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# Intercultural Education in Catalonia (Spain): Evolution of Discourses and Practices (2000-2016)\*

## *Educación intercultural en Cataluña (España): evolución de los discursos y de las prácticas (2000-2016)*

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the evolution of intercultural discourses and practices in Catalan schools (Spain), based on two studies contextualised in different times. The first study was conducted in the 2000/2001 academic year, a time of incipient immigration and the incorporation of the intercultural discourse. The second study (2015/2016), nevertheless, took place in a context of migratory stabilisation and consolidation of the intercultural discourse in the autonomous community. Both studies took the quantitative methodological approach. The results showed that intercultural discourses and practices

have evolved positively (in terms of their presence in school documents, actions taken and teacher training) and in keeping with European Union guidelines over the years. However, it still remains the challenge of debunking the belief that intercultural education is related to students of foreign nationality, and therefore the practice that intercultural education is mainly addressed at schools with high percentages of students of foreign nationality.

**Keywords:** Intercultural education, cultural diversity, intercultural practices, Catalonia, Spain.

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\* Acknowledgements: The research that has led to these results has been promoted by Recercaixa, specifically by the 'Diversidad cultural e igualdad de oportunidades en la escuela' Project ['Cultural Diversity and Equal Opportunities in School'] (Recercaixa2015 call). As well as the call for aid for R+D+i projects "Research challenges" (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, resolution CSO2017-84872-R)(Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, resolution CSO2017-84872-R).

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza la evolución de los discursos y prácticas interculturales en las escuelas catalanas (España), a partir de dos estudios contextualizados en diferentes épocas. El primer estudio se realizó en el año académico 2000/2001, una época de inmigración incipiente y de incorporación del discurso intercultural. El segundo estudio (2015/2016), sin embargo, tuvo lugar en un contexto de estabilización migratoria y consolidación del discurso intercultural en la Comunidad Autónoma. Ambos estudios adoptaron el enfoque metodológico cuantitativo. Los resultados muestran que los discursos y las prácticas interculturales han evolucionado positivamente (en

cuanto a su presencia en los documentos del centro escolar, las acciones que se realizan y la formación de los docentes) y de acuerdo con las directrices de la Unión Europea a lo largo de los años. Sin embargo, sigue existiendo el desafío de romper con la creencia de que la educación intercultural está relacionada con los estudiantes de origen extranjero y, por lo tanto, que la práctica de la educación intercultural se aborda principalmente en escuelas con altos porcentaje de alumnado de origen inmigrante.

**Palabras clave:** Educación intercultural, diversidad cultural, prácticas interculturales, Cataluña, España.

## INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity is not new at schools. However, there have been significant changes in how it is viewed. Most countries have gone from monocultural models involving the segregation or assimilation (to the dominant group) of those who are culturally different to more modern discourses of respect and appreciation of other cultures (Faas, Hajisoteriou and Panayiotis, 2014; Hansen, 1998; Perry and Southwell, 2011; Portera, 2008; Tarrow, 1990). The Spanish education system, like those of other societies, has undergone this same evolution (Fernández Enguita, 1996; García Castaño, Granados and García Cano, 1999; García Fernández and Goenechea, 2009), although the pace and timing have been different.

Initially, those who were culturally different (especially the *Gitanos*) were excluded from schools just as they were from other institutional and social spheres. This was followed by a shift from exclusion to segregation with the so-called 'bridge schools', which became a form of non-transitory segregated schooling (Secretariado Nacional Gitano, 1982; Santos Rego, Crespo, Lorenzo and Godás, 2012). With the arrival of democracy, integrationist models also came to Spain. These models sought to incorporate the culturally different into ordinary classrooms with the support of compensatory educational programmes intended to benefit geographical areas or populations that, due to their specific characteristics, required special educational attention (Garreta, 2003, 2006). This period continued until the mid-1990s, which mainly saw the arrival of students of foreign nationality, at which point the compensatory programmes began to be combined with certain intercultural theoretical references and practices (Garreta, 2011; Márquez and García, 2014). Today, in Spain, as in most European countries (Coulby, 2006) and many others that have traditionally been precursors of multiculturalism, such as the United States, Canada or Australia (Aikman, 2012; Bibi Soobratty, 2015), the

intercultural model is regarded as the best strategy for integration, coexistence and social cohesion (Bouchard, 2011).

However, despite the efforts of EU institutions and the Council of Europe to establish a common intercultural dimension that reflects the growing diversity (Faas *et al.*, 2014), individual European countries have great autonomy in the field of education, with the consequent diversification of strategies and actions (Gundara and Portera, 2008). Thus, in practice, very different actions can be found at educational institutions under the umbrella of ‘interculturalism’, and what educators understand intercultural education to be and the actions they carry out to implement it at schools differ from country to country, city to city, and school to school (Allemann-Ghionda, 2008; Leeman and Reid, 2006).

Additionally, and perhaps as a result of the increase in the use of the term ‘intercultural’ by scientists, politicians, and society at large, there is a lack of semantic clarification and common epistemological formulations for the concept of interculturalism and, therefore, of intercultural education (Gundara and Portera, 2008), a fact that further hinders the comparative analysis of the intercultural reality at schools in different countries. There is a general consensus that interculturalism, unlike previous models, places emphasis on the interactions, exchanges, and connections between cultures, which is indicative of the strong collectivist dimension and spirit of reciprocity that govern this philosophy and sets it apart from the inherent individualism of the multicultural model (Bouchard, 2011). It is further fairly uniformly held that intercultural education approaches culture and identity as dynamic constructs; that it conceives of diversity as an opportunity for mutual enrichment; that exchanges and interactions form the core of intercultural actions; that these actions seek integration and social cohesion; and that it is a philosophy aimed at all students, not just minorities and/or immigrants (Bibi Soobratty, 2015; Bleszynska, 2008; Luciak, 2006). However, in practice, the implementation of an intercultural education model based on these axioms poses certain problems (González-Faraco, González-Falcón and Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2020).

