

A qualitative comparative report on five educational systems: Spain, Turkey, Finland, Czech Republic and Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract

The overall aim of this present paper is to compare European (OECD) education systems of Spain (Western Europe), Turkey (Euro-Asia), Finland (Scandinavia), Czech Republic (Central Europe), and Iran (Asia) in terms of two parts including 1) *The Educational System* and 2) *Teacher Training and its perspectives*. This paper presents comparison based on the field of preschool and primary education and teacher training. One of the most important reasons for selecting these five countries is that these countries have various educational structures which naturally the above structures are various in each country with respect to their policies, programs, and goals of these countries. In this respect, knowing and taking advantages from the education policies and experiences of other countries is very helpful in designing the countries' educational system. This present study can have a good significance for teachers. One of the significance is that teachers will inform of educational systems of the selected countries and principles of teacher training. Also, another significance of the study is that the countries like Iran as a developing country need to get international experiences and model from developed countries such as Czech Republic and Finland. This report compares teacher education among European Countries with that of Iran's. It identifies the main differences, basically of policy and practice, in that teacher education has always been centralized in Iran, while it had once been more or less de-centralized in some European countries. In Conclusion, the researcher provides the conclusion at the end of this present study.

Keywords: educational system, curriculum education system, comparative education

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, education and training are vital for the transformation of the European Union, to advance as a knowledge society and compete effectively in a global economy. Europe is necessary to have an education and training of high quality. Europe is formed by varieties such as different cultures and languages. These differences are obvious in many aspects and can also be observed in the structure of the different education systems (Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of Germany, 2014). The overall aim of this present paper is to compare European (OECD) education systems of Spain (Western Europe), Turkey (Euro-Asia), Finland (Scandinavia), Czech Republic (Central Europe), and Iran (Asia) in terms of two parts including 1) The Educational System and 2) Teacher Training and its perspectives.

This paper presents comparison based on the field of preschool and primary education and teacher training. One of the most important reasons for selecting these five countries is that these countries have various educational structures which naturally the above structures are various in each country with respect to their policies, programs, and goals of these countries. In this respect, knowing and taking advantages from the education policies and experiences of other countries is very helpful in designing the countries' educational system. This present study can have a good significance for teachers. One of the significance is that teachers will inform of educational systems of the selected countries and principles of teacher training. Also, another significance of the study is that the countries like Iran as a developing country need to get international experiences and model from developed countries such as Czech Republic and Finland.

This present paper also constitutes two parts including part A: The Educational System and Part B: Teacher Training and its perspectives. The educational system constitutes six indicators including "The Schooling System", "The Educational responsibilities, Compulsory System, Curriculum Education System, Evaluation and assessment system", and Educational Fund. The second part is also related to "Teacher Training and its perspectives". This report compares teacher education among European Countries with that of Iran's. It identifies the main differences, basically of policy and practice, in that teacher education has always been centralized in Iran, while it had once been more or less de-centralized in some European countries. In Conclusion, the researcher provides the conclusion at the end of this present study.

2. Educational Systems (Section I)

2.1 Czech Republic

The schooling system in the Czech Republic covers elementary school, secondary school, and post-secondary **school** (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2104). According to OECD (2016), the education system is highly remarkably in Czech Republic.

1. The Schooling System

1.1 Pre-Primary Education - In Czech Republic, nursery schools (*mateřská škola*) provide pre-primary education for children usually from 3 to 6 years. Municipalities guarantee places for children from the age of 4. From the age of 5, the pre-primary education is *compulsory* and *free of charge*. Otherwise, the fees in public and state schools are considerably regulated (OECD, 2016). Children from 3 to 6 years are entitled to pre-primary education from September following their fourth birthday. Similarly, the **compulsory preprimary education** lasts from the school year after the child's fifth birthday until the beginning of the compulsory school attendance

(OECD, 2016).

1.2 Primary and Lower Secondary Education - The school attendance is compulsory for nine years, usually from the age of 6 to 15. The education is provided mainly by basic schools (*základní škola*). The compulsory school attendance starts at the beginning of the school year following the child's sixth birthday, unless he/ she is granted a postponement (OECD, 2016). Pupils start their compulsory school attendance in the nine-year basic school consisting of two stages which correspond to primary (grades 1–5) and lower secondary (grades 6–9) levels of education. Almost 13% of pupils leave a basic school at the end of the fifth year or the seventh year to enter multi-year general secondary schools (*gymnázium*). Small number of pupils start attending eight-year conservatoires (*konzervatoř*) after completing the fifth year of the basic school (OECD, 2016).

