

# Voices of experts and migrant women on educational programs in Spain

**Vozes de mulheres migrantes e experts sobre programas educativos na Espanha**

**Voces de mujeres migrantes y expertos sobre los programas educativos en España**

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## Highlights

Migrant women and experts criticize the non-formal education offered by NGOs.

The lack of opportunities and social capital keeps migrant women away from emancipatory education.

The educational programs offered emphasize underemployment (domestic work, elder care) and reproduce discrimination.

## Abstract

This article discusses the educational programs offered by institutions for the training of migrant women, drawing on the perspectives of both migrant women and experts in Seville. Using a qualitative approach, 18 interviews were conducted. The data were interpreted through a hermeneutic lens and analyzed using an intersectional framework that considers multiple axes of inequality. The findings reveal that, while these educational programs provide training and support, they often focus on instruction linked to stigmatized forms of underemployment—albeit with a few exceptions. At the same time, these programs also serve as spaces for integration, inclusion, and cultural exchange.

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## Keywords

Educational programs. Migrant women. Non-formal education.

Received: 10.09.2023

Accepted: 08.19.2023

Published: 10.16.2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26512/lc30202451101>

## **| Introduction**

Access to training for Latin American migrant women in Spain, as provided by institutional programs, is largely tied to labor niches such as domestic work and elder care—occupations that are often stigmatized and classified as underemployment. Underemployment refers to roles typically filled by migrant women who lack formal training or recognized professional experience within the European Union. These jobs—progressively abandoned by Spanish women—tend to involve long weekly hours and responsibilities that frequently exceed the terms outlined in employment contracts. As a result, migrant women often face severe physical and mental exhaustion, which can lead to discouragement and a diminished pursuit of further educational opportunities.

In this context, there is a need for further research into the training programs available, aiming at expanding migrant women's access to new educational and employment pathways—promoting integration and social inclusion rather than reinforcing prejudice and marginalization. According to Freire (1996) and Rodrigues (2021), in response to emerging demands, critical and high-quality education becomes an essential political tool for processes of visibility.

Considering this, the present study aims to discuss educational programs provided by the public sector and third sector that focus on supporting migrant women, based on the voices of migrant women and *experts* in Seville. These programs, for the most part, operate within the field of education for migrant women.

To this end, two organizations with distinct operational frameworks were analyzed. Despite their differences, they collaborate due to the absence or scarcity of educational offerings that meet actual demand and share a collective approach to service delivery (Denda et al., 2013; Albuquerque, 2021). These processes occur simultaneously between institutions in the Third Sector and the Public Sector.

In this study, the public sector institutions mentioned by migrant women include public universities, schools, migrant protection programs, the *Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal (SEPE)*, *Sevilla Integra*, and the *Cámara del Comercio* [Chamber of Commerce]. These were spaces where the women had educational experiences that impacted their formation as migrants. Two experts from this sector participated in the study. One representing the local government and the other a university. Regarding Third Sector institutions, migrant women sought training and guidance from the following: *Asociación Claver*, *Cáritas*, *Centro Social María Inmaculada*, *Fundación Persán*, *Fundación Cepaim*, *Alianza por la Solidaridad*, *Saros* (a religious movement), and *Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR)*. The experts interviewed in relation to this sector were affiliated with *Fundación Sevilla Acoge*, *Asociación Claver*, *Fundación Solidaridad Candelaria*, and *Movimiento Por La Paz*.

At the same time, the Public Sector is understood here as the part of the State responsible for the production, delivery, and distribution of goods and services by

and for the government or its citizens (Lane, 2000). This brings to light the State's duty to welcome, protect, and provide opportunities to people—whether migrants or not—ensuring the improvement of their lives. However, this duty is ultimately subject to the legal framework and hierarchy of each country's laws (Tejedor Bielsa, 2022). Thus, public sectors in different countries may or may not respond to these demands, depending largely on their respective migration policies, which are far from uniform. It is important to highlight that the concept of the Public Sector is controversial, despite not being a recent topic. This does not exempt it from critique by scholars who argue that the State often fails to fulfill its “homework” (Tejedor Bielsa, 2022).

