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INTEGRATION POLICIES OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN CATALONIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

This article arises from the European research project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE). It is focused on a part of the fieldwork carried on with stakeholders in Spain in order to make an empirical public policy evaluation. The results reveal a lack of coordination between governments and institutions, the need to improve policies for the integration of migrant children, the urgency of avoiding segregation, and a significant commitment to policies with a more holistic and child-centred approach.

Keywords: integration policies, compulsory education, migrant children, educational opportunities.

POLITICHE DI INTEGRAZIONE DEI BAMBINI MIGRANTI IN CATALOGNA: SFIDE E POSSIBILITÀ DI CAMBIAMENTO

SINTESI

L'articolo nasce dal progetto di ricerca europeo Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE). Si concentra su una parte del lavoro svolto sul campo con le parti interessate in Spagna al fine di effettuare una valutazione empirica delle politiche pubbliche. I risultati rivelano scarso coordinamento tra governi e istituzioni, la necessità di migliorare le politiche di integrazione dei bambini migranti, l'urgenza di evitare la segregazione e l'importanza dell'impegno per le politiche basate su un approccio più olistico e incentrato sul bambino.

Parole chiave: politiche di integrazione, istruzione obbligatoria, bambini migranti, sfide di educazione

INTRODUCTION

Migration to Europe is not a new phenomenon; however, the profile of new migrants has changed considerably in recent years due to the existing conflict zones in the Middle East and elsewhere. The Eurostat report (2019) indicates that the migration phenomenon has grown considerably in the last five years and European countries are faced with an unprecedented situation, especially in view of the fact that current immigration to Europe can no longer be governed by economically-oriented migration policies but has to comply with humanitarian-oriented asylum law. The need to rethink integration policies and strategies starting from different humanistic and social science viewpoints is therefore timely and, above all, necessary to investigate the current situation and propose adequate solutions (Mügge & van der Haar, 2016; Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016; Rudiger & Spencer, 2003). The present situation calls for the advancement of educational resources and for the development of new expertise in educational institutions, particularly because newly arrived migrant children have unique learning needs.

In light of present conditions, we proposed the European research project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) (HORIZON 2020 - 822664)¹ aimed at identifying and responding to specific newly arrived children's needs and translate them into policy measures for educational professionals, practitioners and political decision-makers in order to stimulate social inclusion. This article focuses on a part of this project in which we review European, Spanish and Catalan education policies for migrant children, and relate them to integration in education. To be more specific, this study is based on the results of interviews with 14 stakeholders in Spain.

POLICIES FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

In this section, we review the main policies referring to integration and education of migrant children in Spain, focusing on the specific details of the Catalan case. We address the three main legal frameworks that converge: the international, the state and the autonomous legal framework.

At the European level, Member States must aim to guarantee children's rights among their high-priority objectives, since they constitute the main test of Human Rights in societies. The 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have been characterized by an international effort to legislate for the protection of the rights and freedom of minors, resulting in a

great proliferation of ratified legislation and practical instruments for their effective protection (Torrado, 2014). These declarations are instruments that seek to combat discrimination against children for different reasons and especially serve foreign minors and the need to address their protection and assistance. Therefore, international law addresses the protection of children in all territories, regardless of race, religion, nationality, sex or disability, or discrimination based on the ideas or opinions of families; it promotes the means and necessary measures by the social welfare organizations, courts or legislative-administrative authorities. The text that has most influenced attention to the rights of minors is the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Torrado, 2014). Since the inception of the Declaration, a proliferation of international agreements followed, which has helped to promote and raise awareness of the need for greater involvement of the international community in the protection of children, since it is understood that foreign minors are a vulnerable group facing multiple, intertwined forms of oppression (Torrado, 2014).

At a national level, the State assumes a control role, regulating the entry and exit and the length of stay of foreigners. However, autonomous communities are responsible for integration policies, by addressing social integration such as social services, health and education (Iglesias de Ussel, 2010). Therefore, integration has to be managed by the public administration as an objective to be achieved between immigrants and the reception community. All public policies and services must adhere to this objective, promoting economic, social, cultural and political participation. Thus, integration is characterised by cooperation between the State administration, autonomous communities and city councils (Fernández-Suárez, 2015). To carry out their integration policies, almost all the autonomous communities have „Integration Plans“ or „Migration Management Plans“ with variable frequency, either biennial or quadrennial (Comunidad de Madrid, 2018). General strategies and policies for integration are developed at each level. Some contain specific measures regarding immigrant children, although they are always linked to their role as students and have an educational focus because the main idea in this legal framework is that their status as minors has priority over their status as foreigners. This means that according to Spanish law, all minors have their rights recognized as minors, regardless of their immigration status (Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía, APDHA, 2019).