2. Educational Responsibilities

The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Education, Youths and Sports Youths and Sports is responsible for the curriculum, state and development of the education system; determines the content of education; approves frameworks for educational programs; accredits educational programs; is responsible for the state financing policy in education (OECD, 2016).

3. Compulsory Education: Does the duration matter?

Compulsory school attendance starts at 6 years of age and lasts 9 years. Primary and lower secondary education (basic education) is organized mostly within a single-structure system in nine-year basic schools, which are divided into the first and second stage. The age of pupils is usually 6 to 15 years (OECD, 2020).

4. Curriculum Education System

There are two stages of curriculum education system including *Primary and lower secondary education* (NCEE, 2006). The curriculum of the stage of *Primary education* constitutes nine subjects including *Czech language and literature, introduction to acquiring knowledge, the principles of geography and geology, the principles of natural sciences, mathematics, physical education, musical education, work education, and drawing, painting and sculpture* (NCEE, 2006). The curriculum for the stage of *lower secondary education* (6 to 9 years) consists of *foreign language, civic education, history, biology, physics, and chemistry*, as well as *optional subjects* including a second foreign language, computer science, or technical education (NCEE, 2006). Czech has given more freedom to regions and school head to decide what materials must be taught (Arvaz, 2020). The educational curriculums are: (1) Language and language communication, (2) Mathematics and its application, (3) ICT, (4) People and their world, (5) People and society, (6) People and nature, (7) Art and culture, (8) People and their health, (9) People and the world of work. The cross-curricular topics comprise: Personal and social education, Education for democratic citizenship, Education towards thinking in the European and global context, Multicultural education, Environmental education, and Media studies (OECD, 2020).

5. Evaluation and Assessment System

According to OECD (2020), evaluation and assessment system constitutes administering standardized national examinations, tests and sampled assessments to offer system-level data on student learning results. It is reported that external school assessments are considered as the important responsibility mechanism within the education system and ČŠI must assess each school every six years (OECD, 2020). In addition, it is necessary that schools perform internal self-evaluations and determine their conditions, structure and content. Therefore, schools are also required to publish annual activity reports (OECD, 2020). A significant test was introduced which is considered as general study prerequisites. It **assesses verbal, mental and quantitative reasoning of students** (Dvořák, et al., 2014). This test is used by schools for **admission purposes** and helps them not only assess students' fractographic knowledge, but also identify their potentials for future success. In addition to being employed assessment at primary and secondary schools, it is used as a part of the admission process in more than

40 universities in Czech Republic at present (Dvořák, et al., 2014).

6. Educational Fund

According to OECD (2020), Czech Republic has had a low general spending on education with respect to international comparison. Funding is dependent on enrolment numbers. The Ministry provides the majority of funding which devotes to teacher salaries and education-related costs. The rest of funding is provided by regional and municipal budgets and allocates to capital and operating costs (NCEE, 2006). Moreover, the central and regional governments are mainly responsible for providing funding to the primary and secondary schools and more funding has given to secondary education (OECD, 2020). It is reported that many different sources are accessible for school funding including state, regional and municipal budgets, school-raised funds, donations and parental contributions. This indicates the ability of the government to assess for equity in funding provisions (OECD, 2020).

2.2 Islamic Republic of Iran

1. The Schooling System

According to Madandar Arani, Kakia, and Karimi (2012), the Ministry of Education is still committed to promise the decentralization process in Iran, it is difficult to assess the future of education in Iran because it puts emphasis on experiencing cultural changes (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012). In Iran, education starts from ages of 7 to 11 (around 12). The schooling system is divided into two major levels: primary education and high-school education (Hazari, 2014). Primary school is compulsory in Iran. We have from the first grade to six grades in Primary school. Also, a teacher can teach all courses in primary schools. There is not a specific teacher for that course. For example, a teacher can teach English language, Geography, Mathematics. It is reported that the content of these books is general subjects. It takes 6 years to finish primary level (i.e., from six to 12) and attend high school from 12 to 18 of age. There are many free public schools and private schools with high tuition fees. There are also schools called “Nemuneh Mardomi”, which are considered to be better than public schools and more affordable than private schools (Hazari, 2014).

1.1.1 Levels of Education - In Iran, the schooling system is divided into two major levels: primary education and high-school education (Hazari, 2014).

1.1.1.1 Pre-primary education

The duration of pre-primary education is for one-year in Iran. Most children enter into primary education at age of 5 years (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012). Two teaching manuals such as *Content and Methods of Instruction in Pre-Primary Centers, Volumes I and II* include the curriculum of the pre-primary education period. One of the most important aims of the programme of this pre-primary education is to develop behavioural and pedagogical strategies which can have a strong emphasis on basic life skills, natural sciences, hygiene, literacy, history, and religious history and practice (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012).