Pajares (2005) identifies public services as spaces for providing information and assistance on legal matters, language instruction, labor guidance, and other areas. As the legally responsible body for education expenditures directed at migrants, the public sector allocates funding that is proportional to the share migrants represent in the overall population. This challenges the narrative that the Spanish government allocates disproportionate resources to migrants, given that the notion that they receive more than they contribute is fundamentally flawed (Pajares, 2005).

Migration-related services are part of the Spanish Constitution, which establishes the State's responsibility in providing consular assistance, ensuring the right to asylum, and offering social support (Alemán Bracho, 2011). Although social services aim to safeguard individuals from vulnerability and social exclusion, they are largely structured around the needs of nationals. (Alemán Bracho, 2011). In the case of migrants, according to Agrela Romero (2004) and Moreno and Aierdi (2008), social services function as entry points to processes of integration into society and access to broader social policies, such as education, health care, and employment—core elements of public policy.

The presence and availability of multilingual experts, whether in person or via telephone, within public sector services, helps streamline the bureaucratic process and alleviate the emotional toll of migration—especially for migrant women (Pajares, 2005; Alemán Bracho, 2011; Romens, 2021), who are situated at the intersection of gender and migration, among other dimensions.

From a conceptual standpoint, the debate surrounding the term Third Sector—despite being relatively recent, polysemic, and often stigmatized—has been progressively refined in academic and social discussions over time (Albuquerque, 2021). Within this context, the Third Sector is defined as the set of private, non-profit organizations that work for the common good, operating under various organizational structures (Botero, 2001). These institutions seek to address social problems and promote human rights in a committed manner, including issues related to women's migration.

The heterogeneous nature of the Third Sector is characterized by its diverse composition, encompassing foundations, clubs, associations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Originally, its role was centered on charitable actions, mostly promoted by the Catholic Church. Today, however, these institutions

are characterized by their active role and the broad range of services they offer to vulnerable populations (Martínez Buján, 2006; Romão, 2020; Denda et al., 2013)—such as migrant women, who are the focus of this study.

One of the main challenges faced by the Third Sector is the discontinuity of services due to a lack of consistent funding. This is largely a result of its financial dependence on public administration, which provides annual resources used to implement various actions (Denda et al., 2013; Terrón-Caro et al., 2022b). It is widely acknowledged that NGOs and activists play a leading role and possess the most in-depth knowledge regarding the organization of assistance efforts directed toward migrants (Martínez Buján, 2006; Terrón-Caro et al., 2022b). That said, they require financial support in order to effectively implement both welcoming and training initiatives.

According to Terrón-Caro et al. (2022b, p. 55): “Various NGOs organize informal education programs and develop multilingual informational guides to assist migrant women.” These strategies aim to reach a greater number of women who face language barriers as their first challenge upon arriving in the host country.

The increase in the provision of services and job creation in most countries—along with the State’s recognition of the Third Sector’s potential in contributing systematically to social and economic integration—increasingly positions these institutions as key partners and interlocutors in public policymaking (Martínez Buján, 2006; Almeida, 2011; Ferreira, 2012). However, Romão (2010), Montañó (2002), and Cristóvam et al. (2019) criticize this logic, arguing that these responsibilities fall within the State’s mandate, which must respond to the consequences of social inequality.

Given this context, providing access to education becomes an ongoing challenge faced by both migrant women and the Third Sector. Despite their multidisciplinary and welcoming approach—and acknowledging certain limitations—these institutions, together with their activists, are increasingly being constituted as spaces of learning, seeking to make the adaptation process less traumatic.

It is important to note that this article is primarily concerned with the training and educational development of migrant women, rather than with the migration phenomenon itself. To that end, the article is structured into four sections. The first addresses integration and inclusion in society and examines how these processes unfold in contemporary contexts between migrant women and the host society. The second section presents the methodology used in this investigation. The third outlines the analysis conducted using selected empirical material. The fourth presents the conclusions and limitations, highlighting the weaknesses and potential of the educational programs studied.

