

**WHAT INTEGRATION SCHOOLS OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS
DO: INDICATORS FOR GOOD PRACTICES**
**LO QUE HACEN LAS MEJORES ESCUELAS INTEGRADORAS
DE ALUMNADO INMIGRANTE: INDICADORES
DE BUENAS PRÁCTICAS**
**O QUE FAZEM AS MELHORES ESCOLAS INTEGRADORAS DE ALUNATO
IMIGRANTE: INDICADORES DE BOAS PRÁTICAS**

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ABSTRACT: Immigration is a phenomenon which has changed the social scene of all over the countries and has increased alongside a world becoming even more global. These social changes have generated new challenges in educational sphere focused on the integration of immigrant students and the intercultural education. The purpose of this study is to investigate the elements of educational attention to immigrant students defined in hosting policies for this group pertaining to educational institutions and national/international reference authors. To do this and based on a theoretical framework, the following phases in the development of research are addressed in the research: pre-analysis of documents, content analysis with Atlas.ti 7 through categories and indicators of good practices on what schools should do to integrate immigrant students (education access, family care, school choice, intercultural education, educational services, intercultural curriculum, researches on behalf of the integration which prevent from the school dropout rate increases), results and conclusions, to systematize and to group actions in a way that any "inclusive" school should/could implement them making easier any self-assessment integration program in these schools.

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<p>PALABRAS CLAVES: Integración social alumnado inmigrante política educativa programas interculturales educación para la ciudadanía</p>	<p>RESUMEN: La inmigración constituye un fenómeno que ha modificado el escenario social de todos los países y que ha ido creciendo junto a un mundo cada vez más global. Fruto de estos cambios sociales, se han generado nuevos retos y desafíos en el ámbito educativo orientados a la integración del alumnado inmigrante y la educación intercultural. El objetivo del presente estudio se centra en acometer un análisis sobre los elementos de atención educativa al alumnado inmigrante definidos en las políticas de acogida a este colectivo, tanto de instituciones educativas como de autores de referencia a nivel nacional e internacional. Para ello, se abordan las siguientes fases en el desarrollo de la investigación, tras establecer el marco teórico: pre-análisis de la documentación, análisis de contenido con Atlas.ti 7 a través de categorías e indicadores de buenas prácticas sobre qué deberían hacer las escuelas integradoras del alumnado inmigrante (acceso a la educación, atención a las familias, elección de centro, educación intercultural, atención educativa, currículum intercultural, investigación-acción a favor de la integración y prevención del fracaso y abandono escolar), resultados y conclusiones a fin de sistematizar y agrupar las medidas que cualquier escuela "integradora" debería poner en práctica y facilitar con ello la autoevaluación de cualquier programa de integración escolar.</p>
<p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Integração social alunato imigrante política educativa programas interculturais educação para a cidadania</p>	<p>RESUMO: A imigração constitui um fenômeno que tem modificado o cenário social de todos os países e que tem vindo a crescer junto a um mundo cada vez mais global. Fruto dessas mudanças sociais, tem-se gerado novos desafios no âmbito educativo orientados à integração do alunato imigrante e a educação intercultural. O objetivo do presente estudio centra-se em acometer um análise sobre os elementos de atenção educativa ao alunato imigrante definidos nas políticas de acolhida o colectivo, tanto das instituições educativas como dos autores de referência no âmbito nacional e internacional. Para tal, abordam-se as fases a seguir no desenvolvimento da investigação, após estabelecer o marco teórico: pre-análise da documentação, análise do conteúdo com o Atlas.ti 7 através de categorias e indicadores de boas práticas sobre o que deveriam fazer as escolas integradoras do alunato imigrante (acesso à educação, atenção às famílias, eleição do centro, educação intercultural, atenção educativa, currículo intercultural, investigação-ação a favor da integração e prevenção do fracasso e o abandono escolar), resultados e conclusões, ao fim de sistematizar e agrupar as medidas que qualquer escola "integradora" deveria por em prática e facilitar com isso a auto-avaliação de qualquer programa de integração escolar.</p>