Due to the decentralized educational system (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2017) and the fact that integration policies

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consider the education of migrant children to be the responsibility of each individual region (with the exception of the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, which report directly to the Ministry of Education), the legislation can vary significantly from one autonomous community to another. While this is true, all state-level regulations consider migrant students to be students with special educational needs (Arroyo & Berzosa, 2018). Because of this agreement, various measures have been implemented to respond to the specific educational needs of these students: curricular adaptation, preparation of didactic material, flexible grouping, organization of extracurricular activities or specific language classrooms for immigrants (Centro de Información y Documentación Educativa [CIDE], 2005). These measures can be classified into four main types: (1) measures of reception, (2) attention to linguistic and cultural diversity, (3) attention to families, (4) teacher training (Consejo Económico y Social de España [CES], 2019). The main measures are: language support, involving families and local communities, school curriculum and teacher professional development and segregation issues.

Focusing on the case of Catalonia, the objectives established by the educational system should take into consideration and follow those established by the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Human Rights, 1989). In addition, within the framework of International Legislation, the agreements of the European Parliament (April 2, 2009) on the education of the children of migrant workers in Europe indicate some points that establish how the integration of migrant students should be. Carrasco et al. (2011a) draw together some of these points that are interesting for the present investigation, such as: integration must be based on principles of equal educational opportunities and must guarantee equal access to quality education, rejecting temporary or permanent solutions that generate segregation; the integration of children and young people of migrant backgrounds in schools must be carried out as soon as possible since it favours better performance in compulsory and post-compulsory studies; states must dispense with the implementation of special classes for children and minors of migrant origin; all students (migrant and non-migrant) must be treated equally and teachers and schools must consider diversity as an increasingly common, not extraordinary, situation.

However, the research has led us to explore how there are paradoxes and difficulties arise when trying to achieve these objectives. When analyzing educational policies related to the reception and integration of migrant students, in terms of equity and social cohesion, there are some problems and gaps, and a lack of coherence between these policies and discourses and the practices developed.

METHODOLOGY

One of the aims of the MiCREATE project was to collect and identify the common challenges of integration of migrant children through interviews with experts and relevant stakeholders such as government officials, policy-makers, social workers, and NGO representatives. The purpose of the interviews was to assess all stakeholders' needs, to identify gaps for programme development and look for further research directions. At the same time, the project sought to assess the extent to which stakeholders are willing to change, as they are seen as facilitators of change and potential agents for promoting improved integration policies for migrant children.

In this way, the interviews provided insight into what they need and how to make the necessary changes. The criteria for selecting the informants was to have as varied and representative a sample as possible, trying to have representatives from national to local level, from governments to NGOs and educational experts. All the participants were anonymized and accepted to participate voluntarily, after being well-informed about the project, in terms of the information required from them and how that information would be used and disseminated. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and translated into English. The results of this paper are based on the transcriptions. The following tables (table 1, table 2) summarize the sample, organized by stakeholder's position, and the type of data collected from each interview.

RESULTS

In this section topics that interviewees considered more relevant or urgent to pay attention to are compiled. That is, the main problems and challenges in the integration policies of migrant children that were highlighted during the interviews. One of the problems that many interviewees mentioned in different ways and by giving several examples was the lack of coordination between institutions. This sometimes is referred to more specifically as coordination among european, national and autononomical policies, and other times is related to coordination among departments within the same governmental institution. Partially due to this fact, another issue which arose was the lack of a holistic approach to the integration of migrant children policies. Although all the institutions are concerned with migrant children, and wish the best for them, often they have a fragmented view of the problem and therefore, they propose solutions and programs focused on one or two dimensions (e.j. language and curricula, missing a sense of belonging and wellbeing) instead of trying to address the migrant children needs in their entirety. Another group of topics that emerged highlight structural problems within the families, specifically the problem

Table 1: Stakeholders interviewed.

Interviewee from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (Spain).
Two interviewees from Department of Education, Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government, Catalonia, Spain)
Interviewee from Department of Social Welfare and Family, Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government, Catalonia, Spain)
Interviewee from an institution related to UNESCO (Catalonia, Spain)
Interviewee from the area of Equality, Migration and Citizenship, Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government, Catalonia, Spain)
Education Commissioner of the city council of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain)
Deputy of the rights of children and youth (Ombudsman) (Catalonia, Spain)
Member of the Human Rights Institution of Catalonia (Catalonia, Spain)
Director of NGO (Catalonia, Spain)
Expert in Migration and Mobility, from a NGO (Catalonia, Spain)
Researcher at UAB (Autonomous University of Barcelona) specialising in migration, education and inequality (Catalonia, Spain)
Teacher and researcher at Uvic (University of Vic) specialising in social inclusion and migration (Catalonia, Spain)
Director of Educational Foundation (Catalonia, Spain)

Table 2: Data and information from the interviews.

