

THE EDUCATIVE POWER OF IMMIGRANT ASSOCIATIONS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

*[El poder educativo de las asociaciones de inmigrantes en las
escuelas multiculturales]*

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Abstract

With this qualitative research we are trying to know the collaborative capacity and contributions that Immigrant Associations could do to the schools that form part of a social context characterised by the recent and massive arrival of immigrants of Maghrebian, Sub-Sahara, South America, European Union, and East Europe origin. The sample, constituted by 55 immigrants that are members of Immigrant Associations, 16 teachers and 16 directors of schools, makes us to think about the role the Immigrant Associations could play in the education centres. The information, coming out from immigrants and teachers shows up that the participation of associations, besides to do a good intercultural work and favour the identity signs of new students, empower the school influence of immigrant children. Furthermore, this participation would support the continuity between the school and the student families; it also constitutes a way of working with children and young people in communities of learning.

Keywords

Immigrant Associations, Intercultural Education, Intercultural Mediation, Empowerment, communities of learning.

Resumen

Con esta investigación cualitativa pretendemos dar a conocer la capacidad colaborativa y las aportaciones que pueden realizar las asociaciones de inmigrantes a las escuelas que forman parte de un contexto social caracterizado por la llegada reciente y masiva de inmigrantes de orígenes Magrebí, África Subsahariana, Sudamérica, Unión Europea y Europa del Este. La muestra constituida por 55 inmigrantes miembros de asociaciones de inmigrantes y 16 profesores y 16 directores de centros educativos, nos permite comprender el papel que pueden jugar las asociaciones de inmigrantes en los centros educativos. Los datos obtenidos a partir de los propios inmigrantes y profesores, ponen de manifiesto que la participación de las asociaciones, además de realizar una buena labor de mediación intercultural y favorecer las señas identitarias de los nuevos escolares, potencia el “poder” escolar y social de niños y jóvenes inmigrantes. Además, esta participación favorece la continuidad entre centro educativo y familias, y constituye una forma de poder trabajar con los niños y jóvenes en comunidades de aprendizaje.

Descriptores

Asociaciones de inmigrantes, educación intercultural, mediación intercultural, empoderamiento, comunidades de aprendizaje.

In postmodern society, the recent waves of immigrants and emigrants do not constitute a new phenomenon. What is new, however, is the magnitude and strategies of adaptation

which have been employed to address such migrations. In recent times, approximately 200 million people live outside of their countries of origin. It is as if all the populations of

the world have been rearranged, implying that people of various cultures and societies are sharing the same space and time (Soriano, 2004).

With the arrival of people of distinct cultural backgrounds to Spain, a country which has historically been a country of emigration, the Spanish people have witnessed a demographic transformation which will hold profound implications for the future of the country (Soriano, 2006).

The 1970's mark an important point in the history of Spanish migration: the number of Spaniards which emigrated to work in other nations decreased substantially, while the number of foreigners which entered Spain seeking work and a better life has increased. In 1975, Spain was host to 165,000 foreign residents. In 1992, the population of immigrants grew to 415,000. By the end of December 2007, the register of documented immigrants had exploded to 3, 979, 014 (Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, 2008). According to the Secretary of Immigration and Emigration (Secretaría de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración), the number of foreigners again grew to 4,473,499 by December 31, 2008.

With this expansion of the immigrant population, Spanish society has become more and more pluralistic as well. Habermas (1999: 94, 96) highlights the fact that there is daily evidence in Spain that the country is shifting away from the model of a culturally homogeneous society. There has been an increase in the multiplicity of lifestyles, ethnic groups, and religious faiths among other changes. Citizens too are experiencing the useful value of their rights in the form of social security and a mutual recognition of different forms of cultural practices with their government. Such rights for immigrated citizens have granted them new abilities of self-organization (Mezzana, 2003). As a result, new citizen institutions and immigrant associations have arisen as well as.

Immigrant Associations created by immigrants form a space of solidarity which helps strengthen the cultural identity between the immigrant's country of origin and the adopted one (Sipi, 2000). In these spaces, immigrants interchange their experiences within the new circles of life they have begun. This requires them as well to reestablish contact with their country of origin through others around them. Within the context of these associations, mediation and dialogue is produced between immigrants.

Generally, Associations of immigrants are characterized by the following traits. There is

- A constructed space in which immigrants can expand their culture, systems and values. This structure favors the spread of knowledge, that which is necessary to overcome social prejudices (Fernández et al., 2001).
- A supported affirmation of their identities and communities. This in turn favors the formation of collective identities, the human coexistence and satisfies the need of being together in a place where immigrants feel isolated (Pérez y López, 2003).
- An exhibition of an active citizenry for bettering the quality of their lives in the host nation (González, 2005).

Associations of immigrants also have social and educative functions (González, 2005). Within them, the values of solidarity, philanthropy and tolerance are transmitted. These groupings also provide a space from which to draw awareness and to impact public opinion about the social problems of immigrants. They also increase the sensitivity of other citizens to these problems.