Introduction

Migration has significantly been around Europe throughout its recent history. This fact has made countries and their policies to adapt to the historical moment of immigration (Castles & Miller, 2004). Continuous and diverse immigration has turned countries of immigration into a milieu where, from the earliest rejection and ignorance to later recognition, some basic elements in terms of evidence of cultural diversity have been gradually implemented, making immigration and integration visible aspects of the political agenda of the European Union (Llorent & Terrón, 2013). In the last decades, EU's southern states, particularly Spain, have shown very high migration rates. Globalisation has given immigration a more multicultural side, thereby making a better knowledge of cultures possible (Banks, 2015).

In the field of education, the number of foreign students has increased steadily, until its more recent stabilisation. According to data from the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the total number of non-Spanish students in non-university education in the academic year 2014-2015 was 712,098 out of 8,090,017 students (MEC, 2015). Consequently, there are new necessities and challenges that emerge from the pedagogic and social

function of the educational system. Educational policies are therefore the required instruments for social equity (Contreras, 2007).

Following López & Sourrouille (2013), current educational policies must not only pursue equal opportunities in education but also work towards equality in educational achievements. Only in this way will students' school experience guarantee their access to the knowledge that enables them to function in society. Therefore, the school must be an essential means for the acquisition of knowledge and competences that allow them to effectively integrate and participate, thereby supporting the exercise of civil, political and social rights.

On the basis of these premises, one of our objectives in this work is to build on specific theoretical grounds for establishing the necessary elements of educational care for immigrant students in order to promote educational and social equality between immigrant and local students.

1. Rationale and objectives

The structures of the welfare state generate processes of inclusion that allow disadvantaged citizens to be equals to the rest. These institutional mechanisms assume the task of integrating immigrant population.

As regards this issue, the Report on Social Inclusion in Spain (Marí-Klose, Marí-Klose, Granados, Gómez-Granel & Martínez, 2009) states that the educational system must become a founding pillar entrusted with ensuring the opportunities of access to social structures and personal development of citizens, aiming at a proactive social integration. Accordingly, it is indispensable to contribute to the education of subjects so that they are able to interpret and produce in a critical way the knowledge that prevails in the different spheres of social life. Educational institutions must therefore give priority to teaching social mobility over the performance of some fixed functions. We must deal with the need to access quality education that ensures the development of competences to become “knowledge users in an adaptable and ever-changing field” (Aparicio, 2006: 110 [original in Spanish]). The school fulfils an important social function that aims to minimise economic and social inequalities. In her research on Comparative Education, Duru-Bellat (2010) shows that the educational systems of some OCED countries are able to offset social inequalities more effectively.

Besides, Field, Kuczera & Pont (2007) point out that education and training are key elements in the social and economic integration of disadvantaged groups, including immigrants. Education plays a fundamental role in determining people’s development: a fair educational system that cares for integrating society as a whole must foster equality of opportunities and of results, together with the acquisition of the relevant capacities for the enjoyment of an active citizenship. Fairness of an educational system manifests itself when education lays greater emphasis on those issues that promote students’ equality, which will undoubtedly produce a fairer and more equalitarian society.

Educational systems have set themselves up as the major agents for the cultural integration of immigrant population without creating a rupture with their cultures of origin (Heckmann, 2008). In this sense, it is now imperative to execute policies for cultural diversity that ensure the recognition of linguistic plurality through the teaching of mother tongues; the recognition of diverse identities, through the acceptance of distinctive aspects of cultures, including them in academic contents and institutional practice; and the recognition of religious diversity (Heckmann, 2008; Shuali, 2008). It is not enough for isolated schools to include these cultural elements ‘independently’. There must be a determined political will, clear objectives and specific educational actions that embrace the whole educational system, thereby guaranteeing integration from the development

of capabilities in a background of social justice (Sánchez-Santamaría & Ballester, 2014).