General Information	Status and function in the organisation, kind of expertise, principles of the organization regarding integration and migration
Assessment of integration policies and practices for migrant children	Assessment of policies, practices, programmes of integration, main problems, measures and suggestions for improvement, what responsible parties should do, the role of academics and researchers
Migrant children's needs	Practices and programmes to respond to the migrant children's needs, difficulties, and responsible actors
Knowledge about integration, readiness for change	Changes that can be made, readiness of the institution to carry out these changes, challenges, the role of researchers in these changes

of the regrouping of them and the unaccompanied migrant minors. In the following subsections, we will present these issues by quoting verbatim responses by interviewees and including studies and publications to illustrate them.

Lack of a holistic approach and a well coordinated effort between institutions

The Spanish legal and political framework is defined by a distribution of responsibilities and authority in the area of integration in various public institutions. It is marked by collaboration and articulation be-

tween the general State administration, autonomous communities and city councils (Fernández-Suárez, 2015). However, this system implies that other Administrations assume the integration processes, which may evolve differently in each territory. In this way the framework in which the policy of integration of migrants is developed has diffuse characteristics, resulting in a patchwork integration model (Martínez de Lizarrondo, 2009a, 120).

In this way, some informants complained of a certain disconnection between departments and the policies they propose. For instance, an educational commissioner comments:

Our (Mediterranean models) are strongly centralised and very segmented. So here we face a complexity, not only do we have a problem of inter-administrative coordination (i.e. how the municipality, the generality, the state and the EU coordinate with each other), but there is also a problem of intra-administrative coordination (i.e. when you within your own administration are competent to do something and you want to do it, the keys you have to touch are at a theoretical level).

A university researcher also points out a division between policies about migration and integration and educational policies towards migrant pupils in the Catalan government. In fact, the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Catalan Government) has thirteen departments and the migrant issues are evident in some of them: Department of Education;² Department of Labor, Social Affairs and Families;³ Department of External Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency, Department of Territory and Sustainability and the Department of Justice.

Martínez de Lizarrondo (2009a) attributes this autonomic and inter-departmental disconnection to the inexistence of a coherent state integration plan, where municipalities are in charge of responding to clear strategies of integration. Nevertheless, Iglesias de Ussel (2010), although at some point argues that:

as a result of the development of immigration policies by the Autonomous Communities themselves, incompatibilities or frictions with the central government increase due to the different competences that each one assumes and the different consequences that immigration causes at the state and regional or local levels (Iglesias de Ussel, 2010, 517).

At the end of the report he defends the effectiveness of the integration plans carried out in Spain. Specifically he highlights the Catalan principle of territoriality as an Integration Plan that “avoids the abstraction or generality of the measures and comes to specify spatial and temporal aspects in the execution of them, involving in this territorialisation the different Administrations” (Iglesias de Ussel, 2010, 179). According to Ussel, these plans are fostering

a better organisation of the competencies between government, autonomous communities and municipalities to respond to the main cornerstones of a decent process for integrating migrant people: the control of flows, integration of immigrants and co-development (or development cooperation).

While the university researcher interviewed recognised good intentions from all sides, she considered it to be unacceptable that social integration policies are disjointed from educational integration policies. In another interview, professionals from the Department of Education respond to this by mentioning that it is a question of disagreement between general directors. Conversely, an expert on migration and mobility, justifies this perception by saying that institutions do not always accomplish adequate policies for children’s wellbeing and children’s rights decrees. And she asks for more policies of inclusion, and policies that aim to provide equal opportunities in Spain, as well as a review of the international agreements that the country has with other countries. She put the example of the commercial agreement between Spain and Morocco. According to her, if Spain reconsidered some laws between their countries, some Moroccan families would not need to migrate to Spain looking for a better life.

In the same vein, the director of an educational foundation stated that although we have a long tradition of receiving migrants (since the 60s and 70s), “we still do not have a very clear policy on the reception of this population, nor how to assist these children in the educational processes so that they are successful”. She calls for a more holistic approach in integration policies: “and the longer we take to resolve and have a policy that is holistic, that addresses the various elements that come into play, that accompany families, that accompany children, etc., the worse it will be”.