Since 1994, this investigative group has conducted research in schools with both native and immigrant student enrollment. As the most representative research conducted in its first 10 years,¹ the research conducted in 1994 analyzed the educational situation of Maghreb and sub-Saharan school-children in the west

of Almeria province. Also, in 1998, an European project was carried out between 3 countries² and worked with primary school teachers designing intervention strategies and materials for inter-cultural education.

During the academic year of 2001-2002, within a research project of greater scope, this research analyzed education and scholarship of children and immigrant youth in Andalusia³. In 2004, this research began a partnership in conjunction with Associations of Senegalese immigrants in Almeria at their request. In the beginning, our research maintained meetings with seven such groups in Senegal. From these meetings, a research project emerged which studies the collective educational situation in Andalusia⁴. The approach by these Associations allowed the researchers to know that the representative persons of these associations have well-educated backgrounds. Of these people, many have enrolled in university studies in their own places of origin. Moreover, Spanish schools are bringing a significant number of children from different backgrounds (North Africans, South Africans, South Americans, East Europeans, and Asians). In the research conducted up until this point, teachers have complained of not knowing the culture of new students, their forms of life, their language, and their social circles (Soriano, 1998, 2003, 2008a). This shows the distance which schools have with new families (Soriano, 2007, 2008b).

The knowledge that we have of these Associations of Immigrants and of the situation of schools today in Spain invites the study of a possible encounter between the Associations and schools in order that cooperation be established between them.

A review of scientific literature does not show that the collaborative work between the Associations of Immigrants and schools has been carried out. This forces us to reflect on how we can bring to fruition this approach in a

way that they could collaborate and also if the Associations and teachers would be willing to do it. The objective of this study is to know and understand from the perspective of Immigrant Associations and teachers what are the reasons that justify the participation of immigrant groups in multi-cultural education centers and how one can establish cooperation between them and teachers.

The researchers understand that the collaboration of those with the Immigrant Associations and school helps to engage a inter-cultural dialogue within the environment of the immigrant youth and also constitutes a way of empowering the immigrant students in a new society.

Integrated and critical perspective on education

We have to understand education as a collective project in a social context, reflexive and intentional, that has its sight set on a better future for students of all educational levels and cultural origin. It is therefore necessary to extend the concept of education that is currently accepted and seek solutions that meet the educational needs of the entire population either indigenous or from other ethnic groups and cultures (Soriano, 2005).

The social capital available for students, their cultural background and history and educational settings that serve them, along with socioeconomic status are crucial factors in the academic performance of different students in school (Portes, 1999). Furthermore, we know that a relationship between family and school is positive, because it improves the academic success of students. Therefore, the unification of family values and expectations of the teaching staff is important (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). But the perceptions of parents on how the school prepares their children vary by race, ethnicity and social group (Desimore, 1999). In the school of the host country, where families often do not visit it because they spend very much time at work and are not familiar with the language needed to communicate with the teaching staff, the Aso-

ciaciones de Inmigrantes (Immigrant Associations) can exercise a rapprochement between school and family.

Greene (1986) defined education as comprehension oriented toward empowering people in order to spark a change within them, to think critically and creatively, to have an interest in learning and to give meaning to their lives in the world. He thinks that knowledge is essential in obtaining power.

Cummins (1986) argues that students can be “empowered” or “incapacitated” by the teaching staff and the schools that reflect only the dominant culture in society. A study conducted with black students concluded that education empowers students if the language and culture of the given students are included, if the community participates in a collaborative manner, and if the teaching is geared towards reciprocal interaction.

Sleeter (1991) claims that an education that promotes the empowerment of the student must work with them and their community in order to build upon what those students have already given to the school. Never must we confuse education of those most disadvantaged members of school with compensatory education. Boys, girls and young immigrants that attend school do not need to compensate for anything. They bring to school a culture that is not scholarly, yet they possess a collection of knowledge outside of school – motivations, goals, strategies of learning, belongings and personal identities – which direct their growth. As Sleeter (1991) says, they do not need charitable help but the school must keep in mind their skills and build a person from what they already are. As Shor and Freire (1987) indicate, the knowledge that gives power is situated within and interacts with the language and culture of the students.

We believe that the collaboration with schools of these Immigrant Associations which understand and represent the culture of young immigrants makes teachers see the immigrant as a member of a culture with a background on which we must begin constructing

significant meaning and knowledge. In this manner, the collaborative effort acts with the student in two ways: in developing skills and abilities in order to help him to act with efficiency (Ashcroft, 1987), as well as encouraging critical learning of knowledge existing outside of his immediate experiences.

Aside from everything above, in the new modern context of information society, marked by globalization and migratory movements, we consider necessary that learning be an intrinsically social process. We agree with Vila (2004) that in order for learning have a place in school, it should achieve its work continuously with other educative agents. And not only this, school should be a backbone structure which focuses with other educative agents such as the family, communication media, locality, neighborhood, associations, places of leisure, etc.