Many teachers define as ‘intercultural’ any initiative related to diversity, often in the form of intercultural projects or folkloric activities, which tend to emphasise stereotypes and to simplify the complex webs of meaning hidden by cultural diversity (Bleszynska, 2008; Palaiologou and Faas, 2012; Portera, 2008). Another common and even more troubling practice amongst teachers is the tendency to conceive of intercultural education as a form of special education that exclusively concerns immigrant students and, thus, to plan only special actions and measures to integrate culturally diverse students (Allemann-Ghionda, 2008; Bleszynska, 2008; OECD, 2010), such as second language education and support. This may

be why the implementation of what educators consider an intercultural education is often influenced by school demographics, with greater awareness of cultural diversity, and more practices related to it, at schools with higher percentages of immigrants (Díez, 2014; Forrest, Lean and Dunn, 2016; Palaiologou and Faas, 2012). This tendency was identified years ago by various researchers (Leeman and Reid, 2006; Norberg, 2000; Santos Rego and Nieto, 2000) and remains current despite the progress made on intercultural education at the discursive and political levels.

According to several authors (Allemann-Ghionda, 2008; Luciak, 2006), shortcomings in initial and continuing teacher education are one of the main causes of this *décalage* between the theoretical formulations of intercultural education and the actual practices found at schools. In some countries, such as Greece or France, universities do not generally include this subject in their curricula (Allemann-Ghionda, 2008; Palaiologou and Faas, 2012). In those countries where they do, such as Spain (García López, 2002; Rodríguez-Izquierdo 2004; Peñalva and Soriano, 2010), it is often in the form of optional subjects (OECD, 2010), such that this training is voluntary, as with continuing education, which, because it is not compulsory, is pursued only by those practicing teachers who are most interested in the subject (Garreta, 2003).

#### CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN CATALONIA

In Spain there is a decentralised system in which the governments of the various autonomous regions take on a very important role in education, which has led to different ways of understanding and working on cultural diversity within the country (Fernández Echevarría and García Castaño, 2015). In light of this reality, the present study analyses the evolution of intercultural education discourses and practices in Autonomous Community of Catalonia, which is a pioneer in the reception of foreign immigration in Spain and, therefore, also a pioneer in the adoption of a discourse of respect for difference by the public authorities and in the implementation of actions to respond to cultural diversity (Garreta, 2003; 2006). Thus, it is a region of great national and international scientific interest.

#### *Context of the first study*

Catalonia is a young Autonomous Community when it comes to addressing cultural diversity. It was not until the 1990s that Catalonia implemented a general immigration policy (integration policy, not immigration policy which is among the state functions), consolidated in 2000 with the creation of the Secretariat for

Immigration, in a time marked by the start of a large influx of foreign migrants of multiple origins, thus entailing major challenges at the political and social levels, as well as, obviously, for the education system. At that time, the first intercultural discourses and practices emerged, alongside compensatory programmes aimed at facilitating the integration of immigrant students. The 1990s (the years leading up to the study presented here) saw the creation of the Interministerial Committee for Monitoring and Coordinating Actions on Immigration (1992) and the Immigrant Advisory Council (1992), as well as the approval of the Interministerial Immigration Plan (1993), a document that encouraged all Catalan ministries to implement new actions in the field of cultural diversity. In this context, in 1996, the Catalan Ministry of Education published the document *Eix transversal sobre educació intercultural* [Cross-cutting line on intercultural education] (Departament d'Ensenyament 1996), considered to be the first strong commitment to interculturalism in the field of education (The Catalan Ministry of Education had also referred to interculturalism in defining the primary education curriculum in 1992, but only very vaguely).

This document was based on the idea that intercultural education is the pedagogical response to prepare future generations for life in catalan society (increasingly diverse and plural). Thus, it affirmed that intercultural education seeks to develop in *all students* a set of attitudes and abilities regarding their own culture and the cultural diversity found in society and at school, specifying that intercultural education must not be a superficial educational practice, outside the ordinary curriculum, nor should it be targeted solely at culturally different students, but rather that this approach is intended for all schools, classrooms and students. The guidelines provided in the 1996 document also asked schools to gradually incorporate the objectives of intercultural education into the main school documents: the *projecto educativo de centro* (school educational project, SEP) and the *projecto curricular de centro* (school curricular project, SCP)<sup>1</sup>.

To sum, the first study took place at a time in which the intercultural model was just getting off the ground, both at the theoretical level and in terms of concrete policies. Nevertheless, although the discourse was quite closely aligned with what the European institutions said that intercultural education should be (Faas *et al.*, 2014), the specific intercultural education policies in Catalonia were aimed,

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1 For the Departament d'Ensenyament (1992), the SEP is made up of the pedagogical and organisational principles to govern all educational actions, whilst the SCP is an eminently pedagogical document that serves as a basic instrument for specifying the approaches implemented in the educational project in accordance with the guidelines of the official curriculum.

above all, at improving the processes of integrating foreign students (reception, compensatory education, Catalan language teaching, etc.).

