ECE teachers and children of immigrant origins:
perceptions, implications and pedagogy

Dissemination document

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Reflection tools
Title: “ECE teachers and Children of immigrant origins: perceptions, implications and pedagogy”.

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Presentation

The following document presents the results of the investigations titled “Children of immigrant origins and Early Childhood Education in Catalonia. Teacher Perceptions throughout discourse analysis. Video-cued Multivocal Ethnography”. Such investigation has been developed for a Doctoral thesis in Human Learning Psychology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and can be consulted at the digital Repository of documents (DDD) of the cited university.

Research objectives focus on detecting ECE teacher perceptions regarding children of immigrant origins, alongside the needs deriving from their discourse. The methodological approach followed is *Video-cued Multivocal Ethnography* introduced by the North-American ethnographer Joseph Tobin. Such method, of ethnographic foundation, is based on focus group discourse analysis throughout participants’ comments and observations when watching ethnographic videos. Following the methodological principals, the ethnographic video becomes a projective tool stimulating pedagogical practice reflection, therefore enhancing a spontaneous discourse to emerge amongst educational agents, bringing to the fore sociocultural values and beliefs regarding education and, in this case, regarding children of immigrant origins.
The results of the investigation are presented along four vast
topics which have emerged from teacher discourses: on the one
hand, those referring to the general ECE settings, school and
family relationships and those relating to the learning language.
On the other hand and more specifically, the investigation focuses
on children of immigrant origins and on how the cited
conditionings have also effects on such a collective. This is,
precisely, one of the key points of the investigation, making
evident how teachers’ perception regarding children of immigrant
origins cannot be analysed aside from, previously, analysing their
perception regarding ECE, school and family relationships and the
language topic.

Aiming to reach the teachers who have taken part in the
investigation and also other agents of the educational community
interested in such, the present material has been designed
carefully to make the results accessible. It has been written
following the easy to read\textsuperscript{1} text guidelines and complemented
with plain lineal drawings, aiming to foment a critical reading of
its contents, therefore becoming a pedagogical reflection and a
stimulation tool regarding the object of study: detecting Catalan
ECE teacher perceptions of children of immigrant origins and how
such perceptions influence their pedagogy.

\textsuperscript{1} Easy to read: Lectura Fàcil is the Easy to Read Association in Catalonia and follows
the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) instructions. More
information at www.lecturafacil.net
It is important to note that the investigation’s objective is not to describe teacher’s beliefs as a general descriptive trait of teachers in Catalonia, rather than to withdraw existing values and concerns which, admitting variability amongst teachers and the partaking schools, exists in the local pedagogy influenced by the widely existing sociocultural values. In such way, the present document is aimed to be interpreted as a tool created to generate pedagogical reflection over an existing reality without being unworthy of many of the initiatives many educational teams are developing on intercultural matters.

Finally, and more personally, I would like to thank the teachers and schools which have kindly accepted to take part in the research. Developing such an investigation has been a pleasure but also a delicate pedagogical challenge; a journey of personal growth and constant reflection, sometimes overwhelming, as I delved into my own beliefs and values, also detecting personal needs. I hope this document enhances some of these processes in other colleagues aiming to advance towards an inclusive and intercultural educational system.
To the teachers of schools A, B, C, D & E, for their participation, honesty and time.

To the “Micos” and “Mones” and their families.

A kind thank you.
ECE teacher and Children of immigrant origins: perceptions, implications and pedagogy

Dissemination document

Reflection tools
Early Childhood Education (ECE) schools are a world of their own where can be found all kinds of diversity amongst teachers, children, families, environments, possibilities,...

Let’s take a look at the teachers.

Certainly in ECE, teachers work together all having their own instructive styles and also different perceptions of what they believe is educational quality.
It is expected that most teachers begin their profession with great expectations and projects in mind...

...but evidence shows how reality can sometimes be more complex than expected.
Where we do find an agreement, is on admitting that today’s school demands have changed.
... but sometimes pedagogy...
perhaps has not changed that much...

Evidence shows how ECE
tends to reproduce a schoolifying\(^2\) tendency
where concern over reading and writing
and cognitive contents is made evident.

 Nonetheless, evidence also shows how ECE teachers are aware of incongruities between their actions and their pedagogical believes.

“I don’t know why we do this when what children really need in such early ages is to socialize, experiment and gain in autonomy…”

So where does this pressure come from?
Perhaps pressures are external?
Everyone talks about educational quality...
about what “should be” a “good” education
or what is believed as such...

As is natural, children’s families also talk about this,
and a lot!...
they also compare with others...
As could be expected,
they want the best for their children, but...
... time and opportunities often fail
(sometimes, a little energy and willingness too).
Therefore, it is not strange that, occasionally, distances are kept between schools and families.

Obviously, when this is the case, it is very difficult to coordinate mutual efforts and share a common educational project.

Could it be that they have all forgotten that ECE settings are not compulsory?
Going back to the system’s quality discourse, recently there is a lot of talk on children’s diversity.

Teachers prove to be aware of such and many make efforts to advance towards inclusion, reducing *barriers to learning and participation.*

But, not everyone is convinced...

“Yes, diversity is good, of course, *but it delays the rhythm of the rest of the class*”...

