

Diagnosis about Integration process of youth foreign Catalan

Marta Sabariego Puig*, Berta Palou Julián, Esther Luna González

Facultat de Pedagogia. Universidad de Barcelona

Passeig de la Vall d'Hebrón, 171

2ª planta – Edificio Llevant

08035 Barcelona

Teléfono: 93 403 52 20

Fax: 93 403 50 11

* Corresponding author: Email: msabariego@ub.edu;

Received: 2015-2-14; Accepted: 2015-4-12

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a diagnostic study on the real integration process of young migrants in Catalonia. The study was carried out using a descriptive survey of 3,830 young Catalans from varying cultural backgrounds aged between 14 and 18, with the aim of identifying the key factors influencing the integration of Catalan migrant youth. Also, in order to analyze these key elements in greater depth as factors easing and/or obstructing integration, four discussion groups were held with the same young people. Results reveal achievements and challenges for further study, useful for the design of social and educational policies which may promote the integration process, understood in its structural, social, cognitive-cultural and identity dimensions. Our study confirms the need for a society with pluralistic beliefs, principles and actions, which should be reflected in democratic systems and social and educational policies based on the concept of integration as reciprocity.

Keywords

Integration, youth, immigration, citizenship

1. THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION

Various studies on integration in multicultural areas (Aparicio and Tornos 2000; Favell 2001; Borgström et al. 2002; Palou 2011a; Portes et al. 2011) stress two key aspects of the situation: firstly they verify that the coexistence of people of distinct cultural origins causes problems and difficulties, and secondly they also observe that immigrant groups experience many problems integrating with the host society (Pumares, 1996; Colectivo IOÉ, 1992, 1994 and 2002; González, 2002; Freixa, 2003; Palou, 2011a).

In accordance with these findings we have adopted Martínez' (2006) model, which structures the concept of integration into a multi-field framework detailing some of the major factors that explain a successful integration process in terms of its achievement in practice:

- The structural field, referring to the individual's participation in professional activities and social and political institutions on the basis of the principle of equality of opportunities. The variables in this dimension are: the legal situation (citizenship and residence), educational status and position in the labor market, economic resources, and access to housing and welfare systems.
- The cognitive-cultural field, which embraces learning cognitive skills and managing the host society's culture. The variables in this group are: knowledge of the language, political values, cultural values and norms, religious beliefs, and lifestyles.
- The social field, referring to the individual's social relationships inside and out of her/his community, and the availability of avenues of participation. The variables in this field are: the extent and identity of family relationships, contacts with

members of the person's own community, contacts with local people, friendships, and ties with associations and social bodies.

- The field of identity, which includes the subjective dimensions of belonging and personal identification with the community. The variables in this group are: subjective perception of belonging (national and cultural), attitudes of immigrants towards the host society and the latter's attitudes towards them, the type and degree of identification with the host society, and the orientation of the host society towards intercultural relationships (Martínez, 2006: 88-89).

From this multi-field model we see that the key condition allowing us to speak of immigrants' integration is the recognition of their status as citizens, where citizenship is understood to involve ethnic and cultural diversity progressing in this direction, towards a fully intercultural citizenship.

This model implies a challenge that, as Bartolomé and Cabrera (2003) point out, demands open-minded responses taking on board different cultural identities; inclusive responses enabling equality and justice between all citizens; and democratic responses allowing civic participation for all in the construction of the multicultural society we live in.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to arrive at a diagnosis of the real process of young immigrants' integration in Catalonia, specifically from the ages of 14 to 18. We can break this aim down further into two more specific objectives:

1. To identify the key elements in the current state of youth migrant integration in Catalonia by means of a survey from two viewpoints: that of the youth of foreign origin and that of native young people.

2. To analyze in depth the factors which ease and/or obstruct integration, as well as the patterns of these young people's integration process in the Catalan context, basing ourselves on the key fields of integration (Martínez, 2006 and Palou, 2011b).

To address these objectives a mixed-method study was carried out (Creswell, 2003; Burke and Onwuegbuzie, A. J, 2004), comprising a descriptive survey of the young people combined with discussion groups. In this way complementarity between research methods and techniques is built into our analysis. This strategy enables us to study in greater depth the key factors affecting the current state of migrant youth integration in Catalonia, from their own experience and in the first person.

The three phases making up the study were:

- Phase I: selection of and access to informants by the research team.
- Phase II: data collection by the team using the questionnaires and discussion groups.
- Phase III: analysis by the research team of the data obtained and development of conclusions as a basis for designing initiatives favoring coexistence and social cohesion.

3. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Our information-gathering techniques conform to the study's aims and design features.

The techniques used were:

- For the survey, an adapted version of the "*Social Cohesion Amongst Young People Questionnaire*" (Palou, 2010). A total of 3,830 young people aged

between 14 and 18 took part, from varying cultural backgrounds, intentionally selected from 52 Catalan secondary schools, mostly (72%) in Compulsory Secondary Education (up to age 16).

- Four discussion groups with the young people, both migrants and natives, designed to analyze in depth how they themselves experience the process of integration and what they consider to be the key factors facilitating it.

4. RESULTS

Using Martínez' (2006) four fields we present below the results obtained from the diagnostic study.

In the structural field, the normative aspects of integration are defined according to the participants' opinions on who can be considered a citizen. 31.3% of the young people thought that citizens are those who have their "papers in order", tailed closely by 30.8% whose opinion was that citizens are those who "live and work here".

This concept of citizenship predicated on "legalized" administrative status was accompanied by the stereotyping of the immigrant community as a social category marked even more strongly by the current context of economic and financial crisis. Biased representations and negative views, images and attitudes towards immigration, mediated by a logic of excessive differentiation (Delgado, 1998), were confirmed, problematizing the "different other" on two levels:

1. The discourse of social panic. When asked what they thought about migrants and what they believed society thinks, almost half the native participants said that they are thieves, criminals, and trouble-makers, that they are bad and violent, that they cause fights, create problems, lack respect, and make coexistence difficult:

“I don’t care if they come ... what I don’t like is ... that the ones who come, come to steal things ...”; “And we don’t realize that ... you get all kinds of people all over. ...normally it’s true that immigration is associated with vandalism, in general...” (male native students, 11th grade).

School students of foreign origin confirm this socially constructed perception of immigration which associates them with poverty, lack of education, and a uniform, stereotyped image (“they’re all the same”): “—This guy’s from Colombia, so he’s sure to be one of those low-life types, and this one’s Chinese, so he’s sure to be quiet and shy and you can get away with anything with him—so people see it that way ...” (female Uruguayan student, 11th grade). “People discriminate against you because you’re for example Rumanian, and they say that you steal and do bad stuff and that’s the reputation that Rumanians and Colombians have, that they’re all drug dealers, and that’s the bad image they give you...” (male Colombian student, 8th grade).

2. The discourse of competition: immigration is associated with loss of resources (housing, work, access to social services), and this strengthens natives’ rejection of migration. Thus most of the native young people claimed that society treats migrants better (it gives them social assistance, aid and grants, they receive more benefits than we do, they have jobs and housing provided, etc.).

This criticism of the favored treatment of the immigrant community (positive discrimination) is one of the factors which most obstructs integration, together with a negative reception from the host society which stems from attitudes of aversion and/or social stereotyping:

“I knew people too who always held it against me saying I got benefits because I couldn’t buy the school books because they were really expensive. They said, ‘Huh!

They help you but my Mum had to spend 300€ on those books,’ and that makes me feel bad too, because I didn’t want to be different” (male Chilean student, 11th grade).

“Once it happened to me that they wouldn’t let me into a house. When I didn’t wear a veil they did let me in, and when I wore a veil they didn’t let me in, when I wore it they said, ‘Don’t come in!’ It was a Spanish friend’s house”. (female Maghrebi student, 8th grade)

Regarding reasons for migration, it is noticeable that the students, both natives and migrant, and although they may evidence a stereotyped view of immigration, agree in recognizing the same factors as expectations and motives behind migration: one of the main reasons for emigrating is to improve your quality of life (economic improvement resulting from wage increases):

“Here there are loads of things you don’t have in our countries: social services, health, work...” (Maghrebi student, Open Center).

“They’re people who emigrate to another country for various reasons. Like for example for a better future” (native student, 8th grade).

In the social field, the survey and the information yielded by the discussion groups confirmed the following results profile according to the contexts (a) of the school, and (b) of public areas.