The aim of this paper is to carry out an analysis of the elements of educational provision to immigrant students as gathered in the integration policies of immigrant students by educational institutions and by national and international renowned scholars. In doing so, we wish to contribute to the existing studies exploring the field of educational integration of immigrant students. This research proposes to lay the foundations for the future development of an instrument ensuring the quality of integration policies and encouraging their positive educational, social, cultural and economic impact. We will therefore begin by categorising and identifying the different elements of attention to immigrant students detected, with a view to establishing the indicators that will allow educational authorities to assess in the planning phases those actions that guarantee an optimum integration.

2. Methodology

the present study follows the investigation phases put forward by Guix (2007): to establish a theoretical framework, to carry out a pre-analysis of the documentation in order to set research questions and aims and, lastly, to do a content analysis in order to determine indicators of good practice.

In order to establish the theoretical framework that will inform the analysis, we searched the databases *ISI Web of Science*, *Dialnet* and *Education Resources Information Centre* (ERIC) for measures and programmes of educational integration of immigrant students, preferably those referred to Spanish settings, and we took also into account the institutions and organisms involved in pursuing this aim.

In the next stage, we carry out a pre-analysis of the documentation in order to set our research question: what are the principles of educational attention to immigrant students that are currently being discussed or implemented.

Subsequently, we conduct a content analysis of the different components of the educational attention to immigrant students that, according to renowned national and international scholars, are valued as essential for an effective education of immigrant students in diverse educational systems (Aguado & Gil, 2003; Alegre, 2008; Alegre & Benito Pérez, 2010; Benito Pérez & González-Ballobà, 2013; Banks, 2015; Bunar, 2011; Calero, Choi & Waisgrais, 2010; Carrasco, 2005; CIDE, 2005; Commission of the European Communities, 2008; EURYDICE, 2009; Fernández Enguita, 2006; Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007; Fundación

CeiMigra, 2012; García Castaño & Granados, 1999; Garreta & Llevot, 2011; Heckmann, 2008; Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh & White, 2011; Llevot & Bernad, 2015; Ni Chaoimh & White, 2011; Mancebón & Pérez-Ximénez de Embún, 2007; Marchesi, 2003, 2006; Martínez Lizarrondo, 2011; Martínez Usaralde & García López, 2007; Martínez Usaralde, 2015; Mena, Fernández Enguita & Riviére, 2010; OCDE, 2007, 2010; Palaudàrias & Garreta, 2011; Pérez-Esparrells & Rahona, 2009, 2012; Rahona & Morales, 2007, 2013; Sales & García López, 1997; Sánchez-Hugalde, 2007; Serra & Palaudàrias, 2010; Simó, Pàmies, Collet-Sabé & Tort, 2014; Shuali, 2010; Tarabini & Curran, 2013).

The content analysis of the documentation is performed by means of the software Atlas.ti 7, which allows users to organise texts in units of meaning (what [do] schools do to promote the integration of immigrant students), encode them in categories (a concept that brings together different elements with common features, according to García & Quintana, 2012) and establish a system of codification (frequency of occurrence of

such elements). Accordingly, we set the following categories:

- Access to education
- Attention to families
- Choice of school
- Intercultural education
- Educational attention
- Intercultural curriculum
- Action-research for integration
- Prevention of educational failure and dropout

Finally, we categorise the information in the documents including the elements of integration identified in any of the set categories.

3. Results

In this section we present the results of the content analysis of documents of the components of attention to the immigrant students that educational institutions should take into account for an effective integration, according to the set categories and ordered by frequency of occurrence.

Table 1. Summary of findings: what should a school do to integrate immigrant students?