1.1.1.2 Primary education

Primary education constitutes two kinds of *primary* and *lower secondary*, (Called *مدرسه دبستان*) (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012). At age of around 6, children can enter into the primary school (*مدرسه ابتدایی*) (دبستان ابتدایی) at the age of 6 and lasts for 5 years (Menashri, 1992).

1.1.1.3 Lower secondary education or guidance cycle

In Iran, students will start the Middle school or the guidance cycle (*مدرسه راهنمایی*); it covers 6 to 8 grades (Menashri, 1992). The duration of this period (*doreh-e rahnamaii*) is three years. The aim of this *Lower secondary education* or *guidance cycle level* is to emphasize on helping a student discover an area of specialization rather than teaching general knowledge (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012).

1.1.1.4 Secondary education or high school

The duration of *Secondary education or high school* is four years, but this level is not *compulsory*. Besides, this level of education is divided between theoretical, *vocational/technical* and *manual* and each programme has its own specialties (Menashri, 1992). Actually, students may choose to continue the theoretical branch, or the Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) process. The theoretical branch consists of general academic disciplines such as mathematics, *physics*, *empirical sciences*, *human sciences*, and *economics* (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012). In Iran, there are two types of schools, namely *free public schools* and *private schools* from elementary school through to university (Menashri, 1992), as well as to enter into higher education, it needs to have a High school diploma, and then pass the state University's entrance exam (Konkour کنکور) (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012).

2. Educational Responsibilities

Iranian's education system is highly centralized (Menashri, 1992). The education programmes in the schools of Iran are uniform and are highly the same as the programmes in Tehran. The important difference is that in Tehran, many facilities are accessible and there are a lot of schools to provide education at a single level (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012). According to Kozhani (2006), Iran has an own centralized education system. Educational objectives, policies, curriculums, teaching and learning materials (teachers' guides and students' textbooks) are all decided by the central government (Kozhani, 2006). The Ministry of education is responsible for schools in Iran. The Ministry of Education is responsible for K-12 education and higher education, and the Ministry of Science and Technology supervises the higher education process (Menashri, 1992). It is also reported that the Ministry of Education is responsible for educational planning, financing, administration, curriculum, and textbook development. The liability of the Ministry is also teacher training, grading, and examinations (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012).

3. Compulsory Education: Does the duration matter

In Iran, all schools are single-sex. All children spend six years of their lives at primary level from ages six to 12 and attend high school from ages 12 to 18. Primary education is compulsory in Iran. There are many free public schools as well as private schools with high tuition fees (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012).

4. Curriculum Education System

In Iran, all schools teach the same national curriculum. Although there may be sufficient number of facilities to provide education in urban areas, rural areas do not usually enjoy the same level of facilities. One reason underpinning imposing a centralized curriculum by the revolutionary government can be the attitude that the maintenance of the revolution relies on the present school children accepting the values of the revolution. one of the first steps taken by the government after the 1979 revolution was the desecularization of the education system which was done in three stages that involved changing materials and textbooks according to Islamic values, adding courses on religion in both schools and universities; monitoring teachers and dismissing some as they were understood to be the true meaning secular; and establishing Islamic dress codes for teachers and students especially in female schools. Therefore, a centralized curriculum which ensures that the revolutionary values are taught to all students in all schools throughout the country was part of this reform and has remained unchanged since then (Madandar Arani et al., 2012). Iranian schools and the head of the schools are limited in the decisions they can make on their own about the educational process and atmosphere.

As a matter of fact, head schools are supposed to keep in close touch with the provincial education offices and to keep track of the latest rules and decisions set by the Ministry of Education and deliver them to the teaching staff in the schools and do their best to administer the educational practices stipulated by the ministry of Education as well as possible (Madandar Arani et al., 2012). In this case, too, it is not easy to decide whether greater or more limited autonomy of schools are good. It all depends on the contextual factors in the educational

settings (Madandar Arani et al., 2012). The curriculum of the primary school (Dabestan) consists of the study of Qur'an, Persian composition, dictation, Persian reading comprehension, social studies, arts, hygiene and natural sciences, mathematics, and physical education, but the main focus is on reading comprehension (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012). The curriculum of the lower secondary education includes subjects such as history, geography, Arabic, vocational training, foreign languages, and defence preparation, but the main emphasis is on mathematics and natural sciences (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012).