In line with what has been reviewed, it seems that the Spanish government is aware of the diversity of cases related to migration among autonomous communities. Thus, on one hand there is the acknowledgement of the need for certain autonomy between regions but, on the other hand, there is the risk of contradiction or discoordination with national or even european policies (Sedmak, Medaric & Zadel, 2013). In order to avoid possible conflicts, the government has proposed different integration plans,

2 In charge of providing information, facilities and resources for the schooling and enrollment to the different educational offers, there is a specific basic information for the enrollment processes in compulsory education in several languages (<http://queestudiar.gencat.cat/ca/preinscripcio/info-idiomes/>). In addition, this department has two areas committed to orient and accompany migrant and the most vulnerable students and their families in their reception and development throughout different educational stages (<http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/ca/arees-actuacio/centres-serveis-educatius/programes-innovacio-pedagogica/formacio-professional/plans-educatius-entorn-0-20> and <http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/projectes/alumnat-origen-estranger/alumnatnou/acollida/>).

3 The webpage of this department is in Catalan, Spanish, French and English. It has an area dedicated to immigration and refugees (https://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits_tematics/immigracio/) and another one committed to ensure children’s and young people’s rights, with special attention to those who are the most vulnerable (https://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits_tematics/infancia_i_adolescencia/).

although according to the stakeholders interviewed it creates the impression that at the moment these plans need improvement.

With regards to the need for a holistic approach to migrant children integration, there is also the problem of Intercultural language education policies that have been mainly limited to the language needs of migrant students whilst they may have educational needs of all kinds, and not just the need to learn the language of the host country. There is a need for basic adaptation, since they come from another educational system and another culture. In addition, the different material needs, stability, employment of families, etc., will affect their integration and learning processes. As the ombudsman argued: "They may also have emotional needs due to the difficulties they may have at home and, perhaps, they may need some type of support for their emotional well-being". Moreover, some interviewees criticise that current policies still work under the logic of controlling migratory flows when the present reality is that we are living in a very diverse society. It is not only a question of newly arrived migrants versus national citizens, but the reality is much more complex with many nuances, as well as a two-way process that not only involves migrants, but also wider society.

Integration policies in schools

An important and unsolved issue which arose from the interviews was the segregation of schools due to political, economic, and social reasons. As it was previously discussed, segregation within schools has increased in recent years in Spain (Murillo, Martínez-Garrido & Belavi, 2017; Marcos & Ubrich, 2016; Síndic de Greuges, 2016; Bonal, Zancajo & Scandurra, 2019). The main reason is that Spain tends to be a segregated society (Tort & Simó, 2007), whereby migrants with low incomes and at risk of poverty live in concentrated communities on the outskirts of main cities or in specific districts, where they can find more accessible housing (Martínez de Lizarrondo, 2009b). Since the migrant fluxes has increased in recent years, segregation has risen too. In response to this, in Catalonia, for example, in the last decade the Catalan Ombudsman has been pressuring Catalan Government to face up to this problem. A report from 2006 warns of school segregation and the peril that it entails "not only from the point of view of equal educational opportunities, but also from the perspective of the erosion of social and community cohesion" (Síndic de Greuges, 2006 cited on Tort & Simó, 2007). As a result of this persistent work, in 2019 the Catalan Ombudsman and the Department of Education of Catalan Government

signed an agreement against school segregation (Síndic de Greuges de Catalunya, 2019). However, segregation is still an unsolved problem in those Spanish cities with large proportions of migrant families.

The education commissioner of the city council of Barcelona explained in the interview that one of the main lines in which they work is a contingency plan against school segregation, since unfortunately ghetto⁴ schools continue to be created. He gave the example that in Barcelona in a neighbourhood where there are 30% immigrants and there are two schools next door, one welcomes 2% of the foreign population of the neighborhood and the other 60–70%. Thus, the segregation and, therefore the contingency plan, is linked to the child's socio-economic condition, their social vulnerability, not their nationality. This plan is based on two elements: the impact on student admission policies and on enrollment management. Because the reason why some schools have almost all migrant children in the district enrolled, while others have few or none enrolled is related to the Spanish enrollment system in which families can choose the school for their children. As the interviewee exposed:

There is a phenomenon that we may call pedagogical ghettos because there are families who come to the administration to demand that they have the right to choose the education of their children and you must provide them with a place in the school and the type of pedagogy that they demand.

The result is that there is a contradiction between the social equity and excellence objectives included in educational policies and the mechanisms for selection and admission of students allowed by the educational authorities and carried out in schools, "that respond to pressures from social groups and family strategies to obtain social and academic capital of prestige through school socialisation" (Carrasco et al., 2011b, 369).