CATEGORIES	What schools should offer to effectively integrate immigrant students (INDICATORS FOR GOOD PRACTICE, ranked by frequency of occurrence)
Access to education	Widespread access to pre-school education Existence of early childhood education programmes, especially aimed at disadvantaged populations
Attention to families	Availability of different strategies for providing families with socio-educational information Promotion of programmes to connect families with the educational process Organisation of programmes of school integration of students and their families
Choice of educational centre	Availability of different strategies for providing families with socio-educational information Prevention of excessive concentration of immigrant students in the same school(s) Mechanisms of allocation of increased resources to schools with higher rates of immigrants Programmes to promote school autonomy in the governance of human, didactic and pedagogic resources
Intercultural education	Promotion of the formation of teaching and management teams in intercultural education and attention to cultural diversity
Educational attention	Implementation of remedial classes for students with learning difficulties
Intercultural curriculum	Integration of aspects of intercultural education in the curriculum and in school organisation
Action-research for integration	Implementation of immigration an socio-educational research programmes that identify the potential inequalities among students and their attention
Prevention of educational failure and dropout	Organisation of programmes to prevent school absenteeism and drop-out
Source: Author.	

In order to elaborate on the elements that are involved in the definition of the so-called 'integration', in the following section we deal with the most relevant categories shown in Table 1:

Attention to families

- Availability of different strategies for providing families with socio-educational information.
- Promotion of programmes to connect families with the educational process.
- Organisation of programmes of school integration of students and their families.

The schools' encouragement of the participation of immigrant students' parents, playing an active role in their education, is a determining indicator of positive school integration. This process of integration enormously benefits from this participation, as these families cater their schools for new educational possibilities.

In this sense, Shuali (2010), based on several European experiences, states that the collaboration of other people who share the immigrant students' language and culture does not only maximise the possibility of a more effective contact, but also strengthens the link between the school and immigrant communities. This may result in a positive attitude towards the commitment and interest of the students, which may also correlate with an improvement in their academic performance and, consequently, with more equality in their school career.

Furthermore, the mechanisms of integration of the immigrant students and their families are particularly important (Llevot & Bernad, 2015). These are especially relevant because they have an effect on the schooling process, when these students and their families begin to understand, adapt themselves and operate within the specific educational centres and the society where these are located.

The aim of the process of integration can be defined as the organisation of the educational actions oriented towards the adaptation of the students and their families to the educational centre (Palaudàrias & Garreta, 2011); and to their lives in a new society, we may add.

Thus, integration must be founded upon three principles:

- "To start from knowledge and recognition of the characteristics of foreign students when entering the school, with a greater emphasis on what we share than on what makes us different."
- "To work on integration strategies suited for the school's situation and availability."

- "To enact the principles of normalisation and equality of opportunities, starting from a positive evaluation from students." (Palaudàrias & Garreta, 2001: 51 [original in Spanish]).

Choice of educational centre

- Availability of different strategies for providing families with socio-educational information.
- Prevention of excessive concentration of immigrant students in the same school(s).
- Mechanisms of allocation of increased resources to schools with higher rates of immigrants.
- Programmes to promote school autonomy in the governance of human, didactic and pedagogic resources.

The more information parents have and, consequently, the more involved they become in their children's education, the higher the number of quality criteria considered in their choice of an educational centre. Families with higher socio-economic resources are more inclined to choose an educational centre that meets their expectations (Sánchez-Hugalde, 2007).

Providing families with further information on such issues as the choice of an educational centre for their children would result in a fairer distribution of students, thereby reducing the excessive gathering of immigrants in some schools. This uncontrolled concentration of immigrant students -especially in first-generation students- has a negative impact on the school's overall performance, as there is a higher demand of individualised attention that schools cannot adequately cope with.