### *Context of the second study*

With regard to the evolution of immigration since the mid-nineties of the twentieth century, there was a notable increase in the enrolment of students of foreign nationality at schools and an even greater diversification of the countries of origin until the start of the economic crisis in Spain (around 2008), which led to a reduction in arrivals and enrolments by new students from abroad. In fact, according to the official statistics, in the 2016/2017 academic year, 12.4% of students in Catalonia were of foreign nationality (the Spanish mean was 8.5%); furthermore, there was a percentage change of 46% between the 1995/1996 and 2000/2001 academic years and of 120.6% between the 2002/2003 and 2013/2014 academic years (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2017). Thus, following the publication of the *Eix transversal sobre educació intercultural* (1996), multiple policies were developed within the intercultural discourse. However, these policies were mainly intended to meet the needs of those considered to be culturally diverse. The 2001-2004 Interministerial Immigration Plan, developed by the Catalan Secretariat for Immigration in 2001, proposed learning programmes, material and resources for newcomer students. In 2003, the Catalan Ministry of Education developed the *Pla d'actuació per a l'alumnat de nacionalitat estrangera (2003-2006)* [Action Plan for Students of Foreign Nationality (2003-2006)] (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2003), the general objective of which was the scholastic and social integration of all students, regardless of their language, culture or social status. One year later (2004), the *Pla per a la Llengua i la Cohesió Social* [Language and Social Cohesion Plan] was approved, which aimed to enhance coexistence primarily based on Catalan language learning. This plan entailed the disappearance of the Compensatory Education Programme and the implementation of various measures, such as the creation of *aules d'acollida* (Molina and Casado, 2014), literally welcome or reception classrooms, or the holding of school adaptation workshops, both primarily aimed at students from other countries.

This plan, which is still in force, is today part of an ambitious and far-reaching programme (2012-2018) to reduce school failure (within the framework of European and international guidelines) called the *Ofensiva de país a favor de l'èxit escolar* [National Offensive for Academic Success] (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2012). With the main aim of improving the competence level of primary education and compulsory secondary education students and reducing the school dropout rate, this Plan establishes ten main lines of action, including, amongst others: 1) profes-

sionalisation of teaching; 2) addressing student diversity and personalising teaching; and 3) methodological and teaching innovation in classrooms. The Plan thus considers essential those activities conducive to processes to integrate students from other cultures, as well as the development of intercultural competences amongst *all students*. This more relational and competence-based aspect of intercultural education is particularly addressed in the Plan's third action line (methodological and teaching innovation in classrooms), in which intercultural education is considered the ideal pedagogical response to the need to prepare the population to thrive in a plural and democratic society. Thus, emphasis also continues to be placed on the need for initial and continuing teacher education and the taking of concrete measures to integrate culturally diverse students even as, at the discursive level, the intercultural education approach has become widespread (Leiva, 2017).

## METHODOLOGY

The present paper contributes to the existing literature by analysing the evolution of intercultural education policies, in this case in Catalonia, and the related discourses and practices put in place at schools. By comparing two similar studies carried out at two different times (the 2000/2001 and 2015/2016 academic years), we gain deeper insight into how and to what extent the policies implemented over the years under the rubric of 'interculturalism' have served to improve existing practices at schools. We likewise sought to identify the strategic lines that future education policies should address in order to tackle the remaining challenges. The research questions guiding this investigation are the following:

Research Question 1: How and to what extent has educational policy in Catalonia changed teachers' and head teachers' discourses and practices towards cultural diversity?

Research Question 2: After more than 20 years of the 'intercultural' discourse in educational policy and educational practices at Catalan schools, is intercultural education influenced by school demographics?

### *Procedure*

The paper will focus on the comparison of two studies conducted in Catalonia by the first author's research team with a difference of 15 years. Both studies used a survey-based quantitative method to collect the data. The first study was conducted between November 2000 and January 2001. Years later, the need to replicate

the survey was considered. However, in this case (due to the project in which the research was being conducted), it had to be done in two stages: one focused on primary education (the empirical work was carried out from 15 May to 15 September 2015<sup>2</sup>) and the other on compulsory secondary education (the empirical telephone work at the second phase was carried out from 15 May to 15 September 2016<sup>3</sup>). Furthermore, the respondents were representatives of the schools' administrative teams, as they could provide more information on how the schools operated.

### *Participants*

The oldest study was based on the teacher censuses of the Catalan Ministry of Education for the 2000/2001 academic year, and it was calculated that a sample of 740 primary and compulsory secondary education teachers would be needed (which, assuming the worst-case scenario of  $p=q=50\%$ , and a confidence level of 95.5%, would have a margin of error of  $\pm 3.6$ ). The sample was selected using a random design from the lists of schools in Catalonia, and a teacher from each level of education was surveyed in person at each randomly selected school ( $n=211$ ). As a result of the diversification of the respondents at the schools (in terms of grades within levels) and the random selection thereof, the sample was thus representative in a way that few samples obtained to work on the subject of cultural diversity at schools in Catalonia had been in the past<sup>4</sup>.

