inspectores de Instrucción Primaria del reino* [Regulations for inspectors of primary education in the kingdom], approved almost two months later and published in the [Gaceta de Madrid on 25 May 1849](#), although it only established conditions and formal requirements that in no way limited the discretionary nature of the decision. Moreover, article 4 established that the first promotion "shall be made freely by the Government".

3. The longest-lived education law in Spanish history (Ley Moyano, 1857): How did it establish access to inspection?

[The Law of Public Instruction](#) (LIP) of 9 September 1857, known as the Moyano Law, since it was promulgated by the then Minister of Public Works, Mr. Claudio Moyano y Samaniego, was the longest-lived law in the history of Spain, being in force for 113 years, until it was finally repealed by the General Law of Education of 1970. This Law must have had some virtue to survive the century it was in

force, regulating public education in Spain and surviving monarchical, republican and totalitarian regimes. In its articles, Title IV of section four was devoted to the Inspectorate and it was established that in each province there would be an Inspector of primary schools (one for the three *Basque provinces*), which could be increased to two, after consultation with the Royal Council of Public Instruction, in the event of recognised need (or even up to three in Madrid). Bearing in mind that there were 49 provinces at the time, the minimum number of provincial inspectors was forty-six. It was also stated that "Inspectors shall be appointed by the King" (LIP, 1857, art. 298). But who could obtain the appointment of provincial inspector?

To be eligible for this post, it was necessary to have completed studies at the Central Normal School and to have been a primary school teacher for five years in a public school or ten years in a private school. However, to be appointed Inspector General of Primary Education, one had to be a first class provincial inspector (three classes of provinces were established, assigning different salaries to the inspectors depending on whether they were first, second or third class provincial inspectors), directors of Normal Schools of the same category or teachers of the higher course of the Central Normal School, all of them with a minimum of five years' experience in their last post and holding the title of Bachelor of Arts. It is worth noting that **article 300 of the LIP** (public instruction law) **established the first professional career of primary education inspectors** through a system of "career promotions" for provincial inspectors, based on "merit and years of service", regardless of the provinces in which they were working.

4. And then came the first Royal Decree introducing competitive examinations for entry to the corps of primary education inspectors (1885).

Despite the fact that the LIP established the commitment to regulate the inspectorate, it was not until 1885 that the [Royal Decree](#) was approved [which established the corps of primary education inspectors](#) as a body of civil servants, to which ninety inspectors were assigned. The preamble to this Royal Decree

presented the vision and conception that Cánovas' government had of education at the time and justified the creation of the "corps of inspectors in the field of primary education" on the need to provide legal security and to **protect inspectors from the arbitrariness of power and those in power**: "they cannot fear that the outcome of long years of great services rendered to education will be that they will suddenly be thrown into all the conflicts of necessity by an arbitrary resolution". At the same time, he painted a rather worrying picture, with inspectors (one per province) overwhelmed by a workload that was impossible to even minimally cover. The Royal Decree was intended to remedy this situation, although these good intentions and efforts to improve were not going to be enough. It is important to point out that the second transitional provision of this regulation established, among other things, the inclusion in the career ladder of inspectors who were in the active exercise of their post, together with "those who had belonged to the corps of inspectors of the primary education branch (...)", from which it can be deduced that the corps existed, although not de jure but de facto.

The preamble of the Royal Decree of 1885 justified the first access to the corps of inspectors by pointing out the relevance of "the indispensable technical knowledge for these services to produce fruits of prosperity and improvement in popular instruction" and its article 3 established the requirements. In this Royal Decree we also find another antecedent of the professional career, although we might think that it is something of our time:

In this draft decree, an attempt was made to ensure that the branch of inspection would be for the modest and hard-working primary school teachers one of the prospects and incentives that could be presented to them as a hope and improvement in their career of obscure sacrifices (Royal Decree of 1885, preamble, p. 661).

For this reason, it was established that promotions in the corps of primary education inspectors would be based on seniority and competitive examination. Both the system of admission and promotion was developed by a regulation

published in two consecutive publications in the *Gaceta de Madrid* on [25 November](#) and [26 November](#) 1885. The competitive examination for entry into the corps of primary education inspectors was reserved for "Normal Teachers" with a minimum of three years' tenure in this type of school and for those who had worked for at least five years in an official or assimilated free primary education school. The teachers of the Higher School, with this minimum seniority and who did not hold the title of Normal Teacher, had to pass a special examination in Pedagogy and Legislation of primary education, which was carried out by the specific Tribunal for the revalidation of teaching qualifications and which was constituted in the central Normal School.

It is worth noting that the regulations prescribed an annual competitive examination to fill vacancies that had occurred in the corps since the previous competitive examination. At the same time, it determined the exercises to be included in the competitive examination (art. 13): one oral and two practical exercises, of an eliminatory nature (Table 1):

Exercises	Description
Oral	Answer three questions, chosen at random by the candidate, from the official questionnaire on primary education legislation , previously published by the Directorate General of Public Instruction.
Practical exercise 1	Processing and reasoned report on a file that the inspectors have to process or report on by reason of their position, proposing the final resolution that should be given to the file, or the practice of the diligence or diligences that are lacking in the processing of the file. They had to be incommunicated or supervised by the Court, so that they could not help each other,
Practical	Visit to the school designated by the Court and the

exercise 2	completion of a visit report. This report was to be submitted to the Court within 84 hours of the visit.
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Table 1: Exercises included in the competitive examination laid down in article 15 of the Regulation of 25 November 1885.

The [1885 Regulations](#) developed the figure of the "Special Inspector for Municipal Schools" introduced by the Royal Decree of the same year for towns of more than 100,000 "souls". This post was reserved for inspectors of first education in the first section of the scale, for headmasters of normal schools with a minimum of five years' tenure, or for teachers of normal or model schools with 10 years' tenure. They were freely appointed by the Ministry of Development from among those who met some of the above conditions, and in the event that there was more than one inspector in these localities, a chief inspector was appointed or, failing that, his functions were carried out by the most senior inspector in the post.

The Regulations created the post of "Delegates of Inspection" in localities of less than two thousand inhabitants (there could be several in larger towns), with all the rights of inspection corresponding to the Government, and who had to visit at least once a year all the Schools subject to their supervision. It was an "honorary, free and resignable" post (Regulation 1885, art. 74), exercised by local residents with roots in the locality who met "the best conditions of aptitude and morality for the performance of the post" (Regulation of 1885, art. 73) and whose function could not be assigned to headmasters, primary school teachers, councillors or members of the local Boards of Primary Education. In reality, the creation of this figure at no financial cost indicated a desire to control what was taught in schools from a social, religious and political point of view, but without an allocated budget. It was a cheap way of replacing and even perverting the functions of the inspectors of primary education by establishing a kind of "political commissariat".

5. Various attempts to improve the General Inspectorate of Education (1887-1898).

Only two years after the Royal Decree which introduced competitive examinations for entry to the corps of primary education inspectors (1885), in March 1887, the first [Draft Law on the Inspection of Education](#) was drawn up, a regulation which, although it was never promulgated, has the merit that a large part of its articles served as inspiration for the [Royal Decree of 15 July](#). The regulation was published that same year in order to provisionally organise the General Inspectorate of Education while the Cortes approved the aforementioned bill. With regard to the appointment of inspectors, the articles of this legal text show the clear political dependence and discretion in the appointment of inspectors general by the Minister of Education, who assigned this function to directors general or councillors of public instruction, to rectors or deans with four years' experience in the post, to full professors or even to civil servants from the Ministry of Public Works who had been Heads of Administration in the Directorate General of Public Instruction. On the other hand, article 10 specified that no posts for first and second class inspectors would be filled until the conditions, entry and promotion in the corps had been determined by law.