This right to choose schools entails that some schools have 'live enrollment'. So, the problem with segregation comes from this phenomenon, which means that students can enroll throughout the year. That is, during the scholastic year, those schools that have not fulfilled all the places can receive new enrollments which most of the time are from newly arrived migrant children. This usually happens with schools that at the beginning of the course already count on a high percentage of migrant pupils being enrolled. On this subject, the Director of Educational Foundation in Barcelona comments that "there can be no policies to accompany the school environment

4 According to Anyon in his work *Ghetto Schooling* (1997), we can understand the "ghetto-school" as one that is characterized by having at least these three factors perpetuated over time: institutional, economic and professional abandonment; distrust in the integrating and embracing capacity of the school by teachers and families; and sociocultural or racial isolation.

(issue of ratios, student distribution, live enrolment), if there are no policies that enable this school to do its work to combat the segregated social composition". According to Tort and Simó (2007), the problem lies in the difficulty to find a balance between the right of families to choose a school and the right of all children to enjoy a quality education (Tort & Simó, 2007, 128).

In Spain there are private, concertada (schools sponsored by a public voucher system) and public schools, and usually the highest concentration of migrant students is in public schools (Martínez de Lizarrondo, 2009b; García et al., 2015). In Barcelona, two out of three public schools double the closest private school in foreign student number (Rodríguez, Puente & Oliveres, 2019). According to Martínez de Lizarrondo, 2009b, 260),

there are more and more cases of parents of native students avoiding schools with a notable presence of immigrants and enrolling their children in other schools where their presence is less numerous. In this sense, the concertada schools usually do their best not to take in immigrant students.

In addition to inter-school segregation mediated by social processes that affect educational inequality, the interviews have highlighted the importance of paying attention to intra-school segregation. Thus, another important issue pointed out by the interviewees is the excessive emphasis on linguistic integration in intercultural educational policies in schools. Foreign students are considered as „students with special needs" by the regulatory bodies. Firstly, we find that within the category of students with special needs, different subgroups are combined. Students who have enrolled late or are living in disadvantaged social situations, groups that often also correspond to the first stages of immigration, can study in classes together with students with cognitive, sensory, motor, psychic or behavioural problems (Carrasco, 2011). In this way, there cannot be a good understanding of migrant minors, nor are their specific needs being attended to. Secondly, newly arrived migrant children with low level language skills in the host country's language are placed in „specific language classrooms". The aim is to promote the acquisition of the language as quickly as possible to join specific classes (Arroyo, 2010; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody, 2017). As a result, these students are placed in separate groups for some lessons (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). The fact that integration is mainly limited to the acquisition of the host country language, makes other structural problems invisible or lower on the agenda of migrant children integration. As an interviewee states:

The linguistic correction is placed above the knowledge of the curricular contents and that is very serious [...] the communicative competence and the curricular competence and the language have to be valued, the linguistic correction should be the last thing. It cannot be the first nor can it be the barrier to evaluation and that this is leaving them behind. (researcher at the UAB, specialising in migration, education and inequality)

Thus, cultural difference is almost perceived as a migrant condition rather than a social condition (Gregoriou, 2011). Migrant children not only need to learn the new country's language, but need to know and get used to a different educational system and culture. Going to separated classrooms makes it difficult to access cultural practices and learning that go beyond the knowledge of the language. In addition, the different material needs, stability, employment of families, etc., will affect their integration and learning processes. As the Deputy of the rights of children and youth in Catalonia (Ombudsman) argued: "They may also have emotional needs due to the difficulties they may have at home and, perhaps, they may need some type of reinforcement for their emotional well-being". Therefore, the work with a foreign student must be adapted and delivered with full awareness of their particular social, cultural, educational and personal circumstances, as well as their emotional and psychological state.

The consequence is that the practice of separating students within schools in order, paradoxically, to achieve their integration, can create internal segregation. Differentiated educational spaces reproduce unequal relationships within the school, since students of foreign origin do not end up accessing the same opportunities as the regular classroom. Research shows the ways in which internal segregation hinders intercultural contact and relationships between the students (Hallinan & Williams, 1987; Oakes, 1985 both cited in Carrasco et al., 2011b). The goal is to integrate or include these foreign students, but the current measures do not help to build a socio-culturally and linguistically diverse student population.