It is desirable that in multicultural contexts schools adapt into authentic communities of learning which establish a genuine correlation between the classroom, the home, the nearest community and the information stream coming from internet and other mass communication media. The school should cease to be monolithic and anchored in time and be coherent with the social reality in which we live.

Methodology

The context of the investigation

This investigation was carried out in the Almería capital and province. Almerian schools have educated immigrant students since 1990, when the first recent arrivals of Moroccan immigrants occurred. With the coming of immigrant families of different backgrounds, Almerian schools have taught students of Maghreb, sub-Saharan African, South America, and of eastern, northern, and central Europe. In this context, we encounter schools for primary and secondary education with immigrant student numbers exceeding 60% of enrollment.

Objectives and participants of the study

As we have noted in the introduction, referring to the earlier research, teachers complain of an ignorance of other cultures, languages, and of the lack of integration in many recently immigrated students. In addition to this, we consider the results found in the PISA report concerning the academic performance of immigrant students and, in these circumstances, we understand that the collaborative work between schools and Immigrant Associations could contribute toward education improvement.

The main objective of this study is to recognize and understand from the perspective of Immigrant Associations and teachers the reasons that justify the participation of Immigrant Associations in multicultural educative centers and how one can establish cooperation between them and teachers.

To reach this grand objective, we have come to realize that the most adequate methodology is qualitative. This is a descriptive research of comprehensive character from the viewpoint of 62 immigrant members of 16 Associations, 16 teachers, and 16 directors of infant, primary and secondary schools triangulating the results.

The subjects of this research are members of the Associations of Immigrants, located in the city of Almeria and the western and eastern regions of Almeria province, as well as teachers of schools with immigrant students and with an immigrant association nearby.

The Associations of Immigrants with which we struck up relations are recognized by the Ministry of Justice and have enjoyed public subsidies that allow them to be active.

The research is conducted in three phases:

1st Phase: The perspective of the Immigrant Associations:

Specific objective

- To know, from the standpoint of immigrant associations, the reasons for their participation in educational centers and how they are prepared to collaborate.

Participants in the study

The subjects of this phase were 55 immigrants belonging to 16 Associations of Immigrants, located in the city of Almeria as well as its northern and western regions of the province. These Associations are registered with the Ministry of Justice and have enjoyed public subsidies that allow them to be active. Of the 55 participants, 48 are interviewees and 7 form part of a discussion group.

- 48 immigrants have been informants through interviews. 3 people were interviewed from each association. The 16 Immigrant Associations who have participated in the interviews are the following:

3 Associations of Moroccan immigrants.

1 association of Malaysian immigrants

2 associations of Senegalese immigrants

1 association of Guinea-Bissauan immigrants

1 association of immigrants from Guinea Conakry

1 association of Ghanaian immigrants

2 associations of Russian immigrants

1 association of Mauritanian immigrants

1 association of Pakistani immigrants

1 association composed of immigrants of varying nationalities

A federation of immigrant associations

An association of immigrants proceeding from African decent

7 immigrant participants in the discussion group. A representative of each of the following Associations: Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Russia, Morocco, Moroccan women, and the "Asociación de trabajadores de inmigrantes marroquíes (ATIME)."

2nd phase: The perspective of teachers

Specific objectives

- To understand from the perspective of teachers the reasons that justify the participation of Immigrant Associations in schools.

- To identify those aspects of the curriculum which are best suited for immigrant associations to participate to maximize integration and school success.
- To assess the value of collaborative efforts of Immigrant Associations with the school in order to serve the children and young immigrants.

Participants in the study

The educative sources of this phase are comprised of 16 school directors and 16 teachers of infant, primary, and secondary schools. Their schools are located in zones of high immigration and feature in each local area at least one Immigrant Association.

3rd Phase: The triangulation of both perspectives

Specific objective

- To contrast the obtained information of the Immigrant Associations, educators, and of the school directors

Techniques of collecting data and data analysis

The specified objectives in the phases of the study were developed through conducting in-depth interviews with representatives of the Immigrant Associations, educators, and school directors. After completing the interviews, we brought about a group of discussion with immigrants belonging to Associations.

Before performing interviews, we visited and contacted with each of the Associations that had accepted to participate in the study and established contact with participants of the schools.

There were two guideline scripts of open-ended questions for the Associations and the educators with similar core content. The application of the interviews was carried out over three sessions:

- In the first session, we would attempt to recover all relevant information using the guideline script of questions.

- In the second session, we identified doubts and filled gaps of information that we had encountered during the transcription of interviews in the first session.

- In the third and most important session, from our point of view, we read back to the interviewees our diverse findings of the first two sessions in order that they could correct their own errors. In this manner, we validated all the collected information.

Once the information derived from the in-depth interviews was analyzed, a discussion group was organized. The use of this technique as pertaining to data collection is that it inherently validated the various opinions and conclusions extracted from the interviews. In the group of discussion, there were 7 representatives of the Immigrant Associations.