Regarding the second study, the first survey (conducted in 2015) consisted in interviews with representatives from 380 primary schools (ages 6 to 12), which, as-

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- 2 The profile of the interviewees is conditioned by the surveyors' request that it was needed a person with high knowledge of what was done at schools (and belonging to the management team): 65.8% head teachers, 25.5% head of studies, 7.4% management team secretaries and 1.3% vocals. 73.2% were women and the rest were men. The average age of those interviewed is 47 years (more information on the profile of the sample, the empirical phase and the analysis of the information in: Llevot, Bernad, Molet, Garreta and Domingo, 2018).
  - 3 The profile of the interviewees is conditioned by the surveyors' request that it was needed a person with high knowledge of what was done at schools (and belonging to the management team): 34% director, 29.1% head of studies, 31.1% pedagogical coordinator, 2.6% secretary and 3.2% vocal. To specify the interviewer's profile a bit more, it can be said that 55% are women and 41% men (the average age of those interviewed is 48 years).
  - 4 Synthetically, 61% of the sample were women and 39% were men. It should also be noted that this is a diverse sample in terms of the teaching speciality (more than 20 different specialities) and the time they have been working as teachers: less than five years (18%), more than 15 years (47%) and the rest being in the average situation. Regarding their educational level, 47% of teachers are primary teachers and 53% are high school teachers. Finally, it should be mentioned that the average age the average age of those interviewed is 43 years (more information on the profile of the sample, the empirical phase and the analysis of the information in: Garreta, 2003).

suming the worst-case scenario of  $p=q=50\%$ , and with a confidence level of  $95.5\%$ , had a margin of error of  $\pm 3.2\%$ . The schools were chosen based on the design of a proportional sample that made it possible to generalise the results. The selection was performed based on the list of schools and a random number table, which made it possible to select, and substitute, where necessary, the sampling points. This time, the survey was conducted by phone, as was the subsequent survey at the compulsory secondary education level (ages 12 to 16).

The second survey focused on secondary schools (in fact, the present paper will analyse the sum total of the primary and secondary school surveys, which brings the total sample size to 730 surveys, making it comparable to the results obtained 15 years ago). The secondary school survey was also carried out based on a list of existing schools (population) from which the sample was randomly chosen (maintaining the territorial spread). The surveys were conducted with 350 representatives of secondary school administrative teams, which, assuming the worst-case scenario, and a confidence level of  $95.5\%$ , had a margin of error of  $\pm 3.2\%$ .

As can be seen, in both cases the surveys were conducted at schools that, due to the sample size and profile of the respondents, make it possible to compare the results to show how the approach to and work done on cultural diversity at schools have evolved. However, a weakness of the comparison is that the same profile of professionals was not surveyed neither the same questions were asked. The former downside is due to the fact that the project promoting the second research established the profile of the interviewees; the use of different questions is argued by the changes in the terminology and the need to adapt the study to the school reality. However, the fact that the same professional profile has not been surveyed (which is due to the fact that the competitive project obtained indicated the profile of the surveyed person) being a limitation does not detract from the relevance of the results of the comparison given that there are no other sources to carry out the analysis of evolution (15 years) and given that the data obtained portrays the same school reality.

### *Instrument*

In both cases, the questionnaire included closed- and open-ended questions, as the latter make it possible to obtain broader and more detailed information (López-Roldán and Fachelli, 2015). The questionnaire, although similar, was not identical. The time elapsed between one survey and another led to a change in terminology in educational administration and among professionals, which meant that some questions had to be updated. However, the questions of both studies that we will

compare in this article maintain the same sense, although they have been formulated in a slightly different way.

The instruments used to collect the information, i.e. the questionnaires, were designed in a previous theoretical-empirical phase by the research team of the projects in which the surveys are located. From a theoretical point of view, in addition to extending the research carried out on the subject to an international and Spanish level, the discourses and policies of the Catalan educational administration were analysed. This, together with a phase of documentary interviews with representatives of the educational administration, made it possible to design the instruments. Prior to its application, the instrument in the three surveys was validated by three university experts in the fields of psychopedagogy and sociology. At the same time, a pre-test was carried out to verify the correct understanding, structure and order of the questions in the questionnaire.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

For the present analysis, the following thematic areas (and our objectives) were examined by asking respondents: 1) the school documents: how is each school's work on and for diversity explained in its main management documents; 2) the specific actions undertaken to address diversity and promote intercultural competence in all students; and 3) teacher training: whether it is sufficient and what training they would need to improve the actions being undertaken. Within each area, all questions asked in both studies were selected. In some cases, the questions were identical in the two studies. In others, although similar, they were worded slightly differently due to the need to adapt them to the target respondents and, in the second study, to the evolution of intercultural discourse.

With regard to the analysis, first we conducted a descriptive analysis of the data from both studies in order to answer the first research question. Then, to answer the second research question, the percentage of students of foreign nationality was used as the independent variable. The schools were then grouped into categories based on the level of students of foreign nationality. It should be noted that the analysis segments reflect the considerable increase in the presence of students of foreign nationality experienced by catalan schools in the interim between the two studies.

In accordance with the situation at the time, the 2000 study differentiated between three types of schools: those that had no students of foreign nationality (26%), those in which such students accounted for up to 5% of the total student body (14.5%), and those in which they accounted for more than 5% of the total student body (59.5%, primarily consisting of schools with a mean percentage of 5.22%,

indicating that even in those schools in which the percentage of such students was greater than 5%, it was not too much greater). In contrast, due to the increase in the number of students of foreign nationality in the intervening years between the two studies, the more recent study used a more extensive classification: schools that had no students of foreign nationality (6.43%); schools in which such students accounted for less than 5% of the total student body (23.97%); schools in which such students accounted for between 5% and 20% of the total student body (40.27%); and, finally, schools in which students of foreign nationality accounted for more than 20% of the total student body (29.33%). In this second study, the overall mean was 19.7%, substantially more than the mean of 5.22% from 2000/2001. In other words, in the 15-year period between the two studies, important changes took place in the education system and the profile of its students and families, which obviously conditioned the school profiles defined for the present analysis.