However, it was not the draft law that was approved in 1889, but a new [Royal Decree \(21 October 1889\)](#) which sought to adapt the previous law to the resources available at the time, since, according to its preamble, it had not been accompanied by the necessary resources. The failure to allocate a sufficient budget, in general for education and, in particular, for the Inspectorate, is an endemic evil that has negatively conditioned the development of the profession during these 175 years.

In any case, as in so many laws and royal decrees, the alleged intentions stated in the preambles are one thing, but the content of these regulations is quite another. Practically no aspect of what was announced in the preamble was reflected or developed in the articles. What was done was to reduce from four to two, in certain cases, the number of years required in the previous regulation to be appointed inspectors general and to establish that, in order to be appointed

inspectors general, the heads of administration had to have entered the post by competitive examination.

As far as provincial inspectors were concerned, article 6 of the Royal Decree established the need to give them "suitable instructions for the performance of their duties and to supervise their conduct as civil servants", but it was not until 1896 that these instructions were regulated. The preamble to the [Royal Decree of 27 March 1896](#) admitted that the General Inspectorate was insufficiently endowed with resources to carry out its responsibilities and that the primary education inspectorate was the one most in need of regulatory provisions, although this regulation did not modify the procedure for joining the Inspectorate. It was later, by means of the [Royal Decree of 11 October 1898](#), that a system of access and promotion for provincial inspectors was created. For this purpose, three categories of inspectors were established: term inspectors (provincial and municipal inspectorates in Madrid), promotion inspectors (inspections at the head of university districts) and entry inspectors (all others). For the appointment of provincial inspectors, the Inspectorate General was to draw up individual files on the candidates "recording their merits and services, their morality, aptitude and zeal, and all other data that could contribute to a more accurate selection" (art. 34). The articles established how vacancies were to be filled (on the proposal of the General Inspectorate and the Permanent Commission of the Council) and promotions (by competitive examination), while determining what was to be taken into account in the filling of vacancies (art. 38):

1st Proven aptitude for the service. 2nd The honesty and good manners of the candidates and the energy with which they have proceeded to correct abuses and corrupt practices. 3rd initiative for the introduction of positive improvements in teaching. 4th literary and administrative merits resulting from personal records.

As can be seen, the **selection system is totally discretionary and lacks the minimum objective criteria.**

6. The ups and downs of the appointment of inspectors in the early 20th century (1900-1913)

The turn of the century brought with it the **recovery of the competitive examination system for** entry into the corps of provincial inspectors of primary education, through the Reform of the Normal Schools and the Inspectorate of Primary Education. This reform was established in a Royal Decree issued by the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts (all previous regulations had been promoted by the Ministry of Public Works) on [6 July 1900](#). This Royal Decree contained a detailed description of the total of five tests and examinations that made up the competitive examination for entry to the provincial inspectorate of primary education in 1900 (Table 2):

Exercises	Description
1	A report on what the inspection should be, freely written by the candidate, which will be presented by the candidate to the selection board on the day it holds its first public meeting.
2	Ordinary open-book translation from French. This exercise is eliminatory.
3	Within five hours, without books or manuscripts, write a dissertation on a point of general pedagogy or the history of pedagogy , drawn by lot from a questionnaire consisting of 30 topics, which is drawn up by the examining board and made known to the candidates two days before the exercise. The dissertations are read in public and presented to the selection board.
4	Oral answers to a question on Methodology , covering one of the primary school subjects of their choice, and two questions

	on School Legislation and Comparative Organisation. After this exercise, the selection board eliminates those candidates with the least merit who exceed three times the number of vacancies.
5	Inspection visit to a public school, made in the presence of the Court, to which he delivers a note of his observations, written within three hours, in solitary confinement and without books.

Table 2: Exercises included in the competitive examination established in article 32 of the Royal Decree of 6 July 1900.

Being honest, it was an even more complete competitive examination system than those currently in use. Moreover, some of its exercises, such as the report on the conception of the inspection function or the inspection visit, could very well be incorporated into the selection systems for entry into the educational inspectorate today, more than 120 years later. It is worth mentioning that the exercise on the report on the Inspectorate and its defence was in force in the eighties and nineties, in the entrance exams to the inspectorate that were held for more than a decade as a consequence of the entry into force of Law 30/1984, of 2 August, on measures for the reform of the Civil Service, as we shall see later on.

However, what could have been, for the second time, a historical milestone and a major step forward in the design of a truly professional and independent Inspectorate of Primary Education, access by competitive examination did not even last a year. Once again, a Royal Decree ([Royal Decree of 12 April 1901](#)) reorganised, once again, the primary education inspection service, returning to the discretionary appointment of "entry-level" inspectors (art. 5): "Vacancies will be freely filled by the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts (...)" from among those in possession of the title of Normal Teacher with five years' experience in a post in the public school. In his preamble, the Minister of the branch, Álvaro de Figueroa y Torres, Count of Romanones, intended (p. 103):

(...) to prevent these positions, which are delicate in themselves and which exert so much influence on primary education, from being in unfit hands or in the service of not very lawful interests and passions; but this obvious need is not satisfied by simply filling these positions by competitive examination, because if it is recognised that these functions could fall into unfit hands, nothing is resolved by declaring those who hold them irremovable without first having made a proper purification of aptitudes and conditions.

With this Royal Decree, the **competitive examination system for entry into the Inspectorate is once again banished in favour of a return to discretion**. The apparent sincerity regarding the political (and moral) reasons for this measure is to be welcomed (p. 103):

The undersigned Minister considers that the competitive examination is a means which, apart from leaving vacant districts without inspection for a long period of time, will be able to check the scientific aptitude of those who are to hold these posts, but in no way their morality, which is the most important of the conditions they must meet.

This Royal Decree expressly repealed the system for entry into the corps of primary education inspectors that had been approved just nine months earlier. Among the reasons behind this drastic decision taken by the government of Sagasta's Liberal party were the usual and already known reasons, which, whether confessed or not, drove those in power at the time to design a submissive Inspectorate, in the worst sense of the term. We refer to the will of political power to use the Education Inspectorate as a transmission belt for the ideas and interests of those in power, often prioritising ideological control and the propagation of their own convictions over the real objectives of an education system in any era: to provide the best possible education to the population in each and every school in Spain, regardless of the number of inhabitants, the geographical location or the level of economic development of the area.