5. Evaluation and Assessment System

In Iran, the teachers can create as assessor in their classroom. Assessment in Iranian schools is mainly the responsibility of teachers which is done as part of the strategies for the active involvement of students in the teaching-learning process. There are two type of assessment in Iranian Schools: *continuous* and *formative* assessments. Continuous assessment involves students in active participation in the learning process. Examples of this type of assessment includes sporadic quizzes in the middle of semesters, homework completion, and classroom activities. Parents are usually sent a report card at the end of each month and semester which provides them with feedbacks about the performance of their children. Final exams are usually conducted in written and sometimes oral and practical in primary schools. Students need to get a passing score at the end of each academic year for each subject in order to be able to move on to higher grade levels. A nationwide exam is administered at the end of each stage of education, namely at the end of the primary period (6th grade), at the end of lower secondary (9th grade), and at the end of upper secondary (12th grade). The assessment system in Iranian primary schools relies on a qualitative assessment framework school and The qualitative method of assessment for primary schools in Iran was piloted as a project in 2002 at some primary schools (Ahmadi, 2004). The purpose was to omit 0-20 band score for students at this level of education and it was proposed by the Supreme Committee of the education system to improve the evaluation approaches in education schools (Ahmadi, 2004). Depending on the type and nature of the subject matter, exams are performed in written, oral and hands-on ways. The most common form of the exams is the written exams. The minimum passing score to move on to a higher grade is 10 and the maximum grade is 20 (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012). It is reported that in Iran, testing and evaluation are subjected to the subjects of each textbook and textbooks determine the content of the examination system. National examinations evaluate performance of students in the elementary school (grade 6), guidance or middle school (grade 3) and high school (grade 4) (Madandar Arani, Kakia, & Karimi, 2012).

6. Educational Fund

In Iran, in addition to government spending, non-profit schools, parents and educators associations, municipalities, donors' school building, student councils, government and public model, boarding schools and the board of trustees of some schools involves major public participation (Ahmadi, Abbas Zadeh Shahri, & Mirjavani Zanganeh, 2016).

2.3 Finland

1. The Schooling System: Finland

Finland is famous for its equal education system and for the high quality of teaching and learning (Halinen at al., 2016b). Equity and equality are developed by offering equal access to education for everyone, by supporting every student's learning and well-being as well as by ensuring, by means of high-quality support systems, that everyone has opportunities to be successful in learning (Halinen at al., 2016b). Differences between schools and municipalities are small. Education is free of charge in Finland, even at the university level. The education system is flexible and always provides a way forward for students who want to study and move from one level to another. There are no dead ends in the system. The schooling system in Finland consists of daycare programs (for *babies* and *toddlers*), a one-year "**pre-school**" (age six), a nine-year compulsory basic comprehensive school (age seven to age sixteen), post-compulsory secondary general academic and

vocational education, higher education and adult education (Antikainen, Ari; Luukkainen, Anna, 2008).

2. Educational Responsibilities

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture has the overall responsibility for the growth of education, science, cultural, sport and youth policies (The Ministry directs Finnish educational and cultural policy, 2017). The administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture has 13 agencies, including *Finnish National Agency for Education, Academy of Finland and Arts Promotion Centre Finland* (The Ministry directs Finnish educational and cultural policy, 2017). Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for developing education and training, early childhood education and care and lifelong learning, and for improving internationalization. Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) is a national development agency. EDUFI is subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Culture and its tasks and organization are set in the legislation. The Finnish National Agency for Education is the national expert agency responsible for the development of ECEC and pre-primary education (The Ministry directs Finnish educational and cultural policy, 2017). It issues the national core curricula based on which municipalities and other providers prepare the local curricula. Municipalities have a statutory duty to provide ECEC services and pre-primary education according to the local need. Families pay fees for ECEC. These fees vary between 0 – 289 € in full-day provision depending on the size and income of the family. In private ECEC fees are usually higher. Pre-primary education of six-year-olds is free of charge.

3. Compulsory Education: Does the duration matter?

Every child permanently residing in Finland must attend compulsory education. Basic education is free of charge. Free school meals are also provided. Comprehensive schools are maintained by the local authorities (municipalities) and other education providers (OECD, 2015).

4. Curriculum Education System

The objective of Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum is to support children's growth towards humanity and ethically responsible membership of society, and to provide children with the knowledge and skills necessary in life (Airaksinen et al. 2016). In Finland, expansion of knowledge expertise and the skills to create new inventions. Changes in Families. Women's entry into working life. Family with Children 0-7 and parents' employment situation. In Finland, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the responsibility of local (municipal) authority (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, 15-17).