## RESULTS

### *School documents*

In Spain, the official curriculum—a term that began to be used on a regular basis with the enactment of the 1970 General Education Act—is defined as the set of objectives, content, pedagogical methods and assessment criteria that should guide the teaching for each level, stage, cycle, degree and modality of the education system (Departament d'Ensenyament, 1992). This curriculum is dictated by the central and regional governments, which establish what must be taught and recommend how it should be done. Beyond that, it is the schools that are responsible for developing the progressive levels of curricular specification, which involves progressive adaptations of the official curriculum, or of the official minimum teachings, to the educational needs of each school, group of students or specific pupil. As part of this process of defining the curriculum according to the specific needs of each school, educational institutions must make a series of decisions that are recorded in two main documents: the *projecto educativo de centro* (school educational project, SEP) and the *projecto curricular de centro* (school curricular project, SCP). In these documents, it must be included how the intercultural approach guide the educational actions, as well as more specific actions in this regard. Therefore, given that the SEP and the SCP are the documents of reference for teachers, the first level of analysis of this study focused on determining the degree of recognition and presence of intercultural guidelines in them<sup>5</sup>.

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5 In all three studies, the same question was asked: *To what extent do you think the need to address cultural*

According to the survey conducted in the 2000/2001 academic year, when asked how thoroughly the SCP explained the need to adequately address cultural diversity, 55.5% of the teachers responded “very” or “somewhat”, whilst 37.1% responded “not very” or “not at all. The mean score<sup>6</sup> showed that, overall, the responses fell between ‘not very’ and ‘somewhat’ (2.68). The study conducted fifteen years later yielded a mean score of 3.08, such that the mean response was ‘somewhat’. These data clearly point to an increase in the discourse on addressing diversity in the SCP, one of the framework documents for a school’s operation. However, attention should be drawn to the percentage of schools (20%) that, in the more recent study, did not explain the need to adequately address cultural diversity in their SCP at all or did so only ‘not very’ thoroughly. This figure rose to 42.5% at schools without students of foreign nationality in their classrooms and fell to 8.9% at schools where students from other cultures account for more than 20% of the student body. This suggests that one of the relationships identified in the study from the 2000/2001 academic year remains current 15 years later, even though the political and administrative discourse specifies that all schools must take cultural diversity into account (Departament d’Ensenyament, 1996), namely, the more students of foreign nationality at the school, the more explicitly the need to adequately address this diversity is explained. In other words, one of the key factors for the inclusion of the recognition of cultural diversity in school documents is the presence of students and families with this profile at the educational institution itself.

The second document analysed was the SEP. To this end, respondents were asked how thoroughly specific guidelines had been established in that document to work on cultural diversity. The responses in both studies yielded very similar percentages to those registered for the previous question. In the 2000/2001 study, the mean was 2.61; i.e., the mean response was between ‘not very’ and ‘somewhat’, as in the previous document, for which the mean was 2.68. Fifteen years on, the mean score had risen to 3.06 (i.e., the mean response was ‘somewhat’, as with the SCP). Therefore, with regard to the SEP and the establishment of guidelines to work on cultural diversity, a considerable increase was also found in ‘intercultural’ discourse over the 15-year period. However, and also again, in both the early 2000s

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*diversity has been made explicit in the schools curricular project?* and *To what extent do you think that criteria have been established in the centre’s educational project to address cultural diversity?* The answers, closed to the respondent and on a scale, were also identical: ‘very’, ‘somewhat’, ‘not very’ and ‘not at all’.

6 This mean value, which will be used in the presentation of the results, was obtained by converting the responses to a numerical value as follows: ‘very’ was assigned a value of 4, ‘somewhat’ a value of 3, ‘not very’ a value of 2, and ‘not at all’ a value of 1.

and the current context, there was a tendency for schools with a greater percentage of immigrant students to explain the intercultural discourse more thoroughly (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Explanation of the intercultural discourse in the school documents**

	FIRST STUDY: 2000/2001				SECOND STUDY: 2015/2016				
	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN NATIONALITY AT THE SCHOOL				PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN NATIONALITY AT THE SCHOOL				
	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	MORE THAN 5%	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	FROM 6% TO 20%	MORE THAN 20%
SCP									
Mean	2.68	2.05	2.61	2.90	3.08	2.63	2.84	3.09	3.40
Standard deviation	0.89	0.86	0.89	0.82	0.76	0.68	0.68	0.75	0.69
SEP									
Mean	2.61	2	2.57	2.82	3.06	2.64	2.83	3.04	3.40
Standard deviation	0.88	0.84	0.83	0.88	0.76	0.65	0.70	0.77	0.69

### *Specific actions*

The second level of analysis is that of the concrete actions taken in relation to cultural diversity<sup>7</sup>. With regard to the progress made, the first finding worth noting is the percentage increase of all actions, which timidly emerged at the turn of the century and today are part of a much larger number of schools (see, for example, curricular adaptations, tutoring sessions, intercultural workshops, and training/information sessions for families in Table 2). This means that there is greater social awareness (and awareness on the part of educators) of how we should respond to the needs of our time, which is characterised by increasingly global, plural and diverse societies. In this case, this sensitisation is followed by specific actions at schools, with an increasing number of primary and secondary schools carrying out some of the actions shown in Table 2. This increase in cultural diversity actions is also clear in the number of schools that do not carry out any actions, which

7 In the three studies, the question was the same and asked what actions/activities the schools implemented regarding cultural diversity. It was formulated as an open-question, so the interviewer did not suggest any answer and the informants' response was written down and subsequently coded and analysed.

fell from 51.2% in the 2000/2001 academic year to 16.3% in the study from the 2015/2016 academic year.