While the regulatory changes were being made to the appointment of primary education inspectors, the [Royal Decree of 16 August 1901](#) **created the post of secondary education inspector** (one per university district). They were appointed on a temporary basis by the Minister of Public Instruction, when the needs of the service so required, to "make visits" to the Institutes corresponding to that district. To hold this post, it was necessary to have taught as a teacher for more than five years or to be or have been a councillor of public instruction or university professor, even if they had not served five years. A year later, the [Royal Decree of 24 August 1902](#) established the inspection of all levels of education and took a further step in the Sagasta government's determination to design an Inspectorate subject to the interests of his government. The preamble to this Royal Decree, also drafted by the Count of Romanones (p. 893), expressed this without any complexes or concealment whatsoever: "In the already extensive catalogue of what has been legislated among us on the inspection of education, experience has warned us of the fruitlessness of the provisions which tended to entrust this task to an official body of inspectors fixedly constituted (...)", and to this end, it was decided to establish an Inspectorate of Education....", and to this end, it decreed that the power to appoint inspectors was vested in the Minister, "as a delegation of the supervisory functions of the Government" (art. 2). As a consequence, it was established that "for the greater efficiency of the work of the Inspectorate, the post of Inspector will always be of a transitory nature" (art. 3), although the main argument or excuse put forward for establishing this transitory nature was of a budgetary nature: "the transitory nature of the inspection visits in order not to burden the budget with the large allocation to a numerous body of inspectors in exercise" (p. 893). In order to further control, the Royal Decree granted university professors the inspection of teaching in general and technical institutes and teacher training colleges, and the Councillors of Public Instruction the inspection of university teaching.

In 1905, a new Royal Decree ([Royal Decree of 30 March 1905](#)) introduced "special aptitude tests" (art. 5) for the post of inspector of primary education. In order to justify these tests, the preamble states the following:

Up to the present day, it can be said that inspection has been non-existent. The few inspectors currently in service are not adequately equipped, nor do they have the means to visit the schools, nor were they chosen with the care that their delicate mission requires (Royal Decree of 30 March 1905, preamble).

But in 1907, a new Royal Decree established a new regulation for entry into the Inspectorate of Primary Education, this time under the Liberal Party presided over by Antonio Aguilar y Correa. This [Royal Decree of 1907](#) was important as it was the umpteenth modification of the entry system and, like the previous ones, it was a tabula rasa with its predecessor. The new regulation established the "Curso o Grado Normal Superior" for the training of inspectors and entry into the corps. This was a two-year course, which ended in the second year with students going abroad. While the training was being implemented, vacancies were filled on an interim basis and the remaining successful candidates occupied newly created posts of Inspector of Primary Education. The text clarified that the approved *normalistas* (female schoolteachers) could also occupy the posts of female inspectors that were created. This Royal Decree also provided for the alternation of functions between the new primary inspectors and normal teachers for a certain period of time, without specifying it.

Barely ten months later, the conservative government of Antonio Maura once again published new regulations for entry into the Inspectorate. The [Royal Decree of 12 November 1907](#) sought to guarantee the stability of the inspectors in the exercise of their functions and competences, something which had clearly not happened since the creation of the first inspectors in 1849:

It is also necessary that the civil servants entrusted with such a thorny mission have the guarantee of stability, so that in the exercise of their office they may always enjoy, within the law, the necessary tranquillity to

exercise their functions with sufficient independence that, excluding pressure from those above, they cannot invoke this as an exemption from the responsibilities inherent in the fulfilment of the duties entrusted to them (Royal Decree of 12 November 1907, preamble).

This new regulation of the inspectorate **created the figure of "auxiliary inspectors"**, who were the lowest category in the hierarchy of the corps of primary education inspectors and through which access was gained. For this purpose, the Royal Decree established a **system of entrance by competitive examination** consisting of six exercises (Table 3):

Exercises	Description
1	Translating from French without the aid of a dictionary.
2	Write a report in the presence of the Court on a practical case of school legislation drawn by lot.
3	Write a written dissertation on a case of pedagogy and history of pedagogy before the examining board.
4	Explaining a psychology topic in person to twenty people, drawn by lot.
5	Explain another Ethics topic under the same conditions as the previous one.
6	Verbally critique a work declared to be of use to the schools , drawn by lot, and examine it without the aid of another book for three hours.

Table 3: Exercises included in the competitive examination provided for in article 7 of the Royal Decree of 12 November 1907

This regulation also created the "list of candidates" (art. 9), made up of those who passed the competitive examinations and who could fill the vacancies that

arose, and established the irremovability of the inspectors of primary education (art. 16). With regard to the filling of vacancies within the corps, a dual system of promotion was established, that of "seniority" and that of "merit", subject to the discretionary assessment of the convening body.

However, in 1910, with the new change of government, the Liberal Party came to power, under the presidency of José Canalejas and with the Count of Romanones as Minister of Public Instruction, a new reorganisation of the Inspectorate of Primary Education was carried out by means of the [Royal Decree of 27 May 1910](#), which, in turn, re-established the General Inspectorate (previously introduced in 1898). Little budget, few inspectors, most of them underpaid, as was the case with the auxiliary inspectors, characterised the inspectorate "with such a shortage of personnel and means that it lacks the effectiveness and efficiency that would be desirable for good service" (preamble), which was to be remedied. This reorganisation of the inspectorate included some novelties. Thus, it was determined that: (1) there would be four general inspectors, freely appointed by the government, among those persons who had the corresponding administrative category and had distinguished themselves for their work or services to public culture; (2) that the rectors of the universities would be ex officio inspectors of all educational establishments, public and private, and of all teaching officials serving the State within the university districts; and that (3) the directors of educational establishments would also be considered inspectors of all the services under their charge. With regard to entry into the corps of primary education inspectors, a dual system of access was established, incorporating entry by merit: "From 1912, one third of the posts will be filled by competitive examination, as provided for in this Decree, and the others will be awarded in order of merit to the Normal Teachers who leave the Teacher Training College" (Royal Decree of 27 May 1910, art. 18).

By Royal Decree published in the [Madrid Gazette on 9 February 1913](#), the **incorporation of women into the Inspectorate was formalised, with the category of Assistant Teaching Inspectors**, first in the capitals of the University

District and years later, extended to the rest: "Another no less important innovation offers the current Budget with the creation of the female Inspectorate, to whose management a prudent number of girls' schools will have to be entrusted" (preamble).

The ups and downs in the organisation of the inspectorate and in the appointment of those responsible for carrying it out in the early years of the 20th century offer us a new attempt to achieve stability in the entry into the Inspectorate of Primary Education with the [Royal Decree of 5 May 1913](#). This Royal Decree determined a new classification of the civil servants in the corps of primary education inspectors: those who were *ex officio* (advisors of Public Instruction), those who were special (appointed or authorised by the Ministry) and those who were professionals (who formed a professional corps). In its articles, a section was dedicated exclusively to entry, promotions and transfers, establishing that: "In the Inspectorate of Primary Education (...) entry will be by competitive examination, with the lowest salary" (art. 50), although it did not establish what this would consist of, specifying that: "The conditions of the exercises will be announced in due course", (art. 51) and determining the requirements for entry to the Inspectorate of Primary Education (...) and that: "The conditions of the exercises will be announced in due course", (art. 51). 51) and determining the requirements to be able to compete: "Public school teachers with a higher degree and three years of service, teachers and assistants who are proprietors of Normal Schools, Heads of Public Instruction Sections with official primary education services, and graduates in Law, Science and Philosophy and Letters may freely compete", although the [Royal Order of 21 June 1913](#) demanded of the latter what we could consider the antecedents of the pedagogical aptitude training of modern times: "they must accredit their pedagogical aptitude by means of the corresponding certificate or the title of Maestro superior" (art. 12). This authorisation for law graduates to sit the competitive examinations for entry to the corps of primary education inspectors lasted barely two years, as this possibility was repealed by the [Royal Decree of 5](#)

[March 1915](#). This latter regulation incorporated a competitive examination system that combined a free and a restricted selection process, with different requirements to be able to apply.