In the school context, native young people participated more in classroom and school activities, including those involving a certain responsibility, while young people of foreign origin were more active in their neighborhoods. 32% of the young people had been classroom representatives, 31% took part in a range of school meetings and groups, and 24% in organized out-of-school activities and solidarity projects. However, the

migrant young people participated more in all out-of-school activities ($X^2=10'02$, $p=0'007$, $\alpha=0'05$), and took part less as year representatives ($X^2=10'6$, $p=0'005$, $\alpha=0'05$) and in school meetings ($X^2=62'4$, $p=0'000$, $\alpha=0'05$). In general these adolescents did not consider the school as the ideal area for integration and felt more comfortable in out-of-school activities of a more ludic type, responding more to their needs, thus confirming the results of previous studies (Palou, Rodríguez and Vilà, 2013). Amongst the most common mixed activities favoring intercultural coexistence, theatre groups ($X^2=17'4$, $p=0'000$, $\alpha=0'05$) and dance groups ($X^2=121'4$, $p=0'000$, $\alpha=0'05$) stood out as preferences for the girls, and sports groups ($X^2=450'4$, $p=0'000$, $\alpha=0'05$) for the boys.

When asked about their assessment of cultural diversity in educational institutions, 38% stated that it awakened interest in other cultures. Conversely, 37% also said that it caused more conflict, concurring with previous studies (Freixa, 2003; Alegre, 2005; Palou, 2011b). If this data is analyzed taking into account the origin of students, foreign-born young people are more favorable towards working in multicultural groups. They highlighted the enrichment of the discussions emerging and were less sensitive to the comprehension difficulties and reduction in quality which, on the other hand, the native young people mentioned in their assessments.

Only when immigration is given a real face and young people think about their migrant classmates do they express a more open-minded, respectful, and inclusive attitude in their personal relationships, along with their personal contacts at school. 43% valued the enrichment of work stemming from the diversity of viewpoints; and 35% also valued positively that discussions and debates were more interesting:

“I think it’s good that there are people from other cultures because we can learn about their traditions and the stuff they do in their countries. I don’t know, I like having people from other cultures” (female student, 8th grade).

Discussing intercultural coexistence in public space, 53% of participants stated that “*I don’t mind if people from different cultures live in my neighborhood as long as everyone minds their own business,*” thus favoring acceptance of cultural diversity and the fact of migration within the frame of coexistence, but without the recognition which would imply a step further for coexistence, and which was only considered by 17%. At the same time, a worrying 13% stated openly that “*I don’t like people with cultures different from mine living in my neighborhood.*”

Analyzing acceptance and recognition of migration in more depth, it is necessary to look at opinions on coexistence regarding groups of different origin. Thus, while 80% of the sample accepted having Spanish residents in their neighborhood, only 22% would accept Roma neighbors.

Paradoxically, perception of social rejection in multicultural areas was only expressed by the young migrants. In the discussion groups these young people told stories involving lack of respect and problems encountered participating with natives on an equal basis. There was no evidence that the native young people were aware of this:

“Well I think it’s different and I go round with Asian people, because I had a Spanish friend, but she always laughed at me, so since then I didn’t want to have any more Spanish friends, because I didn’t know how to speak Spanish well, so she laughed at me and I didn’t like it. So I stopped going round with her and since then I’ve always had Asian friends” (male Bangladeshi student, 6th grade).

Turning to social relationships, although in general the participants evidenced relatively diverse relationships, their responses show statistically significant differences according to their place of birth. Thus while the young Catalans and those originating from other provinces of Spain were those who associate more with natives (a certain cultural

incestuousness is observed) , the young migrants were those who more frequently have more varied friendships and associated less with natives. This relationship pattern was found in friendships both at school ($X^2=562'2$, $p=0'000$, $\alpha=0'05$) and in the neighborhoods.

Thus one factor which obstructs integration on the part of both young migrants and natives is their lack of affective social networks (lack of social capital) and their exclusive mixing with people of their own communities, stemming from primary socialization processes and ethnocentric and monocultural educational institutions.

“Well also, when you get here, if people avoid you, it could also be because their parents tell them, ‘Don’t hang out with that lot because they’re bad and they do that stuff, don’t go round with them’;” “Yes, a lot depends on the family. If parents bring up their kids in one way, you can tell them how things really are as much as you like because they’re not going to understand you, because that’s the way they brought them up” (male Chilean student, 11th grade).

These are factors germane to the social field of integration, the lack of which fosters neither social relationships nor participation with other members of the community, as this student says:

“When I went to school for the first time I got to know other people at school because there was another Moroccan kid in my class who helped me at first. I could speak Arabic with him” (female Maghrebi student, Open Center).

Ideally, close relationships and the availability of role models to identify with should play a key part in giving shape to young people’s future directions and ambitions (Portes, Vickstrom and Aparicio, 2011). Beyond these contextual factors, the migrant young

people indicated that personal qualities (respect, friendliness, empathy, sociability, extraversion) were features which boosted integration in the current social context:

“Being yourself. First change yourself and it depends as well. If you want to change the world change yourself first. If you don’t want racism in the world or with the Spanish the first person who has to be non-racist is you” (male Ecuadorian student, Open Center).