Policies in regrouping families

As it has been discussed, one of the political objectives that should be met, in line with other international policies, is the integration of migrant children and youth in schools should be carried out as soon as possible, since it facilitates better performance in their studies. However, one of the obstacles to achieving this is in Immigration Law itself, due to the family reunification system, which is not designed to facilitate immigration including children. Family reunification is a process of integration within immigrant populations. This occurs when non-EU foreigners with a residence and work

permit start to join members of their family to live in their host country (spouse, own children and children of the spouse and own ascendants and of the spouse) who are in a non-EU country (Pastor & Martínez, 2015). According to Council Directive 2003/86/EC (European Union, 2003, point 4), “Family reunification . . . helps to create sociocultural stability facilitating the integration of third country nationals in the Member State”. However, it gives certain freedom to Member States to apply it in any manner they see fit. In Spain, there are several laws related to family reunification,⁵ and among other requirements, the applicant must prove to have a renewed residence permit, have employment and / or sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of the family and provide documentation of adequate housing (Pastor & Martínez, 2015).

According to an expert on Migration and Mobility, these conditions are “practically impossible to achieve”. And she adds: “these women come here to work, to support and to guarantee a generational improvement for their children and instead cannot bring them. So that is an impediment and a big frustration for them”. And not only frustration, but also a mixture of emotions such as stress, loneliness, and emotional turmoil (Martínez-Taboada et al., 2017). A respondent from the Department of Social Welfare and Family also mentions: “The Immigration Law establishes that the migratory process is individual, and once people have the conditions to emigrate, which are not simple, they can request the right to family reunification”.

In relation to this issue, an informant from the area of Equality, Migration and Citizenship states that this legislation depends on the State, and that there are regrouping guidelines that are European, a standard EU law that is very difficult to change. He pointed out that family migration has a big impact on education, that one of the reasons why migrants have worse school results is the late family reunification, and that the earlier they arrive, the greater the probability of success in school:

For example, with Latin America, there is a separation of 7 or 8 years. When you arrive you don't know your mother; you have grown in a certain way, with your grandparents [...] Besides, it is clear that separating a mother from her child is inhuman.

This is not only an issue that affects the school integration system and pupils' performance. According to this interviewee, the consequences of transnational motherhood can be very serious for children who come to Spain, especially on an emotional and personal level. Migration is already a difficult process, and

minors often experience situations of migratory duels, uprooting, etc. Delayed family reunification only adds complexity for both parents and children. That's why it is important that the governments take a sensible view with this and try to make it easier for migrant families.

Policies for young migrants between 16 and 18 years old

Another issue that appeared frequently in the interviews was the reality of unaccompanied migrant minors becoming an important phenomenon. Recently, populations have increased and their profiles have diversified. Within this reality, there is still a lot of work to be done from the side of the reception countries. An interviewee from an NGO expert in Migration and Mobility, mentioned the criminalisation of this specific group and how generally young men are assumed to have a criminal risk profile. According to this, the interviewee from the Department of Social Welfare and Family in the Catalan Government explains:

in Catalonia a fake image of radicalised young migrants has been built. Therefore, I believe that there are increasing challenges or new important lines to consider when discussing public policy. Not only for the attention but also for the management of all the perception that is socially held of these groups. (Department of Social Welfare and Family, Catalan Government)

Another interviewee from the Department of Social Welfare and Family in the Catalan Government also mentioned that the work with unaccompanied foreign minors is a big challenge. She explained how in Central Catalonia there are approximately 200 unaccompanied foreign minors who are in centers supervised by the DGAIA (General Directorate for the Care of Children and Adolescents), or in reception centers. The majority, between 70% or 80%, come under an agreement with their families. Educational work is being done with them: children under 16 are all in school; those between 16 and 18 years old are doing occupational training programs. Also, once they arrive they have to surmount difficult barriers while trying to formalise their citizenship conditions. There are many administrative obstacles, and although the protection centers help them in this process, there is still widespread stigmatization:

It is thought that unaccompanied foreign minors are those who steal... When they do not even reach 1% in Catalonia. Only this percentage does not want to be part of this process,

5 Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain, Organic Law 2/2009 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration and Royal Decree 557/2011 of April 20

and they have disruptive behaviors or live in situations of theft, trafficking or prostitution. (Department of Social Welfare and Family)

On the other hand, the education commissioner of Barcelona interviewed pointed out the present issue experienced in Catalonia where MENAS (Unaccompanied Migrant Minors) are fleeing from Morocco. These young people basically arrive in Catalonia and Andalusia, overwhelming the response capacities of the system for attending them. These administrations are not prepared to accommodate such an enormous volume of MENAS. Thus, according to him,

this has a bounce effect on the city, because, as the Generalitat (Catalan Government) can't offer enough places or enough skilled professionals to work with these guys, many of these teenagers escape the CRAEs (Residential Centres for Educational Action) and live on the streets [...] so these guys are living in vulnerable infra-human situations. (Educational Commissioner of the city council of Barcelona)

According to the Commissioner, the City Council is the institution "that has to handle it without initially being its competence". Further to this, and related to the previous example of ununified policies, a teacher and researcher of the University of Vic who was interviewed, acknowledges that the most effective policy is one that operates on a municipal level: "it is the one that ends up articulating social and educational policy possibilities or limits. What happens is that the other policies either push or hinder. You see that when it is aligned it works better". Another problem within this issue comes from the regulation in relation to the age of these cohorts. As the Educational Commissioner reported, autonomous communities can take care of MENAS until they are 18. After that, the responsibility falls upon the Spanish Government, changing the situation of these youths overnight.