5. Evaluation and Assessment System

In Finland, especially in basic education, the focus is on *formative assessment* and *giving supportive and encouraging feedback* (Pietarinen et al. 2017). In addition to the assessment of learning, more and more assessment for learning and assessment as learning takes place. The development of skills for self-assessment and for peer-assessment is developed during the school years (Pietarinen et al. 2017). This means that students learn, and supported by their teachers, to set goals for their own learning, to discuss the assessment criteria, to plan and reflect upon their working processes, and to assess the results of their own work. For teachers, assessment is an effective pedagogical tool for guiding and encouraging their students' learning and development. For students, learning self-assessment skills also improves their capacity for self-reflection, self-directedness and responsibility. Classroom assessment practices in Finland allow teachers to evaluate and change instruction based on student needs. Within the classroom, teachers use formative assessment and summative assessment, giving students exams created by the textbook company or by teacher's associations (Kupiainen et al., 2009).

6. Educational Fund

In Finland, funding allocations to *primary and secondary schools* are primarily the responsibility of local authorities, both via central transfers to municipalities and locally-raised funds (OECD, 2020). Based on OECD's

report (2020), transferred funds are calculated with respect to the number of residents aged 6-15 years although other factors, such as geographical remoteness and population density, are also considered. These funds are not earmarked; municipalities have full autonomy to decide how they are allocated. Also, municipal funds must cover the cost of learning resources, health and social support services, and one meal a day for children. This system appears to address perceived needs in schools to some extent. Finland's schools are publicly funded. The people in the government agencies managing them, from national officials to local authorities, are educators, not business people, military leaders or career politicians. Every school has the same national goals and draws from the same pool of university-trained educators (OECD, 2020).

2.4 Turkey

1. The Schooling System

In Turkey, the schooling system includes early childhood education, primary, middle, high schools, as and tertiary education. The **compulsory education** was 8 years until 2012, yet the duration of compulsory education has extended to 12 years of schooling with the introduction of **4+4+4** system. According to MoNE, the rationale of changing schooling system was that the average duration of education in the world is 11-12 years on average, yet it is 6 years in Turkey, which indicates that there is a huge gap between the developed countries and Turkey in terms of duration of education (MoNE, 2012).

2. Educational Responsibilities

In Turkey, early childhood education (ECE) forms children between the ages of 3 to 5, and local authorities, public schools and private institutions can provide early childhood education. Early childhood education is not free of charge, yet the Ministry implements a piloting program for free early childhood education. Even though early childhood education is vital for social, academic and intellectual development of the children for compulsory and further education, early childhood education in Turkey causes serious educational inequalities (MoNE, 2012).

3. Compulsory Education: Does the duration matter?

Turkey follows **4+4+4** a single structured model and **primary education** covers the first 4 of the Turkish education system. It is **compulsory** and is given free of charge in state schools. With respect to the compulsory education curriculum, all the schools in Turkey have to follow a national curriculum and the curriculum of the schools is prepared by the General Directorate of Basic Education and put into effect after the approval of the Board of Education (Eurydice, 2016). The compulsory education curriculum aims to offer basic general culture information, to introduce local and global issues, and to help them contribute to the welfare of Turkey (Türk Eğitim Sistemi, 2017). In line with the centralized curriculum, all the textbooks used in the primary, and secondary schools are determined by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (National Education Basic Law, Article 55) and are distributed free of charge.

4. Curriculum Education System

The main purpose of education in Turkey is to educate a person to become a psychically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually competent individual by respecting human rights and universal ethical values. In addition, education in Turkey aims to help students to improve their skills, pursue their interest and eventually be a creative, supportive and contributing member of the society with his/her occupation (Türk Eğitim Sistemi, 2017). The purpose of the primary education curriculum is to ensure that every child acquires the basic knowledge, skills, behaviors, and habits to become a good citizen, is raised in line with the national moral concepts and is prepared for life and for the next education level parallel to his/her interests and skills. Upon completion, the students are awarded with primary and middle school diploma, respectively (Türk Eğitim Sistemi, 2017).

5. Evaluation and Assessment System

Teachers use alternative assessment methods that center on student self-assessments and the diversity in the assessment. The wider system for evaluation – teacher appraisal, school evaluation and system evaluation – can significantly influence teaching and learning practices (OECD, 2013). As the wider evaluation system is well-designed and well-aligned with national goals, it offers powerful levers for transforming the instructional system and improving the application of high-quality assessment practices which support higher-order learning outcomes. Turkey already has established processes for assessing and evaluating teachers and schools. It also uses strategic planning to set and monitor education goals. However, two factors prevent these processes from supporting improvement in teaching and assessment effectively. One is the heavy reliance on summative test results to evaluate quality (OECD, 2013).