Based on data from the PISA reports, some studies have pointed out that school overcrowding has a direct impact on the students' general learning achievement. Thus, some 2003 surveys showed that a concentration of immigrant students above 10% affected negatively the overall results of the students in that school. Likewise, some research based on the 2006 PISA reports obtained similar conclusions, but with a concentration above 20%. The 2009 PISA reports exhibit similar results to the latter (Calero, 2007; Calero & Waisgrais, 2009; Cebolla & Garrido, 2010; Benito Pérez & González-Ballebò, 2013). In this respect, it is important to note that the concentration of students with low socio-economic status has comparable effects.

On the other hand, local population's rejection of sharing spaces for community living with the newly-arrived evinces the former's prejudice to not relating to people from different socio-cultural environments and lower socio-economic

status. Similarly, their fear of possible negative effects in their children's school performance –as being in schools with a high number of immigrants– contribute to equalizing the typology of students within some schools, while, at the same time, to increasing the heterogeneity of the school population among different schools.

It is worth noting that this separating effect patently increases a tendency not to have an ongoing contact between the local and immigrant populations, which nurtures the existence of racial prejudices on both sides. In this respect, Pettigrew & Tropp (2008) study the moderating effects of contact over prejudice, and conclude that contact reduces inter-group prejudices –which is especially remarkable in the larger group. Thus, the introduction of other contact spaces such as the school and the neighbourhood would favour the increase of inter-group acquaintance and would help reduce prejudice, especially in the local group.

Given school high concentrations of immigrants, another significant measure is the allocation of more material and human resources to those schools with a higher proportion of immigrant students.

In addition, one of the positively rated features before the concentration of immigrant population is school autonomy for the distribution of educational resources. The schools with higher autonomy in the allocation of their resources –especially human ones– are often more successful. Notwithstanding this, there is evidence that the Spanish educational system does not favour autonomy in public schools in this respect (Marchesi, 2006).

Intercultural education

- Promotion of the formation of teaching and management teams in intercultural education and attention to cultural diversity.
- Presence of intercultural mediators in the school and out-of-school settings.

According to Heckmann (2008), beyond the existing differences among European educational systems, the relationship and interaction of the staff with the students is central to the students' school success. This author states that most professionals are not adequately trained to work in schools and classrooms with a high number of immigrants. This scholar emphasises the need to a thorough training at all levels: pre-school, primary and secondary school.

In line with this, Shuali (2008: 74) states that intercultural education “takes for granted the existence of a plural and diverse society made up of different ethnic and cultural groups upon which to

work in order to attain a harmonious, integrated and cohesive society without discrimination and where everyone has equal opportunities for participation and social progress” (original in Spanish).

Ultimately, intercultural knowledge must be a *sine qua non* requisite if we wish to attend the multicultural circumstances of schools – with their inherent complexities – in order to promote mutual enrichment.

Intercultural education is not only a matter of pedagogical contents. It also involves school organisation and methodology. In this regard, Fernández Enguita (2006: 127) claims that “in the face of the unequal and evolving challenge of multiculturalism, the education response should not come from politics or governments but from the schools and workers at ground level, which implies certain visions of the organisation and of the profession”.

Educational attention

- Implementation of remedial classes for students with learning difficulties.
- Giving linguistic support classes on the official languages.
- Availability of mother tongue and culture classes for most students' nationalities.
- Presence of more support and teaching staff to attend the concentration of immigrant students.
- Increase of the number of bilingual and immigrant teachers.

We highlight three main variables that decisively influence the educational needs of immigrant students in the educational institutions of the host country: “their age on arrival and commencement of compulsory schooling; their knowledge of the local language; and their educational trajectory and level of learning” (Alegre, 2008: 23).

Language is one of the main obstacles for immigrant students in host countries. Immigrants have to undergo an initial period of learning the official language(s) of the host country. In this respect, the older the students when entering the educational system, the more difficult it is to integrate them.

Thus, learning the local language is a key factor for integration and learning development. Several EU countries have implemented specific measures related to the promotion of languages, such as specific language classes for the newly-arrived immigrant students. Numerous actions have been taken for this aim: tests of linguistic competence, foundation language courses before starting school, and training of professionals in the abilities

needed to improve their students' competence in the host language (Commission of the European Communities, 2008).