The second positive finding is that schools have diversified their actions, broadening the range of activities they carry out since the 2000/2001 academic year. At the turn of the century, teachers' responses reflected that schools were experiencing a growing influx of foreign students at different times throughout the academic year: most of the actions were aimed at informing families about the migratory phenomenon and its impacts, whilst at the same time seeking to prevent any tensions arising from it. Likewise, several schools cited curricular adaptation and tutoring sessions as priority actions. In fact, of the 14.2% of respondents who claimed to have made curricular adaptations, the responses showed that they had adapted school material, i.e. texts or resources (32.2%), added content related to the students' cultures of origin (28.8%), diversified levels to facilitate learning (13.6%), provided individual tutoring sessions to support the student's development (13.6%) and adapted the content linguistically, usually by translating certain materials (13.1%).

**Table 2. Percentage of centres that implement actions to work on cultural diversity (total and differentiating the centres according to the number of students of foreign nationality)**

	FIRST STUDY: 2000/2001 (ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CULTURAL DIVERSITY)				SECOND STUDY: 2015/2016 (ACTIONS TO WORK ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY)				
	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN NATIONALITY AT THE SCHOOL				PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN NATIONALITY AT THE SCHOOL				
	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	MORE THAN 5%	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	FROM 6% TO 20%	MORE THAN 20%
None; there is no cultural diversity	40.8	75	49.2	21.7	16.3	51.1	27.4	9.9	6.4
None; it is not necessary to do anything	10.4	3.1	11.5	10.5	-	-	-	-	-
Curricular adaptations	14.2	1.6	8.2	25.2	54.8	27.6	48	65.6	72
Tutoring sessions	4.9	4.7	4.4	5.6	16.4	12.8	17.7	19.4	12.3
Intercultural workshops	2.6	-	2.1	3.8	29.7	10.6	22.9	32.7	36.3
One-off experiences on the culture of origin	15	9.4	13.8	17.8	-	-	-	-	-

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN CATALONIA (SPAIN)

	FIRST STUDY: 2000/2001 (ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CULTURAL DIVERSITY)				SECOND STUDY: 2015/2016 (ACTIONS TO WORK ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY)				
	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN NATIONALITY AT THE SCHOOL				PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN NATIONALITY AT THE SCHOOL				
	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	MORE THAN 5%	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	FROM 6% TO 20%	MORE THAN 20%
Sessions on tolerance	10.5	7.8	11	10.5	-	-	-	-	-
Activities with the foreign families	0.3	-	0.3	0.3	4.5	-	-	4.1	9.8
Training and information sessions for families	4.2	-	1.8	8.4	10.4	4.3	5.1	11.6	14.7
Linguistic adaptation/ Language support	3	1.6	2.1	4.5	2.5	2.1	1.1	3.1	2.9
School projects	-	-	-	-	13	12.8	13.8	12.6	12.8
Organisation of work groups	-	-	-	-	6.0	-	1.7	4.8	13.2
Workshops on human rights	-	-	-	-	4.2	-	5.1	4.1	4.9
Adaptation of menus	-	-	-	-	15.3	-	9.1	16.0	23.5
Newcomer support classrooms	-	-	-	-	10.7	6.4	4.6	10.2	17.6
Newcomer support plan	-	-	-	-	4.5	-	4.0	5.8	3.9
Specific communication actions	-	-	-	-	9.6	4.3	4.6	9.5	14.7
Classes on language of origin	-	-	-	-	4.4	-	4.0	3.4	4.4
Teacher training	-	-	-	-	2.9	2.1	2.9	3.1	2.9
Academic support	-	-	-	-	2.6	-	-	2.0	6.4
Mediation	-	-	-	-	2.2	2.1	1.7	1.4	3.4
Other	5.3	-	3.6	8.7	5.5	4.3	4.6	4.1	8.8

In the more recent study, all of these actions continued to be implemented and many more were added, primarily aimed at meeting the needs of students of foreign nationality (adaptation of menus, newcomer support classrooms, newcomer support plan, specific communication actions with foreign families, classes on native languages and academic support). These data suggest that educational institu-

tions have not yet grasped the philosophy of intercultural education, as they have diversified their actions but in the sense of taking measures primarily for the integration and adaptation of the culturally different (as opposed to actions to foster intercultural competence in all students). However, a deeper analysis shows that schools have significantly increased their curricular adaptations (from 14.2% in the 2000/2001 academic year to 54.8% in the 2015/2016 academic year), a very important action for the incorporation of interculturalism across all the school's educational approaches. Furthermore, given the importance of making intercultural education a cross-cutting issue in the daily work of all educational institutions, the 2015/2016 study specifically asked about the degree to which schools had incorporated interculturalism in the different curricular areas.