6. Educational Fund

Turkey has a highly centralized governance structure in which education policy is steered by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and, at the tertiary level, by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). In Turkey, schools have little autonomy and limited capacity to respond to their needs.

Education is publicly funded, but Turkish schools can receive contributions from parents through their school-parent associations. The central and provincial governments are responsible for personnel and financial management of schools. Although overall funding has increased in the past decade, data suggests that primary and secondary education are underfunded compared to other OECD countries. Tertiary institutions have more autonomy than schools to address their needs, but central authorities oversee funding and student entrance exams for tertiary institutions.

2.5 Spain

1. The Schooling System: Spain

In Spain, the legislative framework that guides the Spanish educational system is composed of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the laws that improve the principles and rights enshrined in it: Constitutional Law 8/1985 of 3 July, regulating the right to education, Constitutional Law 5/2002 of 19 June, on Qualifications and Vocational Training, and the Constitutional Law 2/2006 of 3 May, on Education amended by Constitutional Law 8/2013, of December 9, for the Improvement of Quality in Education (OECD, 2016). The Spanish education system is divided into four stages, two of which are compulsory:

- Nursery and preschool (*educación infantil*) – optional
- Primary (*educación* or *escuela primaria*) – compulsory
- Compulsory secondary education (*educación secundaria obligatoria*)
- Upper secondary education (*bachillerato*) – optional

2. Educational Responsibilities

In Spain, there are different levels of management of education: *state level* and *regional level*; the *local or municipal level* has no powers of management and direct governance of schools (OECD, 2016). Governance of education in Spain is heavily influenced by the decentralized state model, so that the structure that has been adopted is modeled on the distribution of powers established in the Spanish Constitution (CE Titles IV, VIII), which allocates responsibilities between all educational Authorities: General State Administration (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport), the Administrations of the Autonomous Communities (Boards or Departments of Education) and to a lesser extent, local authorities.

The **Ministry of Education and Vocational Training** (MEFP) has the whole responsibilities for the area of education, and its functions include the following:

- proposal and implementation of the Government policy on education and vocational training, including all kinds of provision of the education system except for university education, and without prejudice to the competences of the Supreme Council for Sports in the area of sports education.
- The State Secretariat for Culture and the Supreme Council for Sports are also part of the Ministry, even if they are not included since they do not have competences on education matters (OECD, 2016).

3. Compulsory Education: Does the duration matter?

In Spain, Compulsory education starts from 6 to 16 years. Between 0 and 6 years of age children can participate in schools that offer preschool and pre-primary education. Primary education consists of six academic years and is available to a pupil between 6 and 12. Compulsory secondary education comprises four academic years for children from 12 to 16 (OECD, 2016). At 16, pupils must pass exams to obtain a qualification known as “*Graduado en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*”, which is the equivalent of our GCSEs, to be accepted to study a Baccalaureate (two academic years prior to going into higher education) or “*Formación Profesional*” (vocational training aimed at preparing pupils to gain direct access to the job market). In Spain, there are four various kinds of Baccalaureates: Arts, Science and Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences and finally, Health and Natural Sciences (OECD, 2016).

4. Curriculum Education System

The aim of the Curriculum introduces foreign children to the Spanish language and culture. The core curriculum is usually Spanish language and literature (and the language and literature of the autonomous region if applicable), mathematics, geography, history, a foreign language and physical education.

5. Evaluation and Assessment System

In Spain, student progress is monitored via continuous evaluation throughout the school year, and through summative or final evaluations carried out during the different educational phases. Students must demonstrate a high degree of mastery in the different competences that correspond to their Primary Education. System evaluations are performed by INEE, regional education authorities, and the State Educational Inspectorate (*Inspección General de Servicios de Educación*) to make sure compliance with legislation (OECD, 2014). INEE reports to the Spanish Parliament annually, using different system evaluations: *general diagnostic evaluations*; *international student assessments*, such as PISA; results of the National System of Education Indicators (*Sistema Estatal de Indicadores de la Educación*); and the report of the State School Board (*Consejo Escolar del Estado*), a participatory body of key education stakeholders.

According to OCED'S report (2014), the objectives of system evaluations are to improve the quality and equity of education, guide education policy and increase the transparency and effectiveness of the education system. Evidence on the education system can be used to help decision-makers develop informed policies leading to improved student outcomes.

6. Educational Fund

In Spain, the financing of education originates from both *public funds* and contributions from *private institutions* and *citizens*. Therefore, the total expenditure on education is considered as the set of funds devoted to education (both public and private) from public and/or private sources (Eurydice, 2021). In Spain, in the context of decentralized financial responsibility for education by the 17 regional governments, education is mainly based on public funding sources. Regional governments have autonomy to handle their annual budget and how it is allocated to schools. Schools receive a small amount of funding based on the number of students enrolled. Most students at primary and secondary levels attended publicly funded schools in 2011: about 68% attended public schools and 28% attended publicly-funded private schools, a higher proportion than the OECD average. At upper secondary level, 79% attended public schools and 12% attended publicly-funded private schools.