Between 1913 and 1932, there were no major changes to the regulations governing entry into the Inspectorate. These were years of alternation between conservative and liberal governments, which were brought to an end by the coup d'état of General Miguel Primo de Rivera in September 1923. Primo de Rivera remained in power as president until January 1930, when King Alfonso XIII, at the end of his reign, replaced him with General Berenguer, until the proclamation of the Second Republic. These were dark years, in which the Inspectorate of Education was subject to attacks due to the immobility of the inspectors, who were forced to change their postings in an arbitrary and cacique manner, years of loss of professional independence, as demonstrated by the [Royal Order of 1 September 1924](#) on visits to public and public schools by government delegates and the total dependence of the inspectors on this figure of political control. Or the [Royal Decree of 1 September 1926](#), stipulating that the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts could freely assign the inspectors of Primary Education to the province where their services were most convenient. Clearly, there could be no greater control.

7. Access to inspection in the Second Republic (14 April 1931 - April 1939)

Under the new regime, the [Decree of 2 October 1931](#) on entry to the Inspectorate of Primary Education was promulgated, replacing the system in force since 1913. This was the first decree to be published during the Provisional Government of the Second Spanish Republic. In its Preamble, it argues that in addition to the creation of the schools that the country needed, it was necessary to provide these schools with "excellent pedagogical guidance", a mission which it says was entrusted to the Inspectorate of Primary Education, while at the same time it considers necessary "the careful selection of the personnel to whom this pedagogical assistance is to be entrusted". And on the basis of these two

arguments, it drafted new rules for entry to the Inspectorate of Primary Education. This eagerness to adapt entry to the teaching inspectorate to the ideology and interests of those in power at any given time is nothing new. In fact, it seems to be intrinsic to educational inspection in Spain, since its creation and up to the present day, as has been indicated throughout this paper. This new regulatory provision establishes for the first time the possibility that the "best teachers may be incorporated into the Inspectorate's service, without removing them from their schools" (preamble), something which is not new, since a similar system was in force during the validity of the previous Royal Decree.

Along the same lines as preceding governments at other historical moments, the Provisional Government of the Republic decided to create what it called the "Higher Inspectorate of Primary Education to direct and coordinate the work of the Professional Inspectorate and the Teacher Training Colleges". It is no more and no less than the "Central Inspectorate", which has also adapted its structure and functioning to the changing times, until today, when its existence is more difficult to justify in an autonomous State.

This Decree established that **entry to the Inspectorate of Primary Education would be by means of two procedures: open competitive examination among National Teachers and restricted competitive examination among National Teachers with more than fifteen years of excellent service in official education.** The concept of "free competitive examination" established by this Decree can be qualified, since the selection board, appointed by the Provisional Government, decided on the basis of a "comprehensive report on their work in primary education", reports from the Professional Inspectorate and the reports and "visits" considered by the board, who could decide who could and who could not take part in the competitive examination. Teachers who the Tribunal considered to be worthy of admission had to carry out a total of seven exercises, which were set out in the Decree of December 1932 and to which we will refer later. The other system of admission to the Inspectorate of Primary Education provided for in this Decree was even more discretionary than the previous one: it

was the "restricted competitive examination" aimed at National Teachers with more than fifteen years of "excellent service in official education", which was completely arbitrary because the criteria and procedures for determining this excellence were not established. Finally, this Decree formally created the Central Inspectorate of Primary Education and Teachers' Training Colleges, made up of three professional inspectors and two Teachers' Training College Professors with more than ten years of "good service". The inspectors of the Central Inspectorate of Primary Education were renamed "Higher Inspectors".

The [Decree of 2 December 1932](#), published nineteen months after the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, dealt with the definition and configuration of the Professional Inspectorate of Primary Education, its admission and the administrative rights of inspectors, among other issues. During that year and a half, the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, with Fernando de los Ríos Urruti as Minister, annulled the appointments made arbitrarily by the Dictatorship. The Ministry of Public Instruction sought to systematise what had been done in those months of the establishment of the new political regime and "complete it in such a way as to highlight the new physiognomy of the inspection function" (preamble). The principles inspiring the Decree were as follows:

To free it from bureaucratic concerns by intensifying its technical character; to bring the Inspector closer to the School and to the Teacher with a tutelary zeal, with the aim of contributing their science and experience to infuse a new spirit into teaching; to turn them into an itinerant Teacher, transforming them, therefore, into a true school counsellor who works in the School with the Teacher, and as a Teacher offering the example of their model lessons (Royal Decree of 2 December 1932, preamble).

Access to the "inspection function" was regulated in great detail in article 27 and following, under the title "Entry into the Inspectorate", and specified the requirement for candidates to present, before taking the competitive examination, a comprehensive report on their work in primary education in the

case of practising teachers, or on a topic of pedagogical research in the case of those who were not practising teachers. As in the previous Decree, a discretionary preliminary filter was established in order to be able to sit the competitive examination, although none of these regulations made any reference to who would form the tribunals, which were constituted at the discretion of the authorities.

Once they had passed the above conditions, formalities and requirements, successful candidates had to face seven exercises (Table 4):

Exercises	Description
1	A written exercise on a fundamental pedagogical question .
2	An oral exercise on a topic of school organisation and methodology .
3	A lesson to a group of children , with complete freedom in the choice of subject and teaching grade. After the test, those candidates who do not show sufficient preparation to continue with the other tests are eliminated.
4	Collective or group visit of competitors to a unitary school and subsequent written report on its situation and functioning and how it could be improved.
5	Visit to a graduate school , under the same conditions as in the previous year.
6	A written exercise on a topic of primary school legislation , with commentary.
7	Written translation of a page from a pedagogical book in French, without the aid of a dictionary.

Table 4: Exercises included in the competitive examination established in article 29 of the Royal Decree of 2 December 1932.

With regard to the second procedure, **the restricted competitive examination, the figure of "inspector-teachers" was created**, who were entrusted with the care and responsibility for a group of schools close to their own to form a school district. The Decree detailed in detail the application process for these teachers to be appointed as "inspector-teachers" and opened the door for those who applied, after two years of "good service", to be assigned to the normal service of the Inspectorate.

It is worth noting that this Decree was a milestone in the history of the Inspectorate, since it **formally abolished the former designation of male and female zones, placing an inspector or a female inspector at the head of each zone.**

Inspectors' changes of assignment were made by means of a transfer competition. This was the system used to fill all vacancies, with two very important exceptions, which were vacancies in Madrid and Barcelona, which were filled through a competition between inspectors in "expectation of vacancy" and through a competition-public entrance examination between primary school inspectors in active service. These years, together with those of the civil war, were turbulent, difficult and all too often obscure years, which resulted in sometimes contradictory decisions, such as the suppression in 1935 of the Central Inspectorate of Primary Education or its reinstatement in March 1936.