In all, 68.5% of the head teachers and administrators said that intercultural discourse had been 'very' or 'somewhat' thoroughly incorporated throughout the curriculum, whilst 28.1% considered that it had been 'not very' thoroughly or 'not at all' incorporated across all the different areas, with responses varying significantly depending on the number of foreign students at the school. Thus, at schools without students of foreign nationality, the mean score was 2.59 (between 'not very' and 'somewhat'), whilst at those in which immigrants account for more than 20% of the student body, the mean score was 3.22 (between 'somewhat' and 'very'). In other words, even though the more recent surveys reveal a growing tendency by schools to incorporate the intercultural question across all areas of their everyday work, the relationship between this attitude and the percentage of immigrant students is quite clear. It suggests that the entire educational community has not yet been convinced that all schools should incorporate this educational approach. This relationship can also be seen in many of the activities and actions schools carry out to foster intercultural competence in students (see, for example, in Table 2, curricular adaptations, intercultural workshops or organisation of work groups).

### *Teacher training*

Finally, our empirical study enabled us to learn more about teacher training on this subject in Catalonia<sup>8</sup>. In the 2000/2001 academic year, 89.7% of the respondents had not received any specific training on cultural diversity as part of their initial

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8 The questions about teacher training was a little different in the two projects since, as explained before, the first study (2000) was aimed at teachers whilst the second (2015/2016) took the members of the schools' management team as the study population. Nevertheless, both studies asked whether teachers have sufficient training to deal with and work with cultural diversity.

education. These results were largely due to the situation at the time, as the discourse on interculturalism in education policies was still new and, in the 1990s, there was no specific legislation to support training in this field (Jordán, 1995). Nevertheless, this lack of initial training was related to the age of the respondent: amongst those under the age of 30, only 68% reported not having received any initial training, which suggests that universities had begun to include training on this subject in their offers. An analysis of teachers' continuing training showed that 63.9% of the respondents had not had any training in cultural diversity. These responses were likewise mediated by age, although in this case in the opposite direction: 73% of the youngest respondents gave negative responses compared to 57% of those over the age of 50. These figures again point to an encouraging finding: a concern amongst practicing teachers to pursue training on the subject. This concern was especially strong amongst teachers who taught at schools with higher percentages of students of foreign nationality, the group to have taken the most courses on the topic. Therefore, teachers' professional circumstances were a decisive factor in the choice to pursue continuing education on interculturalism and diversity management in the classroom.

As for the empirical results of the second study (2015/2016), the data paint an only partially improved picture. The majority of head teachers and members of the school administrative teams (75.2%) consider that teachers have sufficient training to address and work on cultural diversity, although this perception is not as strong at schools with higher percentages of foreign students (76.5% of respondents at schools where foreign students account for more than 20% of the student body or 69.4% at schools where they account for between 6 and 20% compared to 89.4% at schools with fewer or no foreign students). However, when asked about the continuing education they received, 78.5% of the respondents said that, in the last two academic years, none of the teachers at their school had had continuing education on the subject, suggesting it is not perceived as a priority, at least by some. As in the study conducted 15 years earlier, those practicing teachers who did pursue continuing education on cultural diversity worked at schools with high percentages of foreign students (25% at schools where foreign students accounted for more than 20% of the student body compared to 9.7% at schools where they accounted for less than 5%). These data suggest that, although the differences are minor, teachers who work at multicultural schools continue to seek out more training on the subject in order to improve their educational activities in this regard.

In both studies, respondents were also asked what training they considered necessary to improve the work done at the school with regard to cultural diversity (Table 3). The first important finding was that most of the training requests made

by teachers in the 2000/2001 academic year continue to be made today. However, whilst the study at the turn of the century linked the type of training requested to the contextual logic –start of the intercultural phenomenon in Catalonia and, therefore, requests for training, above all, to provide an educational response to the cultural diversity in the classroom– the recent study can also point to the current context – implementation of the interculturalism discourse at the policy level and, increasingly, in the classroom – to explain the study’s findings. This is because, in addition to requesting training on addressing diversity, today’s administrative teams are also requesting training on social, communicative and attitudinal skills, which are essential to equip educators with the necessary competences to carry out a true intercultural education (Council of Europe, 2014; Deardorff, 2006; UNESCO, 2013). Another finding that shows the progress made on intercultural education is the decrease in requests in the current study. Whilst at the turn of the century, the most frequently requested types of training were on knowledge of different cultures (60.7%), adapting curricula (37.6%) and conflict resolution strategies (23.8%), in the recent study these percentages had fallen dramatically, to 29.9%, 12.2% and 18.6%, respectively. However, it should be noted that 24% of the respondents in the recent study said that no training was needed because there is no diversity at their school, testament to the lingering presence of an erroneous understanding of the concept that ties intercultural education to the presence of students of foreign origin in the classroom.