Native young people also recognized the need for the reciprocal closeness and empathy which integration involves: the recognition of the “other” starts with interest in and acceptance of their difference, thus confirming the two-way, voluntary and dynamic character of the process:

“That’s what it is, also your intentions, if you want to get to know other cultures and people from another country, because it depends on you if you relate more to one person or not. It’s that, and also feeling comfortable being here” (native male student, 8th grade).

In the cognitive-cultural field we found that the young people’s linguistic situation did not correspond to the bilingualism found in the Catalan context. The majority of participants spoke only Spanish with both family and friends (48% speaking Spanish at home and 7% speaking both Catalan and Spanish with friends).

The linguistic situation in the schools was somewhat different. The most frequent was the use of both Catalan and Spanish (47%), followed by 28% who said that they only used Catalan as the lingua franca at school, and 21% who spoke only Spanish.

Language and, more specifically, learning the language of the migrant’s host country, is the factor which all participants concur in indicating as the most important for integration into the host society:

“I think that language makes it happen, because it’s not the same if someone comes from Latin America, where there are variations on Spanish, and we understand each other the same because it’s still Spanish, it’s still Spanish. So it’s much easier getting across and making friends because they understand you. But if they come from some other country where the language is completely different, it’s going to be much more difficult for them, and it looks like the ones who are adapt best are people from South America” (native male student, 11th grade).

Their opinion was that lack of cognitive skills and ability to manage the host society’s culture (basically, lack of knowledge of the language) imposed a barrier to integration:

“When I came here I didn’t speak Catalan or Spanish, so it was really hard. And then in first year they taught me Catalan but they didn’t teach me any Spanish” (male Bangladeshi student, 11th grade).

Thus since Catalan is also the linguistic medium in the socioeducational institutions, learning it is important for continuing with studies and attaining the success desired. In this sense both how reception is managed (in terms of the willingness and endeavor of the native population), and the setting up of educational initiatives (in host classroom, in tutorial guidance, in subjects like “Education for Citizenship”) and socioeducational initiatives (in open centers and social services) by the schools themselves, were considered basic to facilitating contact, relationships and, finally, integration amongst young migrants:

“The open center has given us opportunities, and it helps you a lot ... They help you find your way. Here, apart from doing your homework, they help you find your way. Yes, really everyone helps you. You make friends. I met Soukaina here. Also

the teachers help you a lot” (male migrant student, Open Center).

Another important variable in this field is the young people’s understanding and critical judgment of public issues. Our diagnosis showed that they tended to be inactive when faced with problems in their surroundings, while their involvement showed a positive relationship to the closeness and meaning of the context in which such problems occurred: thus 53% of participants only took part in school-wide issues if they were asked to, and 28% stated that they always got involved, whereas in the classroom context, closer and more meaningful to them, we observe the opposite tendency: 66% said that they always got involved, compared with 31% who needed to be asked.

In these contexts, on the other hand, knowledge and fulfilment of common rules of coexistence were highly stressed for the integration process. This is a key variable which almost half of those surveyed rated as very important and saw as very unfavorable if not fulfilled.

As for the field of identity, we found the following on participants’ feelings of belonging: a majority (49%) felt Catalan, while 17% felt Spanish, 16% felt they belonged to their country of origin, and 10% felt both Catalan and Spanish. However, the young foreigners maintained two key elements which reaffirmed their ethnic-cultural identity: religion and cuisine.

This data can also be read differently according to young foreigners’ length of residence in Catalonia. Thus 60% living in in the country for less than a year gave more importance to following the rules and behavior of their home countries, contrasting with those living here longer (only 31% of immigrant students resident for between five and ten years had the same opinion ($X^2=19.6$, $p=0.003$, $\alpha=0.05$)).

The time factor is a key one favoring integration into the host country. The young immigrants living here for more than five years were those who most often valued the lifestyles of people from both their place of origin and the host country; while almost half the young migrants living here for less than five years valued more highly the lifestyle of their home country ($X^2=20'1$, $p=0'002$, $\alpha=0'05$). The more expressive cultural features (cuisine, as against the way of dressing and music of their country) lost weight as models of cultural identity as time went on.