There are different models in Europe for the educational adaptation of students with linguistic and curricular needs (Blanco, 2002). The most common are:

- Establishment of a class redistribution within the school schedule so that the group that receives linguistic reinforcement is taught separately. However, if the group split extends over time, there is the risk of having different learning paces between both groups in some subjects.
- Presence of support teachers in the same classroom, which allows students with educational needs to follow the learning process with their peers. Although this model aims to make the best use of resources and efforts, it can lead to an excessive number of students in the classroom, thereby hindering the course of the educational process due to multiple specific demands.
- Establishment of a separate initial period of linguistic immersion until students achieve sufficient knowledge for their normal integration in the mainstream group. As is the case in the first model, the risk of an unbalanced learning pace may be present.

On the other hand, it is also recommended that these students receive support from teachers in some specific academic subjects. Rahona & Morales (2013) argue that one way of reducing immigrant students' inequalities is compensatory education and support in core subjects: "Any action designed to improve the educational success of this group will lead to an increase in the average academic performance of the Spanish educational system, of every region and of every educational centre" (p. 87).

It is important to emphasise the relevance of the actions designed to effectively even out the acquisition of competences and basic contents for the students in each educational stage. One of the alternatives adopted by traditional educational systems is the students' repetition of grades as an equalising instrument. Field, Kuczera & Pont (2007) highlight that the repetition of grades is associated with subsequent poor school performance. On the one hand, they point out that the results obtained by repeaters are significantly lower than those of the rest. On the other hand, based on different experiences in OECD countries, they show that this is a general tendency. Similarly, repeating grades increases the chances of school dropout in subsequent years.

Prevention of educational failure and dropout

- Organisation of programmes to prevent school absenteeism and dropout.
- Introduction of educational guidance strategies.
- Promotion of access to professional training, especially for those students who decide to drop out early.
- Implementation of curricular diversification programmes that complement the general contents and that foster students' motivation.
- Adoption of measures for the economic and/or material endowment of students from low income families.
- Promotion of adult education and academic recognition as a strategy for the continuation of their educational careers.

For Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh & White (2011), playing a part in immigrant students' enjoyment of the educational process from pre-school to higher education is a guarantee for personal development and indicator of excellent social and educational integration. The reduction of failure and drop-out rates is a necessary requirement to achieve higher levels of socio-educational equality. Furthermore, this fact would contribute to avoiding the social costs of marginalised adults for their lack of basic competences and aptitudes (Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007).

Concerning this issue, it is necessary to reduce the high academic failure rates in many OECD countries if we want to ensure minimum standards of education for everyone.

As OECD (2010) states, based on the 2009 PISA reports, the fact of belonging to the category of 'immigrant student' is associated with an increased probability of negative educational outcomes and higher dropout rates.

The specific measures for educational support and diversification in Spain - included in Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE henceforth) - show varying degrees of influence on the students' continuation. On studying the Significant Curricular Adaptations (ACS, in its Spanish acronym), the consideration of students with Special Educational Needs (ACNEE, in its Spanish acronym), and the Curricular Diversification Programmes, it is worth noting that the latter are the only measures that have proved effective in preventing school dropout (Mena, Fernández Enguita & Riviére, 2010).

Investment in education has received much attention among scholars. Within educational funding, researchers underscore the investments in pre-school and primary education to improve subsequent learning achievement. According to

Pérez-Esparrells & Rahona (2012: 68), “the earlier risk detection occurs and mechanisms are put in place to mitigate learning difficulties, the more students will complete primary school at the right age and continue their studies to obtain their diploma in CSE.” In this respect, the strong individual aid to compensate for the inequalities among students has a decisive influence on the increase of school retention rates.