8. Access to inspection during Franco's dictatorship

The first government of Francisco Franco, which was formed on 30 January 1938 in the city of Burgos, in the midst of the Spanish Civil War, did not take long to make changes in school inspection. By [Order of 20 January 1939](#), the female inspection zones were again established as distinct from the zones for male inspectors, and a period of organised persecution began, directed from the highest ministerial levels: "The Ministry will organise the appropriate service to check and evaluate the work of each Inspector and, in the light of this, determine

whether to continue with the mission entrusted to them or to assign them to other teaching services" (preamble).

The [Law of 17 July 1945 on Primary Education](#) conceived the Inspectorate as a body for the guidance and direction of teachers in the exercise of their professional life, but not with full autonomy, as can be deduced from the preamble: "The Church is also recognised as having the right to supervise and inspect all teaching in public and private establishments of this grade, insofar as it is related to faith and customs". This Law specified that the training of the Inspector of Primary Education should "necessarily include an experimental knowledge of the School, academic preparation of a pedagogical and technical nature and experience of the professional function itself", for which a competitive entrance examination was foreseen (with the requirement of being a Graduate in the Pedagogy Section of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters): "which selects the best prepared and most apt for their vocational gifts, capacity for command and advice". The law also provided for the new inspectors to act as auxiliary inspectors, "for a period of at least one year, during which they would be trained in the technique, advice, direction and management of the schools of a district", what we currently understand as trainee inspectors. It also created the figure of "extraordinary and special inspectors", on a temporary or permanent basis, for persons with relevant merits in the pedagogical, teaching or legal-administrative fields, even when they did not belong to the official Inspectorate.

Subsequently, the Law of 26 February 1953 on the Regulation of Secondary Education provided that the official inspection of these teachings would be carried out by the Ministry of Education (art. 58):

The State in all matters relating to the formation of the national spirit, physical education, public order, health and hygiene and compliance with the legal conditions established for the recognition or authorisation of each centre. The Church, in all matters concerning the teaching of religion, the orthodoxy of doctrines and the morality of customs.

This Law determined that the State inspectors would exercise their function over all the Secondary Education Centres of the University District, which depended on the Ministry of National Education. In development of the Law, the Decree of 5 May 1954 determined that the posts in the **corps of permanent State Secondary Education inspectors** would be filled by means of a competitive examination, among civil servants from the teaching corps of the Ministry of National Education, assessing the merits that the candidates had acquired in the field of Secondary Education. It also left the door open to the possibility that the competition could require the completion of "exercises of a scientific and pedagogical nature". Those who passed the competition would be appointed on a provisional basis for two years and would subsequently acquire irremovability in the State Inspectorate.

Previously, [Decree 898/1963 of 25 April 1963 on the](#) State Secondary Education Inspectorate implemented the Law of 26 February 1953 on the Organisation of Secondary Education and repealed the Decree of 5 May 1954 on the Secondary Education Inspectorate. According to the aforementioned Decree 898/1963, the functions entrusted to the State Inspectorate of Secondary Education were to be carried out by members of the corps of permanent inspectors of Secondary Education, with the exception of the extraordinary inspectors provided for in articles 25 and 27. The Decree stipulated that "the order of convocation may require applicants to have completed up to ten years of effective teaching service in the corps of origin and set a maximum age limit" (article 15). By way of example, let us take a look at what was established in the call for access to this corps published in the [Order of 18 April 1964](#), which called for a competitive examination to fill six vacant posts in the corps of permanent State Secondary Education inspectors (Table 5):

Exercises	Description
1	Oral exercise of exposition and defence of the report

	presented by the candidate on the nature, aims and organisation of Secondary Education .
2	Oral exercise of exposition and defence of the report presented by the candidate on training and selection of Secondary Education Teachers .
3	Written exercise on the current state of the applicant's discipline from a scientific and methodological point of view. Maximum duration: two hours
4	Written exercise in which the candidate will present and comment on a topic drawn by lot from among several proposed by the examining board at the time of the exam, which will deal with some aspect of the Law on the Organisation of Secondary Education, the Law on the Extension of Secondary Education or the organic decrees issued for its development. Maximum duration: Two hours.
5	Written exercise in direct translation of a modern text from one or more of the following languages: English, French, German.

Table 5: Exercises established in the Order of 18 April 1964 calling for a competitive examination to fill six vacant posts in the corps of permanent State Secondary Education inspectors.

Let us return to primary education inspectors. [Law 169/1965](#), of 21 December 1965, on the reform of Primary Education, and its revised text approved by [Decree 193/1967, of 2 February 1967](#), approving the revised text of the Law on Primary Education, established in its article seventy-nine as a special corps of the civil administration, that of the professional inspectors of State Primary Education, who were entrusted with "the tasks of supervision, technical direction and pedagogical guidance of education and school services in the area of their

jurisdiction, always respecting the spirit of initiative of Headmasters and Headmistresses in their teaching activity" (art. 79). Article 83 determined the requirements and system of access, establishing that "Selection will be made, in all cases, **by open competition** among candidates who meet the conditions required in the previous sections".

However, it is striking that the Royal Decree which regulated the inspection of primary education in Spain during a large part of the Franco dictatorship, until 1967, was the one promulgated at the beginning of the Second Republic (1932). It is clear that any regulation that establishes a system under the control of political leaders, as was the case here, which conditioned admission to the competitive examinations for entry into the corps of primary education inspectors to a totally arbitrary and discretionary prior filter, without the slightest transparency, always serves the interests of those in power, whatever their ideology. Hence the permanence in force of this rule during these 45 years of our most recent history.

It was [Decree 2915/1967](#), in force until its repeal by [Royal Decree 1524/1989](#), of 15 December, which regulated the functions and organisation of the Technical Education Inspection Service and developed the system of access to posts in the education inspectorate, which approved the **Regulations of the State Primary Education Professional Inspection Corps and determined the open competition as the mechanism for entry into the Inspectorate** from among candidates who met the following requirements: (a) hold a degree in Philosophy and Letters (Pedagogy Section) and have managed a School, on a day-to-day basis, for the minimum time of two school years. Or b) be a graduate of a university faculty or hold a State-issued degree in higher education, be a primary school teacher, have managed a school on a day-to-day basis for at least two school years, and be able to demonstrate a technical specialisation.

The competitive examination consisted of the following exercises (Table 6):

Exercises	Description
1	Develop in writing, for a maximum of four hours, a topic

(Part 1)	<p>chosen by</p> <p>draw of the questionnaires of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First: General and differential pedagogy. ● Second: Child and adolescent psychobiology. ● Third: General and special didactics. ● And fourth: Legislation, Administration and School Organisation.
1 (Part 2)	Develop orally , for a maximum of one hour (fifteen minutes per topic), four subjects chosen by lot , one from each subject group, from the questionnaires listed in the previous section.
2	A maximum of six hours' written work on a general topic chosen by lot from among five prepared by the selection board . Candidates are allowed to use any kind of text. The candidate will read the exercise before the selection board, whose members will ask any questions or make any clarifications they deem appropriate.
3	Develop in writing, for a maximum of one hour, a practical case study formulated by the examining board, similar to those that may arise in the practice of the profession.
4	Translate , with the aid of dictionaries, for a maximum of two hours, an English and a French text.