Lastly, the young people's sense of civic belonging was mostly linked to the place where they lived. Specifically, 71% of those born in Catalonia felt that they belonged to the place where they were born, while only 37% of the foreigners felt that they belonged to their place of residence ($X^2=335'6$, $p=0'000$, $\alpha=0'05$).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Our results in the four fields necessary to integration confirm that a society which is plural in its beliefs, principles and actions should be reflected in its democratic systems and in social and educational policies based on a concept of integration as reciprocity (Maalouf 1999; Bartolomé 2002; Siguán 2003; Chaib 2005); with integration understood as a fundamental principle for the management of diversity (Delgado 1998; Chaib 2005); and a right to difference grounded in the acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity and the building of social cohesion on the basis of equal participation in a common public culture, amongst everyone, with a voluntary acceptance of this responsibility.

6. REFERENCES

- Aparicio, R. and Tornos, A. (2000). Immigradoion and Integration Policy: Towards an Analysis of Spanish Integration Policy for Immigrants and CIMs. EFFNATIS Working paper 32. [En línea]. Disponible en: http://www.mmo.gr/pdf/library/Spain/Paper32_UPCO.pdf
- Bartolomé, M. (Coord.) (2002). *Identitat y sociedad. Un reto a la educación intercultural* (131-161). Madrid: Narcea.
- Bartolomé, M. and Cabrera, F. (2003). Sociedad multicultural y ciudadanía: hacia una sociedad y ciudadanía multiculturales. *Revista de Educación*, número extraordinario Ciudadanía y Educación, 33-57.
- Burke, R and Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come. *Educational Researcher*, October 2004, 33, 14-26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033007014>
- Borgström, M., Van Boxtel, R., Brouwer-Vogel, L., Casanova, M.A., Fleck, E., Gundara, J., Hegarty, S., Illner, J., Jones, E., Kovats, A., Le Métails, J., Navarro, J., Pfaff, U., Sánchez, S., Solano, C. and Taylor, M. (2002). Hacia una Europa diferente. Respuestas educativas a la interculturalidad. Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe. [En línea]. Disponible en: <http://www.educacion.gob.es/dctm/ministerio/educacion/ifiie/lineas-investigacion-innovacion/educacion-intercultural/publicaciones-informes/informes/europa-respuestas-educativas-interculturalidad?documentId=0901e72b809c4517>
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chaib, M. (2005) *Ètica per una convivència*. Barcelona: La esfera de los libros.
- Delgado, M. (1998). *Diversitat i integració*. Barcelona: Empúries.
- Favell, A. (2001). Integration policy and integration research in Europe: a review and critique. In T. A. Aleinikoff and D. Klusmeyer (Eds.). *Citizenship Today: Global*

- Perspectives and Practices*. (pp. 349-399). Washington, DC: Brookings Institute/Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Martínez, J. (2006). Ciudadanía, religión e integración social. En Vidal, F. y Martínez, J.L. *Religión e integración social de los inmigrantes: La Prueba del ángel* (pp. 64-85). Valencia: CeiMigra.
- Palou, B. (2010). Cuestionario Cohesión social entre jóvenes. En línea disponible: <http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/handle/2445/34192>
- Palou, B. (2011a). La integración de la juventud de origen magrebí en Cataluña. Tesis Doctoral. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona. Departament de Mètodes i Diagnòstic en Educació. [En línea]. Disponible a: <http://tdx.cat/handle/10803/2363>
- Palou, B. (2011b). Análisis de los elementos configurativos de la ciudadanía como condición para la integración de la juventud de origen magrebí en Cataluña, *Revista de Investigación Educativa*, Vol. 30, Núm. 1, 181-195.
- Palou, B.; Rodríguez, M. and Vilà, R. (2013). Convivencia y participación de jóvenes en Sant Boi de Llobregat (Barcelona). *Revista de Educación*, 361, 252-278.
- Portes, A.; Vickstrom, E. and Aparicio, R. (2011). Coming of Age in Spain: The Self-identification, Beliefs and Self-Esteem of the Second Generation. Princeton University. [En línea]. Disponible en: <http://www.princeton.edu/cmd/working-papers/ilseg-papers>.
- Portes, A.; Celaya, A.; Vickstrom, E. and Aparicio, R. (2011). Who Are We? Parental Influences on Self-identities and Self-esteem of Second Generation Youths in Spain. Princeton University. [En línea]. Disponible en: <http://www.princeton.edu/cmd/working-papers/ILSEG%20Papers/wp1102eWhoAreWeCorrectedSept2011.pdf>
- Siguán, M. (2003). *Inmigración y adolescencia. Los retos de la interculturalidad*. Barcelona: Paidós.