The interviews and the group of discussion were recorded, transcribed, categorized, and codified. The analysis of data was processed with the qualitative data analytical program AQUAD 6.0.

Finally, the researchers contrasted the findings of the data recovery from the Immigrant Associations against the findings of data from the educators and from the school directors.

The study met the criteria of scientific rigor of a qualitative investigation. Its credibility remains evident by the implemented strategy of interviewing a source and returning the written transcript to that source in order that they correct errors. Additionally, the triangulation of information also lends to the credibility of the study. Transferability has been achieved through theoretic demonstration and by the acquisition of abundant information. The strategies of triangulation and the features of low subjectivity, as is the case with written transcript, allow us to reach information verification.

In the two following tables appear the systems of categories used in the interviews and discussion group brought about with the Im-

migrant Associations, with the teachers and with the school directors.

Table 1. System of categories of the reasons justifying the participation of the immigrant associations in education centers.

Agents of the educative community	Teachers Immigrants families Native families Immigrant students Native students
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Table 2. System of categories of the participation proposals of the Immigrant Associations in education centers.

Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intercultural activities with native parents - Intercultural activities with immigrant parents - Association of immigrant parents - Tutoring activities - Orientation department - Cross-cutting studies - Curriculum documents 	
Educative Agents	Immigrant Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcoming activates - Mediation between immigrant student and teachers - Immigrant integration
	Native Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acceptance of the immigrants - Understanding of other cultures - Cultural coexistence - Action proposals
	Immigrant Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing of attitudes toward the education system - Advising - Mediation between the center and families
	Native Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing of attitudes - Encouragement of coexistence - Approaching immigrant families
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of cultural resources - Education of the other cultures - Mediation with immigrant parents - Knowing the characteristics of the immigrant

Results

The results we show were produced from the triangulation as methodology of information of the in-depth interviews, the discussion group conducted with the Immigrant Associations and, finally, the in-depth interviews conducted with the teachers.

For better comprehension, we have organized the results in the aspects that we have considered fundamental for responding to our research objectives.

What are some of the reasons that justify the participation of Immigrant Associations in education centers? (From the point of view of the Associations themselves)

The principal reasons cited by our sources and representatives of the Immigrant Associations to justify their presence in education centers focused on four broad agents of action: with the teachers, with the immigrant and native families, with the immigrant students, and with the native students.

Teachers

In the content analysis of the interviewed immigrants, a pattern appeared which cited the belief that many teachers present resistance in favor of multiculturalism in the classroom and demonstrate a lack of motivation to integrate the immigrant student. They complained about the absence of activities in the classroom which foster equality, about the labeling of the "other" (one whom the other children consider different), and about the lack of respect for cultural differences. The immigrants also made reference to the need for helpful activities organized for the educative community outside of school day hours. An interviewee from an association of Senegalese immigrants expressed the following: "...parents are fundamental and after the teachers those that don't make an effort to put to work in pedagogic form the native and immigrants students on the same plane, that's to say, in activities that encourage equality, I don't know what to say to this but you get the picture..." (AIS2)⁵. For these reasons, they propose collaboration with the teachers to help in the understanding of the culture that configures part of the identification of immigrant students. One such example is providing the teachers with materials and resources favoring multiculturalism in schools and doing work with mediating between families and students.

Families of the immigrant students

Throughout the study, the researchers appreciated that the interviewees admitted openly that the challenge of integrating the student immigrant does not fall only upon the teachers of the Educative Institution but also on the immigrant families due to their low participation in schools. A representative from an Association of Pakistani immigrants explained it this way: "They (students) are not integrated educationally. Yet it is also the fault of the parents for not holding an interest in the education of their children. I think that from the associations we should

⁵ AIS2, Second immigrant interviewed of Senegal Association

press upon parents the importance of the education of their children" (AIP1)⁶. Immigrants understand their action with teachers helps to involve immigrant families in the educative process of their sons and daughters. Moreover, an important role that they can fulfill is establishing ties that bind families and education centers.

Families of native students

Immigrant associations also highlight the crucial role that families of native students play in the transmission of discriminatory conduct and stereotyping toward immigrants. In light of this, it is necessary to design actions that permit the approach of native students to the immigrant students. A member of a Russian immigrant association said, "I think that it is not just racism because children are too young to comprehend and carry it out. I think that the problem lies within families, which instill negative attitudes toward other children" (AIR3)⁷. The Associations propose intervening with native families through mediation in order to provoke changes in the attitudes toward the "other". In this manner, schools can provide a healthy education that is devoid of prejudice.