Lastly, it is worth noting the role of adult education as an alternative for those students who abandoned education at an early age. The promotion and adaptation of these services for youth and adults to provide an attractive educational offering is a plan to encourage a part of the population to continue their academic careers and to strengthen their professional roles. The contribution of adult education, together with academic recognition at all educational levels, provides a mechanism to reduce socio-economic asymmetries in disadvantaged populations by endowing them with the potential requisites to access decent work.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The school has a strategic role to play in favouring equal opportunities to access social structures and personal development. It is also a cornerstone of the proactive social integration of all citizens. With this aim, the educational resources allocated to achieve that population have a series of minimum capacities and to revitalise the praxis of citizenship advocate for a reducing existing inequalities.

Immigrant students' increased presence in the Spanish educational system, especially since the end of the 1990s, has led to a phasing-in of general and specific measures by the educational centres, without a general consensus on the measures schools should include in their integration plans to optimise the integration process and meet these students' needs. The present study systematises and groups the measures that any “inclusive” schools should execute:

With regard to “access to education”, wider and cost-free strategies in educational attention benefit especially those groups that cannot afford access to education for lack of economic resources. In this way, we might say cost-free and support access to these measures would definitely be beneficial to subsequent processes of equitable development in the school and social environments (Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh & White, 2011; Rahona & Morales, 2013; Shuali, 2010).

As regards “attention to the families”, the socio-cultural rapprochement between school and

families paves the way for the inclusion of new intercultural educational strategies, and for greater sensitivity in educational work with this group.

As for “choice of educational centre”, it is important that education administrations develop direct actions to encourage a more equitable distribution of students and upgrade information processes. While it is true that the reversion of these social concentration processes does not only depend on information and parental awareness for the most adequate choice, it might also be said that this is one of the key factors. In the case of school concentration, Pérez-Esparrells & Rahona (2009) affirm that providing schools with additional resources can compensate for the educational difficulties caused by the students' profiles.

Besides, the continuous training of teachers plays a fundamental role in “intercultural education”. From this perspective, OECD states that the professional development of teachers and school management teams is an essential complement today to deal resolutely with multicultural situations. This agency also indicates that this development must be a further step towards educational equity between the immigrant and the mainstream groups (Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007). Related to “intercultural contents”, as seen above, the training of teaching and managements teams in schools is equally essential to reach an integrating praxis. Likewise, the importance of a methodology that cares for a multicultural environment is indisputable; as is the presence of intercultural mediators that take part in, and even lead, such projects (Martínez Usarralde, 2015).

When dealing with “educational attention”, according to various sources, it is advisable to use, as far as possible, teachers who speak the immigrants' mother tongue in order to ease comprehension and increase their level of confidence (Commission of the European Communities, 2008; Rahona & Morales, 2013; Simó et al., 2014). In this regard, we observe that the learning of a second language and the recruitment of bilingual teachers are indicators of a good integration. This, however, is not an easy task, given the huge variety of languages. Most European countries are reluctant to offer this kind of resource.

Likewise, the “intercultural curriculum” should aim at reaching a balance between comprehensive and diverse schools for a real and fair intercultural encounter to take place. The promotion of “action-research programmes for integration” is one of the key pillars of integrating schools. Heckman (2008) considers that these programmes are essential if the educational system is to enable a positive and constantly improving adaptation of the integration structures of immigrant students.

Lastly, we wish to comment on the “prevention of school failure and dropout”. When school leaving rates are acute, it is not only the student but the whole system that fails. Therefore, the student’s responsibility for such situation should not minimise that of families, professionals, schools and other relevant institutions.

As a final note, we would like to mention that the allocation of educational resources that improve the long-term prospects of disadvantaged groups like

immigrants is in the interest of social equity and of the population’s future shared expectations. By means of integrating models for immigrant students, the school should also aim to strengthen the recognition of the identities of the different ‘actors’ that make up our society. To face this great challenge, schools and models of educational integration should work together. Education should have a mediating role between origin and social destiny and be an element of recognition of all individuals as citizens.

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