In general, unaccompanied foreign minors receive treatment that is more in line with the irregular immigrant status than with their underage condition. The interviews also highlighted the existing paradoxes in the current policies:

When they turn 18 years old, the Immigration Law applies to them. Then they are expelled from the system at that young age. So, for foreigners, we do have the consideration that at 18 you are already of legal age, but we are having our children until 30 years old at home. So there are some discrepancies of criteria in a crisis context that reproduce a structural precariousness (NGO member, Expert in Migration and Mobility).

It has to be acknowledged that most of the unaccompanied minors who come to Spain contribute to their families' support. Only 3.6% of them are prosecuted, mainly for minor offences, such as conflict in a refugee center, petty theft, etc (González & Torrado, 2008).

The consideration of these youth as irregular foreigners leads them to the application of the Immigration Law, with their consequent restrictions on rights and freedoms, and even deportation when reaching the age of maturity. On the contrary, the consideration of these migrants as unprotected minors due to their condition of being alone in Spain, means that they are covered by child protection laws, and that the guarantee of their physical, affective and material well-being and their social integration is ensured. European, national and regional regulations reflect this polarity regarding the protection of the less unaccompanied foreigners. This duality is translated into measures and resource planning that move from integration models to expulsion ones. Precisely because of their status as minors and their status as foreigners in an irregular administrative situation, unaccompanied minors are more vulnerable and systematically oppressed.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING EXISTING INTEGRATION POLICIES OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

As a result of the research with experts and stakeholders the following challenges and recommendations arose. Some issues are complemented by the interviewee's suggestions and others with literature reviewed for this paper:

- a. Towards **better coordination** between institutions and governments

Regarding this topic, Tort & Simó (2007) suggest:

to define politically what role local and territorial authorities should have in zoning regulation and quota setting and, logically, what is the necessary degree of coordination between the different competent regulatory agents in a given territory [...] in order to act against the segregative and unequal outcomes (Tort & Simó, 2007, 125).

Some stakeholders also have mentioned the importance of achieving coordination between different institutions and organisations. An expert from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, for instance, asks for a coordination of all the protection systems, and coordination between the different policies, not only educational, but also health, social, etc. An educational commissioner complains that there are some 'made-up policies', that is to say, "the state has plans

of intercultural coexistence which is an abstraction ... that only for administrative functioning, you know, it is rhetoric". However, Iglesias de Ussel (2010, 203–204), explains this phenomenon by saying that "those plans that barely have economic resources remain as mere formal declarations and declarations of intent, but never as authentic social policies". That makes evident the importance of not only establishing good cooperation and articulation between departments and institutions, but also of having enough resources to apply the policies properly.

b. Avoiding segregation

When exploring the capacity of the receiving countries and their educational systems to welcome and integrate migrant students, we find that there are deep and structural imbalances that need to be faced and changed. There is no true equality of school and social opportunities for some children and young people (Carrasco et al., 2011a). Because of this, a truly inclusive policy must guarantee that the conditions that schools offer to access learning, participation and sociability are the same for all students, regardless of origin, social conditions, nationality, etc. According to Tort & Simó (2007, 128), "policies against inequalities or urban policies against residential segregation are indispensable if we want to limit school segregation". It is therefore important to propose policies that seek to avoid segregated neighbourhoods, as well as to ensure balanced enrolment in schools, where families of different backgrounds have the same academic opportunities.

c. Unaccompanied minors

Empirical research with experts and stakeholders points to the need to establish new systems of analysis of the specific and international problems of unaccompanied minors aimed at social protection and integration, which must come from the EU. Therefore, young migrants need reform of the policies that work to create assistance and legal protection measures in accordance with the defense of human rights (Torrado, 2014). Thus, policies at both the international and national levels should ensure that the goal of protection and integration is really achieved. At the same time, there needs to be some policies that address the current gap between 16 and 18 years of age, that is, from the time these children finish compulsory education until they become adults.