Publicly-funded private schools must meet certain requirements to receive funding.

3. Teacher Training System: Its Perspectives (Section II)

3.1 Czech Republic

According to OECD Reviews of School Resources (2016), in Czech Republic, teachers are required to have obtained university-level education. For pre-primary teachers, upper-secondary/higher levels of education are accepted. Most university programmes are at master's level and are taught in universities (Eurydice, 2014). According to Eurydice (2014), the individual universities have responsibility for each programme's content and organisation. Each faculty of education providing teacher education has the right to determine the content and organisation of studies. It covers study programmes, study and assessment regulations, entrance examination requirements, the requirements for state final examinations, etc. (Eurydice, 2014). Teacher training integrates both *theoretical* and *practical* perspectives. In addition to traditional methods including lectures and seminars, the 'learning by doing' approach is used, and different theoretical methods, learning through practical exercises, workshops, etc. There is no unified obligatory curriculum for teacher training in higher educational institutions.

3.2 Islamic Republic of Iran

Teacher education in Iran is conducted at public institutions exclusively. Teachers at the upper secondary level are trained in universities and teacher-training colleges (Arabi, Andas Mdandar, 2014). Only one university, the University of *Farhangian*, is devoted to the graduate-level training of university instructors. In order to teach at the upper secondary level, instructors must have a Bachelor (*کارشناسی Karshenasi*) degree. Teachers at the upper secondary level are trained in universities and teacher-training colleges. Only one university, the University of Tarbiat Modarres, is dedicated to the graduate-level training of university instructors. Ranked the second best university in Iran by the Ministry of Education, the university awards master's and doctoral degrees (Malekzadeh, 2015).

3.3 Finland

Teacher training in Finland is arranged by universities and vocational institutes of higher education. Teacher training in Finland is a highly competitive field of masters' degree university studies and is provided in universities all over Finland. Students are selected via two-phase entrance exams which emphasise, in addition to academic qualifications, the candidates' personal suitability and motivation for teacher's work (Malinen, Va'isa'nen, Savolainen, 2012). Elementary-class-teacher education includes a strong practical and research orientation. The Finnish school system's approach in responding to the needs of increasing standards is to put a lot of trust in teachers and local education authorities to deliver good outcomes instead of centralised norms and consequential accountability (Malinen, Va'isa'nen, Savolainen, 2012).

Table 1

Teacher Training in Finland

AGE	SCHOOL	TEACHER
0–6	Kindergarten	Kindergarten/pre-school teachers
6	Optional pre-school	Pre-school teachers or classroom teachers
7–15	Comprehensive school, 9 years	Classroom teachers and subject teachers
16–	Upper secondary school, 3 years	Subject teachers
16–	Vocational schools	Vocational school teachers
19–	Higher education	Teachers with higher academic degree

3.4 Turkey

Nowadays, teacher education for primary schools was contextualized in Primary School Teacher Colleges

(*İlköğretmen Okulları*) and village institute (Baskan, 2001). The reforms in education and teacher education went hand in hand and various models of teacher training were implemented until 1973. In 1973, the duration of basic education was extended to 8 years and the “*National Education Basic Law*” (article 1739) stated that all teachers must earn a tertiary degree (Duman & Karagöz, 2016). In the next years, the duration of teacher education programs was extended to four years and the programs were renamed as Higher Teacher Education Schools (Bayyurt & Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2012). However, extending duration of teacher education programs lead to teacher shortages in Turkey. In such circumstances, the Ministry of Education offered the short-cut teacher training programs, which covered three-month-long night courses. In 1982, faculties of education became responsible for all levels of teacher education and the duration of teacher education programs was unified and it consisted of four years of education in Turkey (Atanur Başkan et al., 2006).

3.5 Spain

In Spain, the teachers require the following degrees in order to teach. the following is required: A Bachelor's degree. A Master's degree on Compulsory Secondary Education and Bachillerato, Vocational Training and Language Education Teacher Training or equivalent degree for teaching purposes (Eurydice, 2021).

- access to Bachelor in School Teacher of Pre-Primary and Primary Education: having obtained a final mark in the admission procedure established by each university equal to or higher than the minimum average grade needed for the relevant degree (Eurydice, 2021).
- access to Pre-Primary Education Advanced Vocational Training Cycle: the access requirements are similar to those for accessing any kind of advanced vocational training cycle (Eurydice, 2021).