The immigrant and the native students

Finally, the interviewed representatives of the Immigrant Associations spoke of the existence of problems between immigrant and native students. These problems concern above all coexistence due to cultural shocks between the two groups and even between immigrants themselves, which proceed from different countries and cultures. A Moroccan immigrant had the following to say: "the interaction between natives and us is very important. It is essential to do the impossible in order that this interaction is produced. It is the best form of understanding ourselves and shedding stereotypes; for example, the other day a boy came here and told me that he

⁶ AIP1, First immigrant interviewed of Pakistan Association

⁷ AIR3, third interviewed belonging to a Russian association

could not wait to see a Moroccan woman operating a computer" (AIM2)⁸. The Associations propose intervening with native students through awareness campaigns and helping teachers in the design of intercultural activities. They view their presence in the school as vital because they understand the culture of the young immigrant and can intervene in order to solve cultural conflicts. On the other hand, they understand that their presence in education centers favors the recognition of their cultural group before the eyes of student immigrants.

What are the reasons that justify the participation of Immigrant Associations within schools? The teachers' perspective

The interviewed teachers generally agreed in their opinions of the representatives of the Immigrant Associations. The reasons that justified the participation of the Immigrant Associations in schools have been classified in conjunction with the problems encountered by the education system with the following agents of the educative community: immigrant student, native student, families of immigrant students, families of native students and the teachers collective. This section complements the following section in which the teachers convened to bring about the participation of Immigrant Associations within schools.

Immigrant students

The teaching staff says that the main problem they face is a lack of knowledge of the native tongue of the majority of immigrant students that come to their classes, which is only exacerbated by the lack of intercultural mediators that would facilitate communication between them and the immigrant students. They also refer to the lack of integration between the immigrant students and those who are native speakers, the low Spanish fluency rate, and the scholastic lag with which they enter the school, as one teacher tells us, "*The children are prejudiced against the Moroccan chil-*

dren. They are more racist and it is much more difficult for younger children because there is not much contact with immigrants and other cultures aside from the cross-cultural workshops. With more exposure to immigrants the children would see that each immigrant and his/her culture have their own unique things, music and dances ... We need specialists who would help us as intercultural mediators ..." (P5)⁹

Native students

For the teachers the fundamental obstacle that they face with the native students is that there is a lack of true coexistence with immigrant students, often due to an ignorance of foreign cultures that leads to certain attitudes toward and stereotypes of the immigrant students. One professor said, in reference to the Immigrant Associations, "*Of course they have to participate in the educational centers in order for the native students to see an immigrant as a person with value instead of just seeing him/her as an immigrant. I mean, an immigrant can live in Spain for 15 years and he/she will always be an immigrant. I think that is a problem with Spanish society*" (P8).

Families of immigrant students

The low interest that immigrant families seem to have in the education that their children are receiving and their nonexistent participation in it is the biggest problem that teachers face regarding the families of immigrant students. The director of one school tells us, "*They don't care, the only thing that matters is that their children attend school. I don't know if it's a matter of adjustment, but when the parents are asked to come to school because there is a problem involving their student, we have difficulty even finding them, and when we do they seem to show interest, but the situation does not improve*" (D1)¹⁰.

Another problem related to the above is the lack of motivation from the parents. They believe that it is not necessary for their chil-

⁸ second interviewed of a Moroccan association

dren to continue studies that are not obligatory. This problem is exacerbated with parents of Moroccan origin who refuse non-obligatory education that is available for their daughters.

Families of native students

The teachers tell us that the more latent barriers with the families of native students are the negative attitudes that they have toward their children sharing an educational center with immigrant students and the null coexistence between natives and immigrants outside of the educational center. Furthermore, there is a significant disconnect with the young immigrant culture. So says a director:

"... native parents see that when their sons and daughters are with immigrants, there are no negative reverberations on their educative development. These parents should participate more, participate in order that the native population will realize that other worlds exist and that one world of coexistence is possible. They should break barriers and nurture global connections. Also, this would favor the integration of immigration groups" (D7).

With the teachers

The most frequent impediments that teachers are confronting include the lack of time to search for resources originating from the culture of the student immigrant, the unfamiliarity of the cultures in the classroom, the lack of participation and connection between immigrant parents with educators, and the absence of information regarding individual circumstances (economic, social, familial...) of student immigrants. In the words of one teacher, *"on many occasions the teachers are unaccustomed to other cultures and do not have significant time available to deepen their understanding. Also, it is difficult because teachers are unaware of the culture and practices of their students, things that are hard for us to simply know. For example, during the first years that I remember teaching, there was a surprise to the teachers when the Muslim fes-*

tival of lamb happened and many children did not show up to class. We figured this to be odd conduct. Today, it is more well-known and understood" (P2).

How can Immigrant Associations participate in schools? Involvement suggestions from the teachers

The following proposals or routes of participation for Immigrant Associations in schools are elaborations to the justifications from teachers that appeared in the previous portion. The proposals have been categorized into two areas: the curriculum and other educative agents.