Table 6: Exercises included in the competitive examination established in article 26 of Decree 2915/1967, of 23 November, approving the Regulations of the State Primary Education Professional Inspection Corps.

Finally, [Law 14/1970](#) of 4 August [1970](#), General Law on Education and Financing of Educational Reform, created a unified body of inspectors, the Technical Education Inspection Service (article 142), made up of members of the teaching bodies of the different teaching specialities, and "whose officials shall

constitute a special body of the Civil Administration of the State". For its part, article 143 established that "The Inspectors of the different specialities shall be selected, by means of a competitive examination, from among the civil servants belonging to the teaching corps of the Department, according to the level of the corresponding speciality". In its development, [Decree 664/1973](#), of 22 March [1973](#), on the functions of the Technical Education Inspection Service, established that while this service was being organised, the functions established in this Decree would be assumed by the Primary Education Inspectorate at the Pre-school and Basic General Education levels and by the Secondary Education Inspectorate at the Baccalaureate level.

9. Education inspection since the advent of democracy in Spain

The advent of the longest democratic period in the history of our country and the promulgation of the [1978 Constitution](#) marked a before and after in our body. The well-known article 27.8 of the [Spanish Constitution](#) enshrined the fundamental right to education, establishing that: "The public authorities shall inspect and standardise the education system in order to guarantee compliance with the laws". With this prescription, the role of the education inspectorate was given a constitutional and fundamental character, even if it was only in its supervisory and control aspect. Subsequently, the well-known fifteenth additional provision of [Law 30/1984](#), of 2 August [1984](#), on measures for the reform of the Civil Service, extinguished the previous inspectorates and stipulated that:

Depending on the needs of the service, and in accordance with the lists of posts determined by the competent educational administration, the educational inspection function shall be carried out by civil servants with higher qualifications belonging to the bodies and scales in which the Public Teaching Service is organised (15th additional provision, point 7 of Law 30/1984, of 2 August).

The posts were filled by public competitive examination, in accordance with the principles of merit and ability and after passing a specialisation course

organised by the corresponding educational administration. Furthermore, it was established that the assignment to the inspection function was for non-consecutive periods of no less than three years and no more than six years. And to make matters worse, the personal grade was not consolidated, although "the performance of the inspection function will be valued as a merit" for the purposes of the teaching career.

And so it goes on:

Once the period of assignment to the educational inspectorate has elapsed, civil servants shall have the right to occupy a post corresponding to their body or scale in the locality of their teaching post (...). As of the entry into force of this Law, the filling of posts in the educational inspectorate may only be carried out by the procedure established in this section (Fifteenth additional provision, point 7 of Law 30/1984, of 2 August).

In this way, **the "inspection function" ceased to have its own body, which is accessed by competitive examination**, and it was established that it would be exercised by civil servants with higher degrees on secondment.

On the other hand, paragraph 8 of this same fifteenth additional provision eliminated the corps of Technical Inspectors of primary education, secondary education and vocational training, and integrated them into the newly created corps called the **Corps of Inspectors at the Service of the Education Administration (CISAE)**, which had been blocked since its creation, as it declared all vacancies in it to be cancelled:

Civil servants in the corps of inspectors in the service of the Education Administration shall have the right to hold posts belonging to the inspection function. Likewise, they shall have access to the other posts pertaining to the administrative career in accordance with the principles of professional promotion established in this Law. For the purposes of the

public offer of inspection, the competent educational administration shall reserve a certain percentage of posts to be filled by the aforementioned civil servants (Fifteenth additional provision, point 8 of Law 30/1984, of 2 August).

This situation was anomalous, as it gave the inspection functions of these bodies to "civil servants with higher qualifications belonging to the bodies and scales in which the Public Teaching Service is organised", who had never held them before. We agree with the feeling of a large part of the inspectorate of those years that this has been one of the greatest attacks suffered by the educational inspectorate in Spain throughout its history.

Law 30/1984 was amended by [Law 23/1988](#), of 28 July 1988, amending the Law on Measures for the Reform of the Civil Service, and in this way the assignment to the "inspection function" became indefinite. It should be recalled that the fifteenth additional provision was challenged and the judgement of the Constitutional Court 99/1987, of 11 June 1987, which made it necessary to amend this provision, which took place by means of the aforementioned Law 23/1988.

7. The educational inspection function is carried out by civil servants with a Doctorate, Bachelor's, Architect's or Engineer's degree, belonging to the bodies and scales in which the public teaching function is organised, as referred to in section 2 of this provision.

Education inspectorate posts between 1984 and 1995 were filled by public competition. This was a period of expansion of the inspectorate, due to the increase in the number of staff, especially in the provinces, in which the "inter-level" model was chosen, as each inspector, regardless of their level, was responsible for the various centres assigned to them, and also due to the increase in bureaucracy.

These provisions were implemented by [Royal Decree 1524/1989](#), of 15 December [1989](#), regulating the functions and organisation of the Technical Education Inspection Service and developing the system for access to posts in the education inspectorate, and the [Order of 27 September 1990](#) laying down rules for the implementation of Royal Decree 1524/1989, of 15 December 1989, regulating the functions and organisation of the Technical Education Inspection Service. In order to take part in the call for access to the inspectorate, it was necessary to have at least seven years of teaching experience, including at least five years as a career civil servant.

10. The current model of access to educational inspection [Organic Law 1/1990](#) of 3 October [1990](#) on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE) is the origin of the current concept of educational inspection in terms of functions and powers. Article 55 of this Law considered EI to be a factor in the quality and improvement of education, together with other factors such as teacher training, teacher planning, the management function and the evaluation of the education system. However, it was [Organic Law 9/1995](#), of 20 November [1995](#), on the participation, evaluation and governance of educational institutions (LOPEGCD) which re-established, once again, a corps of education inspectors, in civil service group A, of a teaching nature: "In order to carry out the functions attributed to the Education Inspectorate in this Law, **the corps of Education Inspectors is created**" (art. 37.1). It took more than eleven years for the corps of education inspectors to become a de jure and de facto reality again; however, the moral and professional damage suffered by the inspectors as a result of the suppression of their original corps and the incorporation into the CISAE remained uncompensated.

The requirements and system of access to the CEI were determined in articles 38 and 39 of the LOPEGCD: belonging to one of the bodies that make up the public teaching function, with a minimum teaching experience of ten years, and being in possession of the title of Doctor, Graduate, Engineer or Architect. It was also necessary to accredit the knowledge required by each regional education

administration of the official language other than Spanish in their respective territorial areas. Article 39 of this rule regulated access to the CEI by means of a competitive examination, which would be organised by the different administrations in accordance with the following criteria:

a) In the competitive examination phase, the professional career of the candidates and their specific merits as teachers were assessed. Among these merits, special consideration was given to the holding of management positions, with positive evaluation, and, in the case of Secondary Education Teachers, the possession of the status of professor. Specialisation in certain areas, programmes or teachings of the education system may also be taken into consideration.

b) In the competitive examination phase, the possession of the knowledge of pedagogy, administration and educational legislation necessary for the performance of the tasks of the inspectorate and the mastery of the appropriate techniques for the exercise of the same were assessed.

Finally, it should be noted that article 40 provides that the selected inspectors were to undergo a period of training "for their adequate preparation", at the end of which they will be appointed as career civil servants in the corps of education inspectors.