**Table 3. Training requested to improve work on cultural diversity**

	FIRST STUDY: 2000/2001				SECOND STUDY: 2015/2016				
	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN AT THE SCHOOL				PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN AT THE SCHOOL				
	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	MORE THAN 5%	TOTAL	NONE	UP TO 5%	FROM 6% TO 20%	MORE THAN 20%
A good theory/general training on cultural diversity	16.2	16.4	16.5	15.9	17.3	4.3	14.9	17.7	22.5
Knowledge of cultures of origin of families and students	60.7	78.7	63.1	52.8	29.9	14.9	23.4	33.7	33.8
Adaptation of the curriculum	37.6	60.7	38.1	31.3	12.2	6.4	8.0	14.6	10.3
Conflict resolution strategies	23.8	32.8	23	22.8	18.6	12.8	13.7	20.1	21.6
Strategies to improve intercultural communication	8.5	6.6	7.4	10.6	9.5	2.1	8.0	8.8	13.2
Models/strategies for action and integration	17.6	4.9	17	21.5	13.0	6.4	16.0	10.9	14.7
Languages of origin of the families and students	4.9	8.2	5.1	3.7	-	-	-	-	-
Work on emotions	-	-	-	-	5.2	4.3	2.3	5.4	7.4
Improvement of attitudes	-	-	-	-	4.8	4.3	2.9	6.1	4.9
Promotion of coexistence	-	-	-	-	4.2	-	3.4	3.4	7.4
Family involvement	-	-	-	-	2.5	-	-	2.7	4.9

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In Catalonia, the arrival of foreign immigrants in the early 1990s led, in general, to the first integration policies and, in particular, the first policies for the incorporation of foreign students into schools. These policies focused on supporting these types of students and their families. In addition, a discourse of working on cultural diversity was launched with the students as a whole, based on an intercultural education perspective. This diversity management model was gradually incorporated

until it was subordinated within the discourse and education policies to the goal of social cohesion (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2009). It was in this changing context that the present study was conducted, with the aim of analysing the evolution of work on cultural diversity at compulsory education institutions (primary and secondary schools) in the autonomous region of Catalonia (in Spain). Specifically, the text presented here compares two studies conducted in Catalonia separated by a period of 15 years.

The first study, conducted in the 2000/2001 academic year, took place in a context characterised by the recent incorporation of intercultural discourse into immigration and education policy, in part as a result of the initial massive incorporation into the education system of a large number of students of foreign nationality, a trend that continued and even grew more pronounced throughout the 2000s. Fifteen years on, during which the discourse on interculturalism has become increasingly stronger (Leiva, 2017), we conducted the second study using the same methodological approach, in order to identify what steps have been taken and what still remains to be done for Catalonia to have a truly intercultural education system.

The documents specifying the curricula to be used for all the schools' operations reflect the growing recognition of cultural diversity at schools in Catalonia, although there are still educational institutions that do not include issues related to cultural diversity in these framework documents. Likewise, schools with little or no students of foreign nationality make the fewest references to these issues in their documents, as they consider it an educational issue that 'does not concern them' (even though the education administration guidelines state that it should be incorporated by everyone). When the focus shifts from discourses to concrete actions, given the tendency observed in the documentary analysis, it is not surprising that: 1) the actions schools take to work on cultural diversity have increased in both quantity and variety; and 2) in both contexts there was a relationship between these actions and the number of students of foreign nationality at the school. Therefore, this points to a misapprehension by some professionals that work on cultural diversity at schools and in the classroom is only necessary at schools with high percentages of the above-mentioned student profile, based on the mistaken assumption that interculturalism is a subject related to foreign students. This reductionist approach has also been identified in other studies, in both Spain (Díez, 2014; Leiva, 2017) and other countries (Bleszynska, 2008; Forrest *et al.*, 2016; Lee-man and Reid, 2006; Palaiologou and Faas, 2012).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, this conception was justified by the Catalan context itself –the novelty of the intercultural discourse, the vestiges of the integrationist model, the compensatory policies still in place, and the migratory boom

underway. However, today there is no strong rationale for it beyond an insufficient or inefficient application of intercultural discourse to education policy and, thus, to primary and secondary schools (Bouchard, 2011). Furthermore, the lack of initial and continuing education in this field, identified in many national studies (Peñalva and Soriano, 2010; Santos Rego, Cernadas-Ríos and Lorenzo Moledo, 2014), can contribute to the mistaken notion that interculturalism consists solely in responding to foreign students. In this regard, although Catalan universities offer a larger number of modules related to cultural diversity than those of other Spanish regions (García López, 2002), the subjects related to diversity, immigration and interculturalism are rarely part of the compulsory content (Peñalva and Soriano, 2010). Thus, critical teacher-training reforms should be implemented to ensure that all future teachers have a greater intercultural orientation (Coronel and Gómez-Hurtado, 2015).

To sum up, the evolution of the work on cultural diversity at schools in Catalonia paints a bittersweet picture. On one hand, the awareness and implementation of practices to address and work on cultural diversity has evolved satisfactorily in keeping with the guidelines of the education authorities, which, for 15 years, have embraced intercultural discourse in their policies. On the other, there remains the challenge of getting all education institutions, regardless of the sociocultural characteristics of their students and families, to carry out practices and actions to foster social cohesion, dialogue between cultures, and, in short, the development of the intercultural competence (Council of Europe, 2014; Dearnorff, 2006). Therefore, it is essential to continue emphasising the concept of ‘interculturalism’ and the need for educators to understand that working on diversity is necessary at all schools and that the ultimate goal is to prepare students to coexist in a culturally diverse society. Today, after 20 years of intercultural discourse in Catalonia, educators continue to emphasise (at both the discursive level and in terms of teaching practice) actions mainly targeted at culturally diverse groups, saddled by the philosophy of previous policies and strategies (compensatory education measures) and in a way that underscores the inability of the system (social, political, etc.) to establish the philosophy of the intercultural model at educational institutions. All educational change takes time, on that we can agree (Fullan, 2001). However, how much longer will it take for us to understand that intercultural education is much more than an issue related to the children of foreign students?

Fecha de recepción del original: 30 de mayo 2019

Fecha de aceptación de la versión definitiva: 20 de enero 2020

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