Spheres of participation within the curriculum

The interviewed teachers proposed the participation of Immigrant Associations in different portions of the curriculum. Their proposals are the following:

- In the *Associations of Parents*. Educators point out that the Associations of Immigrants could have the capability to perform well in the recommendation of diverse intercultural activities. Also, it was believed that immigrants could also engage in the formation of their own parent associations. From our point of view, however, the latter suggestion would facilitate the segregation of parents.
- In the *Activities of Mentoring* and the *Department of Orientation*. The interviewed educators pointed out that the participation of Immigrant Associations would be a very valuable instrument at the time of suggesting intercultural activities for tutors in the orientation department.
- In the *Ejes Transversales* (crosscutting disciplines program). The professors suggested to us that the Immigrant Associations might collaborate in the crosscutting disciplines program, specifically in the area of *Educación para la Paz y la Convivencia* by means of the design and development of activities.

- In the production of *los Documentos Curriculares*. Another possibility for involvement of the Associations, according to the teachers, is in the creation of commissions for coexistence. This would apply toward *los Proyectos Educativos de Centro* (the Educative Projects of the Center) and in *los Proyectos de Orientación y Acción Tutorial* (Orientation Projects and Tutorial Action).

Participation with the agents of the educational community

With the immigrant students

The teaching staff agrees with a series of participation proposals from the Immigrant Associations concerning the immigrant students. These proposals of intervention have been grouped into three areas:

- *To accept the student immigrant*. Teachers suggest that the associations collaborate in welcoming activities for the immigrant students at the beginning of courses with the objective of explaining to them the way the center operates.
- *Mediation between the student immigrant and the teaching staff*. The teaching staff proposes that the Immigrants Associations act as mediators with the diverse obstacles encountered by teachers in the educational instruction of the student immigrant.
- *Scholastic integration*. The teaching staff advocates that the Immigrant Associations collaborate in the design of activities that encourage the integration of the immigrant students in the scholastic setting. These activities may include:

1) Courses for learning Spanish constructed by the Associations themselves. These classes could take place in educative centers as an extracurricular activity. One teacher explains in the following lines the importance of grasping the Spanish language: "...many of the children arrive here without knowing Spanish and Asso-

ciations should try to help us with their learning. Before the child speaks fluently, he can still integrate himself in society and in school. Take for example Spanish review classes. With these available, immigrants who were not registered students of the center could participate in Spanish classes" (P11).

2) Activities that promote the self-esteem and changing of attitudes of the immigrant student.

These types of activities demand sufficient attention from us due to their objective and because they align with the contributions of Cummins (1986) and with teaching theory. The teaching staff defends the idea that activities organized and imparted by the Immigrant Associations themselves will boost the self-esteem and the changing of attitudes of the students. This is because he will perceive that his group is important and that it can contribute significantly to the way the educational center works. That is to say, he will not look at himself as an ethnic minority subject to the will of the native students. The importance of self-esteem and of changing attitudes within the immigrant student has been explained in the following manner by one teacher:

"It is vital that the student see that his culture is valued. For example, the Association could come and run some type of activity about his culture. Then the student immigrant could see his culture as precious because the native students part pâté, ask questions and are interested. Without a doubt, we could give that student a sense of prominence and break the predominance of the Spanish culture. The immigrant students will see that they are people and not just going to school to receive something but to give something as well. In this sense, they will not see themselves as intruders that come in order that they take everything, that they are ignorant and simply execute direc-

tive orders. They will see themselves as people that offer something too" (P15).

3) Activities of coexistence between the diverse groups of immigrant and the native students. This form of participation based on coexistence is narrated by two interviewees: *"When the participation of the Associations in the educative centers is better, the integration of the immigrant students will be better. Just look! The contact between 'different' people makes a difference; it stimulates the change of stereotypes and conduct. Also, contact helps us to speak more easily with others about our own immigrant culture"* (P16). *"...the participation of the Associations will favor the changing of attitudes of native students toward immigrants. I think that the understanding and approach toward an unfamiliar culture is a powerful tool for changing attitudes. Moreover, the immigrant students would also change their attitudes toward Spaniards because they would appreciate that their culture was valued by educators and peers"* (D2).

4) Reinforcing educational activities. The Associations themselves should organize activities of scholastic reinforcement for the immigrant students that offer learning at a slower pace.

With the native students

Teachers agree on the idea that the Immigrant Associations must organize activities intended for the native students to accept the immigrant as a citizen. This includes understanding his culture and customs, inspiring the coexistence and familiarity between cultures, and provoking the changing of attitudes and prejudices from the side of the native towards the immigrant. This would produce an approach between different cultural groups. As one of our interviewed subjects said, *"an immigrant can spend 15 years in Spain being an immigrant and always being an immigrant. I think that this is a problem that has to do with Spanish society. The Associations must collaborate in order that the native students see*

the immigrant as a person with feelings just as they themselves have. Immigrants should not be perceived simply as immigrants, that is to say, that they see them as peers and not as outsiders" (P8).