Have they forgotten that the objective of ECE is to fulfil the educational needs of children who cannot reach these at home?
Amongst so much diversity, now everyone talks about cultural diversity.

It has suddenly become very visible.
And cultural diversity
makes everyone think about immigration...

“I’ve heard that...”,
“Wow! The things I’ve heard about that!”

So much talk about it, sometimes,
one comes to believe it...
But teachers’ are educational professionals and are, by all means, caring and loving with all children.

Still, they may be influenced by all they hear and may affect their expectations of children.
In any case, many schools and teachers are aware of cultural diversity and strive to make children welcome.

Many schools outstand by their multicultural projects...

“Come here, sweetie, I’ll show you all the important things whilst you tell me a tale or two from where you come from”.

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...They also work hard to teach the language as soon as possible.

Of course! While these children do not speak the language, “you can’t work proper contents”.

Auch!!!
Now again, the language is not a problem. ECE teachers admit that, with time and caring attentions, children of immigrant origins quickly learn the language and become one more in the group.

Then...

“all children are the same”. 
But children are not the same, and society reminds them of their differences.

Is it necessary to ignore the differences?
Should they be made evident?
How about the children’s families?

Oh! The things they hear!

As communication is delicate, some families opt to take their children away. Consequently, the school becomes occupied by new arrivals... therefore favouring the creation of ghetto schools.

Some teachers also show concern about such schools, ...
They say they’ve heard a lot of things about working in these schools...

Will that be true?
Certainly, evidence shows how special efforts of close contact between school and families of immigrant origins occur and positive links are established, sometimes, even affectionate...

... but these often prove to be cordiality attitudes of interest for cultural anecdotes...

These are definitely gestures of multicultural proximity but, are they intercultural?

This opens a new question:

Do teachers know the difference between multiculturality and interculturality?
Meanwhile, children’s cultural diversity’s educational potential is wasted.

Furthermore, educational potential of their linguistic diversity is also wasted when aiming to foment a plurilingualistic competence addressing all children.

Once again, a question is opened: Do teachers understand the meaning of *plurilingual competence*?
In the particular case of the Catalan language, developing a plurilingual competence is of upmost importance when facing the arrival of children of immigrant origins.

This is a new challenge for the Catalan linguistic model: making new languages present and, at the same time, watching over Catalan as the learning language in a social environment where Spanish is widely extended.
Searching for conclusions throughout ECE teacher’s discourse...

... a number of conditionings emerge which should be taken into consideration when dealing with ECE settings and intercultural contexts which can also be considered on a general scale.

The investigation highlights:
On the one hand,

1. **Teacher training needs** in:

   - **Early Childhood Education**:
     Before focusing on a child’s origin, it is important to revise the pedagogical fundaments of the educational stage, in this case, ECE’s.

   - **Intercultural Education**:
     On a parallel, it is necessary to delve into intercultural education, understanding such as a mutually committed and critical sensitive attitude towards diversity, different to multicultural education.

   - **Plurilinguistic Competence**:
     Having understood the previous concept, it is necessary to advance towards a plurilinguistic competence, entailing second language learning implications and adjusting the existing immersion policies towards the new context.
On the other hand, the investigation also highlights a need to establish:

2. **Close and affective links between school and families:**
   It is necessary to share expectations and concerns, dismantle stereotyped perceptions and find meeting points, both with local families and also with families of immigrant origins.
So now, what?

Towards a definition of proposals

In relation to the detected needs, the investigation suggests advancing towards an intercultural educational model closer to the *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* concept referred by B. Osborne, and founded over four axles:

1. Emotional Competence
2. Knowledge
3. Opportunity
4. Commitment

![Diagram](image.png)
1. Emotional Competence

Understood as the foundation of all educational action, referring not only to children, but also to their families and the professional colleagues networking...

...emotional competence is perceived as the main trait of teacher’s excellence, independent of a child’s characteristics or the educational context.
2. Knowledge

More so, teachers must have good training; in this case, pedagogical training in ECE and also in intercultural education and plurilingual competence.

Incoherence between teacher’s pedagogical actions and beliefs cannot occur when ECE priorities are clear. Alongside, teachers should not be so vulnerable to external pressures or be influenced by stereotyped perceptions without questioning them and behaving in a compromised manner.
3. Opportunity

Furthermore, **opportunities** for reflexive inquiry should be enhanced: it is necessary to question presuppositions and dismantle stereotypes.

Such opportunities should occur also amongst children’s families, either local or of immigrant origins. The investigation shows how such opportunities allow to build much more critical perceptions over cultural diversity.
4. Commitment

None of the previous axles will make sense without a **committed attitude**, both personal and collective.

*Shall we get started?*
Children are children, with multiple languages of origin, customs, expectations, illusions, knowledge and possibilities. Schools and teachers are, up to a great extent, responsible of their evolution today and tomorrow.

Let's work together, step by step, with coherence, critical responsibility and sensitivity. Let's work together towards an inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy.
“Cowardice asks the question - is it safe? Expediency asks the question - is it politic? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But conscience asks the question - is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but he must do it because conscience tells him it is right”

Dr. Martin Luther King
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