d. Family reunification

According to UNICEF report (United Nations Children's Fund, 2016), family reunification ensures better social integration of migrant children, as well as

protecting them and can even save their lives. In this way, they recommend: 1) Providing available information on family reunification processes; 2) Interpreting the conditions for family reunification in the light of the best interests of the child; 3) Giving priority to extension and family reunification files affecting children; and 4) Extend the concept of family. In addition, if there was a regularised entry for fathers and mothers, it would also simplify the process of integrating children. Finally, a follow-up before, during and after the authorisation to reunite the immigrant's relatives has to be granted, in order to promote a more harmonious and successful reunification (Clavijo, 2012).

e. Towards an holistic approach to integration

Policies should contemplate integration beyond the educational system. In different interviews, the idea of the importance to work with migrant students' families has emerged, and of building a relationship between the educational community and the school environment, and that public policies should favour the sense of belonging to the community or the neighbourhood. In this regard, an expert from an institution related to UNESCO mentioned:

There should be an empowerment of the social and associative network and learning spaces beyond schools. [...] The opportunities to consolidate quality education for these children is not only having a good school, but it is also having a good network of interrelation, and this fosters relationships with different groups, diverse networks of social relationships.

On the other hand, „linguistic correction must be the last thing, not to be the first nor to be the barrier for evaluation“ (university researcher interviewed). The focus must go beyond the school system to address the whole process of settlement of a migrant child in the new host community, working on the economic, emotional and symbolic dimensions of their sense of belonging.

f. Towards a child-centered approach:

Throughout the interviews, it emerged frequently that there is no child-centered approach to the implementation of policies in practice. The right to be heard has been introduced in constitutional law, but it needs further implementation. This implies assuming a conception of minors as active and participatory subjects, with the agency to modify their own environment and to participate in the search and satisfaction of their needs. It is necessary to design new approaches in the construction of policies from dialogue and from listening to migrant minors.

CONCLUSIONS

What can be observed from the interviews is that there is no holistic integration currently. Schools cannot carry out their reception and integration plans in isolation. With this in mind, educational policies must be accompanied by labor and housing policies, they must cover the family, educational and social sphere, in order to adequately cover children's needs. Furthermore, currently in Spain the various agents and institutions involved in the integration of migrant children need to work in a more coordinated manner.

What this study has brought to light is the necessity of a paradigm shift for policies to abandon the logic of controlling migratory flows, and to start accepting the diverse society that currently exists, and accepting diversity as an increasingly common phenomenon.

Therefore, it is important not to focus policies only on migration, but to consider policies that involve the whole of society in order to avoid segregation and foster a more egalitarian and diverse country. The challenge is to work towards lines of inclusion policies for equal opportunities, with policies of interaction and recognition. Learning from the experiences of migrant children in the reception countries helps to make transformations towards equality and global justice. Therefore, public policies should take into account the child-centered approach. For this, it is necessary to see them as participants in our society, recognizing their agency to make decisions about their own lives and their well-being. This can also be achieved by reviewing the current policies with unaccompanied migrant minors, and the conditions for regrouping migrant families.

POLITIKE INTEGRACIJE OTROK PRISELJENCEV V KATALONIJI: IZZIVI IN PRILOŽNOSTI ZA SPREMEMBE

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POVZETEK

Članek smo pripravili v sklopu evropskega raziskovalnega projekta *Otroci priseljenci in priseljske skupnosti v spreminjajoči se Evropi (MiCREATE)*, v njem pa se usmerjamo v tisti del projekta, ki obsega pregled evropske, španske in katalonske politike izobraževanja otrok priseljencev in analizo obravnave integracije v teh politikah. Rezultati temeljijo na oceni javnih politik, ki je bila podlaga za predhodna poročila, ter informacijah, pridobljenih z intervjuji z osrednjimi deležniki, kot so vladni uradniki, oblikovalci politik, raziskovalci, socialni delavci in predstavniki nevladnih organizacij. Namen članka je ugotoviti, katere so glavne vrzeli in pomanjkljivosti obstoječih politik, s katerimi integracijskimi izzivi se srečujejo otroci priseljenci v Španiji ter kakšne spremembe bodo potrebne. Rezultati postavljajo v ospredje štiri ključne teme: potrebo po večji usklajenosti med ustanovami ter po celovitem pristopu, segregacijo, združevanje družin in mladoletnike brez spremstva. V zaključku podajamo nekaj priporočil za boljše usklajevanje obstoječih politik, izboljšave veljavnih politik v korist mladoletnikov in preprečevanje segregacije v šolah ter zahtevo po celovitejšem in otrokosrediščnem pristopu k oblikovanju politik.

Ključne besede: integracijske politike, obvezno izobraževanje, otroci priseljenci, izobraževalne možnosti

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