Some of the proposed items that educators suggested to us for the Associations, as pertains to the native students, are the following: 1) Lectures on the part of Associations leaders to explain in schools their personal histories. Topics might include why they immigrated, social and economic characteristics of their country, their first years in Spain... The teacher defends the notion that this type of activity, that which an immigrant narrates the circumstances of his migratory process, opens eyes and mitigates prejudices that natives feel towards immigrants. 2) Activities which encourage the integration and the coexistence between the students of various cultural groups including the "native." 3) Activities in which the principal traits of one's culture are explained and spread.

With immigrant families

According to the educators, the participation of the Associations with immigrant families centers around two fundamental aspects:

1. Attempting to change the attitudes of families toward the Educative System. Some of the duties established by educators to meet this objective are:
 - To explain to immigrant families the importance of continuing or finishing the compulsory education of their children.
 - To explain the mothers and fathers of the characteristics of the education their children are receiving in a new country.
 - To motivate parents to instill in their children good study habits and responsibility toward their learning.
 - To make better known to families various cultural aspects of their host country.
 - To advise to families how important are their relationships with the school, helping advisors to keep teachers informed about

problems their children have, receiving information about the progress of their children, and collaborating with the educators.

2. A bridge joining educative centers and families of the immigrant students. Educators emphasize the need for a change of attitudes within immigrant families so that they can become invested in the education of children. This would be accompanied by an increased level of participation by parents in educative centers as well. Some of the proposed items to achieve this end are included below:

- The parents can participate in the educative centers giving talks to the native students regarding aspects related to their countries of origin.
- The families can make their mother language better known to native children.

With native families

Teachers suggest that the Immigrant Associations intervene with native families in the following areas:

- *Changing Attitudes*: The teachers believe that the Immigrant Associations can create activities that raise multicultural awareness and in turn eliminate prejudices and stereotypes many native families have, especially towards immigrant students. For example, some natives believe that immigrant students lower the overall academic rigor of education centers.
- *Encouraging the coexistence and acquaintance of native families and immigrants*. Some of the suggestions proposed by educators are based on the execution of activities on the part of Immigrant Associations. These activities promote the coexistence and the rapprochement between immigrant families and natives. As one director tells us *"It would not be a bad thing, the connection between parents. It is important that they recognize the differences between cultures and respect them. I think that this is the most urgent problem. I wish that they would mutually un-*

derstand customs, distinct religions, and unique manners of looking at life. Also, I hope for both groups to reject the bad and to be capable of exchanging the good that each has to offer" (D3).

With their own teachers

The teaching staff understands that the Immigrant Associations can become a big support for the teachers. The proposed collaborations are the following:

- *To provide resources from other cultures*. The teaching staff acknowledges the importance that the Immigrant Associations prepare and deliver materials from their students' native cultures. In the words of one teacher, "The associations can provide their countries' literature for the teachers to use. If we have Moroccan students, we can work with material from the Moroccan organizations. For example, it would be useful to use a book I know of, that includes poems written by Romanian authors in Spain" (P6).

Educating on "other" cultures. Immigrant Associations are the collective that facilitate the dispersement of information about the students' cultures. One teacher explained the cultural benefit of working with the Immigrant Associations: "It would interest us to learn about our immigrant students' cultures from the Associations. Teaching has to break through the students' prior knowledge and experiences in order to advance their education. Therefore, it interests us to know what their culture is..." (P4)

- *Mediators between the teachers and the immigrant families*. A fundamental aspect that all the teachers stressed during their interviews was that the Immigrant Associations need to support those who promote the proximity between the immigrant parents and the school.
- *Advice on immigrant students' characteristics*. In this aspect, the teachers would like the Immigrant Associations to speak

to the immigrant students' parents about the students and, in turn, tell the school about the specific circumstances of each particular immigrant student.

Conclusions

It's as valuable that the teachers, as well as the Immigrant Associations separately reference similar reasons for the Associations to support and actively participate in the classroom.

The conclusions of this study are:

1. Professors and Immigrant Associations are interested in collaborating and supplementing activities that will help integrate the native and the immigrant schoolchildren
2. The teachers and the Immigrant Associations agree on the problems found with immigrant students, the teaching staff and immigrant families. Both groups also believe in the necessity for the Immigrant Associations to participate in the educational centers so that together they can overcome these obstacles. They create a more united front for cultural mediation, close the gap between schools and immigrant families, and offer activities that promote and encourage cultural coexistence.
3. Collaboration between Immigrant Associations and teachers will achieve a school and a society that will see the immigrant as the bearer of a social and cultural capital. These knowledge bearers will be the starting point from which a new education system will be built.
4. The collaboration of Immigrant Associations in the schools will help empower both the immigrant and native students.
5. Education and learning are social acts that require processes between teaching agents – one of which is the Immigrant Association.
6. The participation of Immigrant Associations in the classroom and with other agents of the educational community will favor the creation of learning communities.

The main reason that Immigrant Associations argue to become teaching agents is the perception of the teachers' unwillingness to take in immigrant students and the school's lack of activities to promote interculturalism. However, teachers see themselves as not having enough time to provide the necessities of a multicultural classroom. They mention their own lack of cultural knowledge that the new immigrant student will bring to the classroom. It is also observed that immigrant families are very distant from the school. All these reasons are an invitation for the Immigrant Associations to interfere in the classroom.