## **| Integration, inclusion, and migrant women**

The State holds concrete responsibilities in upholding human and democratic rights and protecting vulnerable populations from social exclusion. With that in mind, such

a vision can be pursued with empathy and care, rather than through prejudice, bureaucracy, or violence. Education is one of the primary pathways to integration and social inclusion. It enables individuals to live with diversity and to reject inequality as a natural or inevitable feature of society (Freire, 1996).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019), integration is a process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the host society. It entails migrants being incorporated into the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the receiving community—a process that implies shared responsibilities on both sides. It is important to note that Schiocchet (2017) is among the scholars who critique the applicability of the term integration, arguing that it reflects an analytical lens shaped by the nation-state, governance, public security, assistance, or solidarity. He advocates instead for the use of the term “encounter”, which, in his view, does not erase the subjectivities or empirical and symbolic connections between countries that individuals carry with them. Nevertheless, this article adopts the term “integration”, as it is the terminology used in the training and support programs under analysis.

The integration of migrants must be a priority in public policies, with special attention to migrant women due to their particular vulnerability (Romens, 2021; Terrón-Caro et al., 2022a; 2022b). As Almeida (2010, p. 539) states, “the vulnerable person is someone whose citizenship is fragile, who cannot exercise their right to physical and psychological integrity as a condition for achieving full participation in society.” In other words, it means being wounded, harmed, or diminished. Policy recommendations must be legally grounded and linked to various areas (education, health care, housing). However, it is worth remembering that integration can only be achieved when the migrant is an active participant in the bidirectional process (Castellanos Claramunt, 2019)—a condition that depends on political will from both sides.

The term “inclusion” refers to providing migrants with dignified access to opportunities based on their condition (IOM, 2019)—a condition that, in itself, may already be considered a disadvantage, as life transitions occur under varying circumstances. Inclusion, therefore, goes beyond integration: it requires an approach that responds to diverse needs and promotes cultural practices that support full citizenship (Castellanos Claramunt, 2019; Hiroko et al., 2022). Participation in activities across different social groups can foster a sense of belonging and facilitate connections. In such contexts, people are able to adopt and share new ideas and knowledge (Alenius, 2016; Freire, 1996), thereby expanding their social capital.

The intersectional condition of being a migrant woman must be recognized by social services, as it involves a dual dimension that brings with it a range of variables (Méndez-Fierros & Hlousek Astudillo, 2023). Thus, applying intersectionality as an analytical sensitivity provides a framework for understanding similarities and differences as they relate to power, functioning as a process of discovery that reveals the complexity and contradictions of reality (Crenshaw, 2019;

Collins & Bilge, 2021). Amid this reality, one's social—and indeed migratory—identity is continually being shaped.

The educational programs offered by both types of institutions, as described by the migrant women and experts interviewed, include internal training in areas such as bureaucratic procedures, professional development, labor integration, and legal assistance. These programs are primarily aimed at migrant women. They also offer external training through cultural activities and public mobilizations in urban spaces, aiming to raise public awareness and engage more people in the struggle for recognition and rights.

## **| Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative methodological approach and applies two inquiry techniques, described below, to analyze Public and Third-Sector training programs aimed at migrant women shaping their trajectories in Seville. As human beings, we construct individual and collective life stories that form our identities, serving as key drivers of our actions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Thus, the voices of migrant women and *experts* express authority by narrating what is specific to a person's story and/or context.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted: Twelve biographical narrative interviews with Latin American migrant women who had lived in Seville for over two years, and six semi-structured interviews with experts who had worked in the field for at least two years. Access to participants was achieved through the researcher's participation in training activities organized by the institutions, as well as through referrals from experts, migrant women, and acquaintances. Regarding the women, diverse profiles were considered: nationality, educational level, age, reasons for migration, marital status, and motherhood. As for the experts: native-born and migrant individuals, gender parity, and representation from both the Third Sector and Public Sector. All participants signed a confidentiality agreement and were assigned pseudonyms.

Data was collected using interview guides based on themes aligned with the study's objectives, developed following a literature review. The data were interpreted using a critical hermeneutic framework inspired by Gadamer and Ricoeur, and discussed through an intersectional analytical lens (Crenshaw, 2019; Akotirene, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2021), aimed at exploring the meanings attributed by participants to the phenomena in question.

