

THE “ESCOLA ANDORRANA”



IN 1990, FACED WITH THE CONSTANT INCREASE IN THE SCHOOL POPULATION, THE GOVERNMENT APPROVED THE CREATION OF A SECOND LEVEL OF EDUCATION WHICH WILL BEGIN IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1991-92 AND WHICH COMPLETES ANDORRA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS REGARDS BASIC AND COMPULSORY SCHOOLING.

ERMENGOL PUIG DIRECTOR GENERAL, ESCOLA ANDORRANA

Andorra, with a culture and a language –Catalan– of her own, is a small state, both in size and, in spite of the density resulting from the economic growth of the last few years, in population. There is cause for optimism in the modernization of the media and of services, which raise the standard of living; and a fairly young population, giving a school-age census for the year 1990-91 of 8,617 children.

Andorra's location, in the heart of the Pyrenean range, has aroused her vocation as a tourist resort and, at the same time, a commercial centre. Her situation between France, with a powerful political and cultural influence, Spain, with a considerable human presence, and Catalonia, with her ancestral cultural testimonial, has been of benefit to her. Traditionally, these countries have guaranteed, and still satisfy, Andorra's educational needs. As well as their multilingualism, they have favoured the country's approach to Europe. For a long time,

the *Consell General* and the government, with commendable Andorran training programmes to accompany the Spanish and French school syllabuses, have guaranteed familiarity with the country's culture and language.

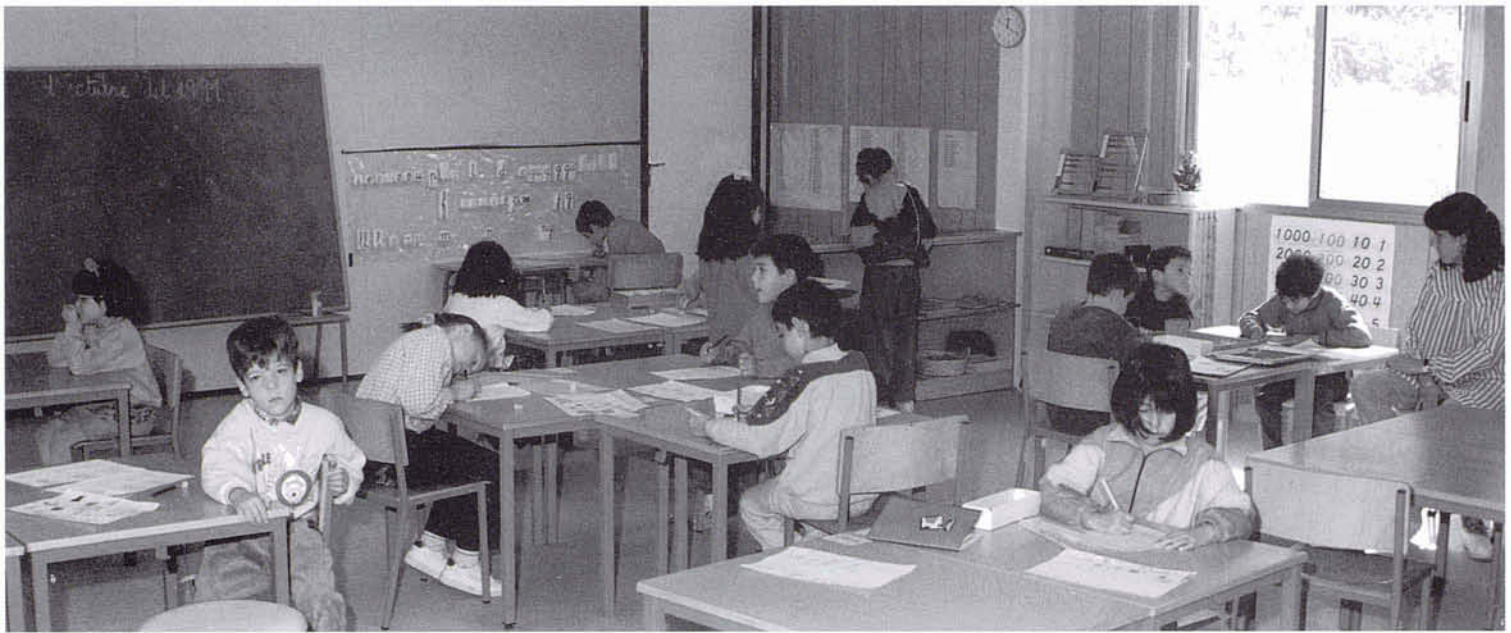
Any improvement on this situation must take as its starting point the design of a specifically Andorran educational system, whose preparation must take into account the aspects mentioned above of modernity, Andorran cultural identity and the study of living languages as relational elements giving access to further education.

The 1982-83 school year started with 38 three-year-olds –an experience in primary education that set out to emphasize the singularity of Andorra, especially from the point of view of the language. A favourable response, as indicated by the active participation of parents, the enthusiasm of the teaching staff and a threefold increase in registrations, led the government in 1985 to

channel these demands and approve the school's continuation for a basic education lasting six years.

In 1990, faced with the constant increase in the school population –the Escola Andorrana has 627 pupils–, the government approved the creation of a second level of education which began in the academic year 1991-92 and which completes Andorra's educational system as regards basic and compulsory schooling. On various occasions the government has also shown an interest in shaping all non-compulsory, non-university education and thus completing an educational organisation for Andorra that must coexist respectfully with the educational systems of the neighbouring countries where students will go for their further education.

At present, the Andorran educational system includes a syllabus which is about to be put into practice and which is arranged in three levels: “maternal”, which is optional, and compulsory edu-



cation, which is made up of primary and secondary education.

"Maternal education" consists of a single cycle aimed at children between the ages of three and six, who are divided into two groups on the basis of their mother tongue: the Catalan-French group and the Catalan-Castilian group, a distribution that lasts until the end of the pupils' primary education.

At this level, the treatment given the different spheres of learning is directed at making it possible to start the following phase without any problems of an emotional nature, with a high level of adaptation to the work and the group, and with the possibility of enjoying later stages of education. The educational content—aspects of identity, forms of representation and the physical and social environment—is based on the child's level of development.

Primary education is for pupils between the ages of six and twelve. Compulsory education starts with this phase, which

is divided into three cycles of two academic years each. The aim at this level is to provide children with an accurate image of themselves and a study technique that affords them a trouble-free grasp of the art of communication and the practice of mathematics and familiarity with their environment.

The different subjects are worked in Catalan—the official language—and also, according to the group, in a second language—Castilian or French—which becomes the vehicle for the contents of their training. A third language—Castilian, French or English—which is worked orally, is introduced in the second cycle. The educational contents, which follow a constructivist methodology, are grouped as follows: Social Sciences, Science and Technology, Mathematics, Languages, Physical Education, Art and Music.

Secondary education takes in young people between the ages of twelve and sixteen. This phase corresponds to the

second level of compulsory education and lasts four years, divided into two cycles of two academic years each. In spite of the gradual introduction of optional elements in the different fields of language, this phase is conceived as an overall general training. Methodologically speaking, it is a development of the preceeding period, and it offers the pupil the chance to begin a fourth language.

The syllabus is arranged around the following common areas: languages, mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, physical education and sport, music and art, with the object of acquiring a correct use of different languages and codes as vehicles for communication and instruments of learning; assimilating the elements of culture of our age; increasing the capacity for analysis and for solving real, everyday problems, and finally, consolidating the baggage needed for later, post-compulsory education or simply for entering active life. ■