Immigrant Associations reasonably declare that they can work with immigrant families and natives, this consideration is also suggested by teachers. The associations suggest to immigrant families to make themselves closer to the schools and known as the parents in order to assume their own responsibility of their child's integration in the new society. Native families need to change their attitudes, since they will pass on the idea of cultural stereotypes and discriminatory behavior to their children, making cultural co-existence more difficult. The teaching world and Immigrant Associations need to pay attention to both native and immigrant families. They need to work with the native families because of these negative attitudes they share with their children, and they need to work with the immigrant families for their lack of interest in their children's education. We agree with Henderson and Mapp (2002) in the importance of work between the school and family for the integral education of the student and so that their will be a harmonic, cultural co-existence in the academic world.

The last justification given by the teachers and Immigrant Associations in order to facilitate the Immigrant Organization' involvement with the schools is the actual work with the native and immigrant students. Both teachers and the Immigrant Associations understand that the problems come from the cultural clashes. They suggest interfering with the native student's preconceived notions in order

to improve their perceptions of immigrants. On the other hand, the immigrant students need help to overcome the language barrier and reinforcing what they already know in order to mitigate what they're lacking in school.

We have observed that the reasons the teachers and Immigrant Associations give in support of their access to schools are convincing. We are also fond of the predisposition and agreement on both parts in positively assessing this participation.

The teaching staff, who until now had not worked with the Immigrant Associations in the school itself, already knows how to plan their integration. For the teaching staff, an important form of support from the Immigrant Associations is tutoring the students as well as designing the curriculum with supplemental materials and documents. The schools think it would be beneficial for the Immigrant Associations to help with welcoming the immigrant students. The teaching staff also appreciates the Immigrant Associations' work in support of integration, co-existence and the young immigrants' developments of higher self-esteem. The schools also think the Immigrant Associations can work with native students on changing their general attitudes. At the same time, the Immigrant Associations can teach the immigrant families to play a significant mediative role in order to see how important education is for their children.

We appreciate how both the teaching staff and Associations are ready to collaborate in order to the immigrant students build new knowledge and meanings taking into account their previous knowledge, learning strategies and cultural identity that these students bring when they arrive to the new education system (Sleeter, 1991), and that are different to the native ones. On the other hand, we also recognize the benefit of the Immigrant Associations' participation because, as Cummins concluded in his studies (1986), education is empowerment if it considers and values the language and culture of the student. Also,

according to McLaren (1989) who defines the social intentions of empowerment, the collaboration between schools and Immigrant Associations will empower not only the immigrant students, but also the native students because they will learn from foreign experiences. The partnership will also help expand the understanding of the native students toward the immigrant students by transforming the ideas, prejudices and racism that many of the native students harbor. In turn, this will favor a multicultural dialogue.

The Immigrant Associations, in their role as mediators, create a stronger tie between the school and the families, as noted by Henderson and Mapp (2002). This will increase the value that the families allocate to their children's education and scholastic success.

We also understand that education is, more than anything, a collective effort on the part of every person and institution in a child's life – the teachers, families, cultural centers, cultural associations, and also, according to our investigation, the local Immigrant Associations. As Vila (2004) said, education, above all else, is a social process; thus, we ought to create a cohesive educational community. However, this responsibility should not fall solely on the schools – Immigrant Associations in particular need to help schools create a multicultural educational environment. On the other hand, as Flecha and Puigvert (2008) said, it is important to remain open to negotiation and collaboration within the classroom, while at the same time mobilizing all available resources. The partnership between the schools and Immigrant Associations within the classroom favors a new type of learning environment. It is very good to establish learning communities, by means of having collaboration of Immigrant Associations in the schools and multicultural educational environments, in order to combat discriminative situations and general inequality with native and immigrant students.

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Notes

- [1] Research Project “Greenhouse and immigrants. The adaptation problem of a collective margin.” General Migration Direction. Ministry of Social Matters.
- [2] Project: Etablissement et Evaluation de Programmes d'Éducation Multiculturelle. Commission des Communautés Europeennes. Direction GeneralXXII-Education, Formation et Jeunesse. SOCRATES.
- [3] Project: The immigrant situation in Aldalusia. Economic and Social Advice for Andalusia.
- [4] Internet Project “Expectations, social reality and the Senegalese integration in Andalusia. Government ministry. Andalusian Committee.
- [5] AIS2, second immigrant interviewee from the Senegalese Association.
- [6].A1P1, first immigrant interviewee from the Pakistani Association.
- [7] A1R3, third interviewee from a Russian Association.
- [8] AIM2, second interviewee from a Moroccan Immigrant association.
- [9] P represents the teacher’s number from the interview. In this case, P5 is the fifth professor interviewed.
- [10] D refers to a director interviewed. The number was assigned during the interview.

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