Access to the CEI was specifically regulated by [Royal Decree 2193/1995](#) of 28 December 1995, which established the basic rules for access to and the provision of posts in the corps of education inspectors and the integration of current inspectors into the corps. This Royal Decree established, for the first time, the basis for the current system of access to the inspectorate. For the area of competence of the Ministry of Education and Science, the [Order of 29 February 1996](#) regulating the organisation and functioning of the Education Inspectorate was enacted, some of which is still in force today, with various modifications.

The repealed [Royal Decree 334/2004](#) of 27 February [2004](#), which approved the Regulations on entry, access and acquisition of new specialisations in the teaching bodies that teach school education in the education system and in the corps of education inspectors, was approved within the framework of [Organic Law 10/2002](#) of 23 December [2002](#) on the Quality of Education, which was never implemented. A minimum length of service of six years as a career civil servant was established for access to the CEI, in addition to the well-known qualification requirements, which the LOE and its various amendments subsequently raised to eight. Access was by competitive examination, and in the competitive examination phase, knowledge of pedagogy, administration and educational legislation was assessed, as well as specific knowledge and techniques for the performance of inspection, assessment and advisory functions. The scientific and didactic updating in the areas or subjects taught by the candidate, as well as the exercise of the activities carried out in the centre, were also valued. The syllabuses consisted of three parts: part A, with general topics relating to pedagogical issues on curricular organisation, school organisation, school management, administration and basic educational legislation, as well as the inspectorate's monitoring, assessment and advisory functions. Part B, devoted to specific topics for each level and stage of education, curriculum development, didactics, organisation and administration of schools and legislation specific to the administration in question. And part C, with subjects related to the inspection specialities provided for in [Royal Decree 1538/2003](#), of 5 December, which establishes the basic specialities of educational inspection (pre-school, infant and primary education, language, foreign languages and languages, mathematics, science, etc.).

These tests, of an eliminatory nature, were as follows (Table 7):

Exercises	Description
1	First test, with two parts in turn: the written development of two subjects, one from part A and the other from part B of the

	<p>syllabus, chosen by the candidate from among four, two from each part, drawn by lot by the selection board, lasting at least two hours, to be presented before the selection board, and which must be passed with at least a mark of five, and the oral presentation of a subject from part C of the syllabus chosen by the candidate from among two drawn by lot by the selection board. The candidate had at least three hours to prepare and could use whatever materials they considered appropriate. This exercise was presented orally for a maximum of one hour. It was graded in the same way as the previous part.</p>
2	<p>The preparation and defence of a report, which consisted of two parts: the applicant's scientific and didactic update on one of the areas, subjects or modules taught, and another on aspects related to the activities carried out in the centres and the way in which the exercise of the inspection function affects the improvement of these activities, which had to be specified in each call for applications. The duration of the presentation and defence was set at one hour, and it was graded in the same way as the previous parts.</p>
3	<p>Written analysis of a practical case, in which the candidate had to formulate a reasoned proposal for action in this case, alluding to the appropriate techniques for action by the education inspectorate. The analysis was presented to the selection board, which could ask any questions or provide any clarifications it considered necessary. In addition, the candidate had two hours for their defence and 20 minutes for clarification. It was graded in the same way as the previous parts.</p>

Table 7: Exercises included in the competitive examination established in article 21 of Royal Decree 334/2004, of 27 February.

The merits of those who passed the competitive examination phase and participated in the competition valued the professional career and specific merits as teachers of the applicants, especially the scientific and didactic aspects of the specialities taught, the exercise of managerial positions or the status of professor.

[Organic Law 2/2006](#), of 3 May, on Education (LOE), with its subsequent and successive modifications, starting with those introduced by [Organic Law 8/2013](#), of 9 December, for the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE) and, subsequently, by [Organic Law 3/2020](#), of 29 December, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOMLOE), laws that form the basis of the current system.

The LOE, with the modifications introduced by the LOMLOE, establishes in its tenth additional provision, section 5, that in order to gain access to the corps of education inspectors it will be necessary to belong to one of the corps that make up the public teaching function with at least eight years' experience in them and to hold a Doctorate, University Master's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Engineering Degree, Architecture Degree or equivalent qualification and pass the corresponding selection process, as well as, where appropriate, accredited knowledge of the co-official language of the Autonomous Community of destination.

And it clarifies in the twelfth additional provision, paragraph 4, that:

(...) The education administrations shall organise the corresponding competitive examination in accordance with the following criteria:

a) In the competitive examination phase, the professional career of the candidates and their specific merits as teachers, the holding of management positions with positive evaluation and membership of one of the bodies of professors referred to in this Law shall be assessed.

b) The competitive examination phase will consist of the assessment of the candidates' pedagogical leadership skills and the evaluation of their competences for the inspection function, as well as their knowledge of

pedagogy, administration and educational legislation for the performance of this function.

c) In the calls for access to the inspectorate, the education administrations may reserve up to one third of the places to be filled by means of a merit-based competition for teachers who, meeting the general requirements, have held the post of headmaster or headmistress with a positive evaluation for at least three terms of office.

Successful candidates in the competitive examination will be required to complete a selective probationary period in order to prepare themselves adequately, at the end of which they will be appointed, where appropriate, as career civil servants in the corps of education inspectors.

The current [Royal Decree 276/2007](#), of 23 February, which approves the Regulations on entry, access and acquisition of new specialities in the teaching bodies referred to in Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education, and regulates the transitional entry system referred to in the seventeenth transitional provision of the aforementioned law, repeals the previous RD and establishes the current selection system. Its articles have been amended by subsequent royal decrees.

The requirements for access are the well-known six years of seniority as a career civil servant, which the amendments to the LOMLOE have made into eight, the possession of a doctorate, degree, engineer degree, architect degree or corresponding degree or equivalent qualification, and accreditation of knowledge of the co-official language of the Autonomous Community concerned. Access is by competitive examination with a selective practice phase, and it is stipulated that up to one third of the vacancies may be reserved for filling by means of a merit-based competition for teachers who, meeting the general requirements, have held the post of director with a positive evaluation for at least three terms of office. This possibility has only been implemented by a few Autonomous Communities, including Andalusia, the Canary Islands and the Principality of Asturias.

The competitive examination phase consists of the following exercises (Table 8):

Exercises	Description
1	Written development of a topic related to part A of the syllabus , chosen by the candidate from among two drawn by lot by the selection board. It includes general topics relating to pedagogical questions on curricular organisation, school organisation, management of educational centres, administration and basic educational legislation, as well as the inspectorate's functions.
2	Oral presentation of a topic from part B of the syllabus , chosen by the candidate from among two drawn by lot by the selection board. It includes specific topics on the characteristics of the educational levels and stages, curricular development and teaching methodology, the organisation and administration of the centres and the legislation of the educational administration in question. In the calls for applications made by the education authorities, others may be added relating to the structure and functioning of the education inspection bodies, as well as to the administrative organisation of the Autonomous Community.
3	Analysis of a practical case study on the appropriate techniques for the performance of the education inspectorate, which will be proposed by the selection board.

Table 8: Exercises included in the competitive examination established in article 44 of Royal Decree 276/2007, of 23 February.