4. Conclusion

In this comparative report, the researcher compared the educational systems of five countries including *Turkey, Czech Republic, Finland, Spain, and Iran* with respect to four indicators including the “*The Schooling System*”, “*The Educational responsibilities, Compulsory System, Curriculum Education System, Evaluation and assessment system*”, and *Educational Fund*. Also, the aim of this present paper is to compare teacher training of five countries including *Turkey, Czech Republic, Finland, Spain, and Iran*. The researcher looked specifically for similarities and differences in the above-mentioned indicators in primary and secondary school structures of the selected countries. In Czech Republic, the education system is highly decentralized. Czech’s education governance is divided into several parts and some municipalities have low ability or sources which help inequalities. It is reported that the present policy of more equal distribution of finances across regions makes sure equity. In addition, the early childhood education and care can enhance the equity of education (OECD, 2020). In comparison to Iran, countries including *Finland, Spain, and Czech Republic* are considered as social democratic welfare states. Governance style in the area of education in *Finland, Spain, and Czech Republic* follows school autonomy and the educational system of these countries are highly decentralized, while Iran’s educational system follows the centralization.

Based on Curriculum Education, the main discrepancy between Iran and Czech Republic was concerned with the way the curricula for schools are developed. While in Iran, a centralized syllabus is utilized to ensure the promotion of Islamic values based on which the government relies, in Czech, schools have a high degree of autonomy to not only improve their own curriculum but to appoint and dismiss teachers. In terms of the number of organization and bodies involved in the educational system, significant differences between Iran and Czech Republic emerged, with Czech Republic having more regulatory and administrative bodies involved (Arvaz, 2020). The core curriculum of Spain is usually Spanish language and literature (and the language and literature of the autonomous region if applicable), mathematics, geography, history, a foreign language and physical education (OECD, 2020). The objective of Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum is to support children’s growth towards humanity and ethically responsible membership of society, and to provide children with the knowledge and skills necessary in life.

In terms of Educational funding, compared with other countries, the budget allocated to the educational programs are relatively low in Iran. Among other countries, Finland's government support Early Childhood Education for their schools' programs. In Iran and Czech Republic, the budget allocated to the educational programs were relatively low compared with the other European countries. Conversely, in Czech, the ministry provides the majority of funding. The rest of funding is provided by regional and municipal budgets. The central and regional governments are mainly responsible for providing funding to the primary and secondary schools. In addition to government spending, non-profit schools, parents and educators' associations, municipalities, donors' school building, student councils, government and public model, boarding schools and the board of trustees of some schools involves major public participation in Iran. Based on the comparative methodology provided above, number of differences and similarities in the assessment system of both Iran and Czech Republic can be observed. First of all, in Iran and Czech Republic, the assessment functions are to some extent new and it seems that both Iran and Czech are still encountering with challenges in the way they assess the effectiveness of education (Arvaz, 2020). One reason for this comes from the different assessment pilot testing and new testing approaches that the two countries have drawn on in recent years.

As for differences, a very noticeable difference between the evaluation system of both countries is that Czech has had a more active participation in international tests (Arvaz, 2020). According to the Iranian Ministry of Education, the only international test that Iranian schools take part in is TIMSS. One reason underlying this can be the fact that most of these tests are developed by Western countries and Iran is somewhat unwilling to let western philosophy of education enter the educational system. In Finland, within the classroom, teachers use formative assessment and summative assessment, giving students exams created by the textbook company or by teacher's associations (Kupiainen et al., 2009). In Turkey, teachers use alternative assessment methods that center on student self-assessments and the diversity in the assessment. In Spain, student progress is monitored via continuous evaluation throughout the school year, and through summative or final evaluations carried out during the different educational phases. In terms of teacher training, both Iran and Turkey have long traditions in teacher training, and Finland's consistent reforms in education and teacher education have professionalized teaching occupation and the teacher unions help to establish and promote a prestigious teacher identity in Finland. However, although teaching profession is highly valued and has a high status in society, Turkey struggles with continuous reforms in teacher education, which cause increase in alternative certification. In addition, the centralized tertiary education system makes it difficult to (re)adjust teacher education programs with the new development in the field of teacher education based on the local needs. Teacher education has always been centralized in Iran, while it had once been more or less de-centralized in some European countries. In Czech Republic, teachers are required to have obtained university-level education. For pre-primary teachers, upper-secondary/higher levels of education are accepted. Most university programmes are at master's level and are taught in universities. In Spain, having a bachelor in School Teacher of Pre-Primary and Primary Education is enough.

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