In the competitive examination phase, candidates' professional careers and specific merits as teachers, the holding of management positions with positive evaluation, membership of one of the corps of professors and the exercise,

where appropriate, of the inspectorate function, in accordance with the basic specifications of Annex III of these Regulations, are assessed. Once the competitive examination has been passed, the traineeship phase begins, which must "ensure that candidates are adequately prepared to carry out the functions attributed to the corps of education inspectors" and which will last "more than one term and no longer than one academic year, and may include training courses".

Finally, before analysing the proposal regarding the immediate future of educational inspection in terms of the entry system, we summarise in Table 9 the access to educational inspection in Spain from the General Education Law to the present day (1970-2024):

Regulations	Body	Com petitio n meri ts	Com petitive examin ation	Com petition
Law 31/1980	Special Corps of Technical Inspectors of Vocational Training	-		
Law 14/1970 (LGE)	SITE (Technical Education Inspection Service)		-	-
Law 31/1980	Special Corps of Technical Inspectors of Vocational Training	-		
Law 14/1984, amending Law 31/1980	Special Corps of Technical Inspectors of Vocational Training	-		-

Law 30/1984 civil service reform measures	Inspection function			-
Law 23/1988 amending Law 30/1984 ; RD 1524/1989	Inspection function (for a maximum of 6 years)		-	-
Organic Law 1/1990 (LOGSE)	Inspection Function		-	-
Organic Law 9/1995 (LOPEG)	Education Inspectorate (CEI)	-	-	
Ley Orgánica 10/2002, de 23 de diciembre, de 23 de diciembre, de Calidad de la Educación (LOCE) (Not implemented).	Education Inspectorate (CEI)	-	-	
Organic Law 2/2006 (LOE)	Education Inspectorate (CEI)	(allowed in the ACs)	-	
Organic Law 3/2020 on the Modification of the LOE (LOMLOE).	Education Inspectorate (CEI)	(allowed in the ACs)	-	

Table 9: Access to education inspection in Spain from the general education law to the present (1970-2024)

The immediate future, or not

As is well known, on 7 October 2022, the new [draft Royal Decree on Education Inspection](#) was submitted for public consultation. Among the reasons given in the document is the need to update the regulatory development regarding, among other aspects, the regime and functions of the body and the access procedure, among other aspects, in order to adapt them to the new features introduced by Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December. The draft royal decree establishes the competitive examination system for entry to the CEI. With regard to the competitive examination, the draft establishes the following exercises (Table 10):

Exercises	Description
1	Completion of a questionnaire relating to part A of the syllabus , consisting of <u>multiple-choice questions</u> of between 60 and 100, and short questions of between 10 and 20, the completion of which is guaranteed to be anonymous. Eliminator.
2	Performance of a practical part in which one or more practical cases are analysed in writing on the appropriate techniques and competences necessary for the performance of the education inspectorate, to be proposed by the selection board, which may conclude with the drafting of an inspection report. The selection board may ask the candidates questions and clarify the content of their intervention. Eliminator.
3	Oral presentation of a topic relating to part B of the syllabus , chosen by the candidate from among two drawn by lot by the selection board. The selection board may ask the candidates questions and clarify the content of their speech.

Table 10: Exercises included in the competitive examination foreseen by the Draft Royal Decree regulating educational inspection.

Leaving aside the multiple-choice test and the length of the syllabus, it does not seem that the new Royal Decree, if it finally comes into force, will bring about a drastic change in the access and selection of education inspectors, especially taking into account the possibility of becoming a career civil servant through a merit-based competition among school principals.

11. Conclusions

At this point, it seems that a more appropriate title for this article might have been: "Who has appointed education inspectors over the last two centuries and how". The intense regulatory activity to organise the inspectorate again and again, constantly changing the way of access to the inspectorate, is evidence of the importance of the role of education inspectors for the political power. The analysis confirms the long and tortuous path towards the professionalisation of the education inspectorate in Spain over 175 years, with some fifty regulatory provisions that have regulated this teaching body. The different governments, political options and pedagogical and ideological stances have left their mark, better or worse, on this corps of civil servants. We have no doubt that, on many occasions, with the will to make the inspectorate what it should be, a body made up of the best prepared and best trained to have an impact on the quality of the education system.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the regulatory texts indicated here:

1. The temptation to create and try to maintain an education inspectorate at the service of the transmission and maintenance of the ideology of those in power at any given time, rather than at the service of improving education, is something that different governments have had at all times, in democracy and in periods of dictatorship, in monarchical and republican regimes.

2. The reasons that have justified the different forms of appointment of inspectors or the various entry systems that have been implemented throughout history have often been based on the hidden motivations of those in power at any given time. As a result, there has not always been an education inspectorate focused on guaranteeing the improvement of the education system, nor has there always been an emphasis on having professionals capable not only of ensuring compliance with regulations, but also of identifying problems in educational institutions, proposing remedial action and providing the necessary support.

3. The examination systems analysed have had some constants in all historical periods. Knowledge of pedagogical aspects and of school organisation and legislation has been assessed in all competitive examinations. Likewise, the resolution of cases or situations from the usual practice of education inspectors has been part of all the processes, although with greater or lesser approximation to reality. The combination of written exercises and oral presentations was also a common feature. There has been a decrease in the number of tests included in the competition, down to the current three exercises. Finally, it is interesting to note that translation exercises have been maintained until only five decades ago.

4. It is also a constant feature of the established power to allow access to the corps of inspectors as career civil servants to candidates who have not taken a competitive examination, but simply by merit-based competition, such as school principals, university rectors or "normal" teachers (those who graduated from the Normal School), among others.

5. Another coincidence throughout the period up to the democratic period is the attempt to distinguish between different categories or classes of inspectors (auxiliary, entry-level, merit-based, promotion-based...), as well as to provide for different promotion systems.

6. One of the most critical moments in the history of educational inspection took place in democracy, in 1984, with the abolition of the corps of primary and secondary school inspectors and its replacement by the so-called inspectorate, which meant, de facto and de jure, absorption and the loss of the possibility of real promotion, as well as the consideration of inspectors as something outdated, whose professionalism was questioned and whose work was considered dispensable. The tremendous injustice and the grave mistake made was evident from the outset and could not be sustained for long. The anachronistic return to a situation of discretion more typical of the 19th century than of the 20th century ended in 1995 with the enactment of Organic Law 9/1995, of 20 November, on the participation, evaluation and governance of schools, which restored the inspectorate.

In short, the selection and access to the corps of education inspectors has always been a hot issue throughout history, with continuous comings and goings of more or less transparent systems and more or less discretionary processes. But, we should no longer go backwards. All future steps must focus on increasing the independence and autonomy of inspectors, based on principles of professional conduct and ethics. They must also aim at ensuring a selection of professionals based on objectivity, merit, equality and capacity. Only in this way can education inspectors contribute to effectively guaranteeing the right to a good education and be the guarantors of the exercise of rights and the enforcement of laws in the field of education.

Regulatory sources

NOTE: The legal provisions of the Gaceta de Madrid and the Boletín Oficial de Instrucción Pública have been referenced in accordance with APA 7th edition format, as if they were journal articles, given that they constitute old legislation that lacks the necessary identifying elements to be cited in accordance with that manual. In addition, a link to the original document has been provided for consultation. In order to facilitate the location of the sources, they have been arranged in chronological order rather than alphabetical order.

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