The narrative interview guide was structured around five dimensions: identities; educational trajectories; personal and affective experiences; gender and migration; and an open section. The semi-structured interview guide was designed around five dimensions, namely: professional trajectory; description of the institution; training space; gender and migration – culture and intersectionality; and an open section. The guides are similar in structure and content but differ in their core objectives. For migrant women, the focus was on the educational process; for the experts, it was on the educational offerings. The goal of including voices from both groups was to

capture different perspectives on the training programs—that is, from both those who teach and those who are taught. Tables 1 and 2 below present the profiles of the interviewees.

**Table 1**

Profile of the Migrant Women Interviewed

Pseudonym	Institution (attended)	Nationality	Occupation	Educational level
Adelfa	University	Brazilian	Researcher	Higher education
Azahar	<i>Claver</i> University	Colombian	Unemployed	Higher education
Azaléa	None	Brazilian	Entrepreneur	Secondary education
Bouganvilla	<i>Claver</i> Cáritas Migrant protection program	Honduran	Cleaner	Higher education
Calêndula	None	Nicaraguan	Waitress	Primary education
Camélia	University	Uruguayan (dual nationality)	Entrepreneur	Higher education
Dália	<i>Centro Social María Inmaculada Claver</i>	Nicaraguan	Elderly caregiver	Secondary education
Gardênia	<i>Claver Sevilla Integra Fundación Persán Cepaim Sepe Chamber of Commerce</i>	Venezuelan	Elderly caregiver	Higher education
Girassol	University	Salvadoran	Researcher	Higher education
Magnólia	University <i>CEAR School Alianza por la Solidaridad</i>	Cuban (dual nationality)	Broadcaster	Higher education
Orquídea	School / University <i>SAROS</i>	Argentinian (dual nationality)	Researcher	Higher education
Violeta	University <i>Claver</i>	Paraguayan (dual nationality)	Migration technician	Higher education

Source: the author.

Table 1 highlights the diversity of migrant women in terms of their countries of origin (10 different nationalities); the relevance of both Third Sector and Public Sector



institutions in providing support and training, as only two of the 12 women had no contact with them; the fact that the majority of these women hold higher education degrees—10 out of 12; and their placement in underemployment, which is a concerning factor.

**Table 2**

Profile of the Experts Interviewed

Pseudonym	Nationality	Experience / Role	Education	Institution
Ana	Brazilian	23 years Labor counselor	Higher education	<i>Fundación Sevilla Acoge</i>
Helena	Spanish	15 years Researcher	Higher education	University
José	Peruvian	16 years Attorney	Higher education	<i>Claver</i>
Miguel	Spanish	12 years Professor (retired)	Higher education	<i>Fundación Solidaria Candelaria</i>
Patrícia	Peruvian	24 years Labor counselor	Higher education	<i>Movimiento por la Paz</i>
Pedro	Spanish	20 years Sociocultural facilitator	Secondary education	City Hall

Source: the author.

Table 2 reveals a diversity of countries of origin among the experts—three nationalities represented among six participants; an average of 18 years of experience in the migration field; a predominance of higher education—five out of six; and a variety of institutions offering some type of support and assistance to migrant women, even if not exclusively.

Regarding the interview analysis, the interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language—either Spanish or Portuguese— and translated into Portuguese by the researcher when necessary. Three analytical categories were constructed: training of migrant women for the labor market, training of migrant women for social integration and inclusion, and collaborative perspectives.

## **| Training of migrant women for the labor market**

When discussing training for the labor market—specifically for underemployment—there are several projects implemented in the form of seminars and workshops, such as: *Entre compañeras la esperanza se cocina!*; *Mujer migrante y empleo del hogar*; *Formación ocupacional en cuidados*; *Clases de idiomas*, and language classes, which, as shown in Table 1, have become the main training fields offered by the Third Sector to migrant women. This reflects an alignment with labor market demand focused on domestic work and elderly care (Martínez Buján, 2006; Oso Casas & Martínez, 2008). Evidence of this can be found in the testimonies of migrant women:



So then I started taking courses on elderly care, did a course on Spanish cuisine, and one on domestic work. I also took a home economics course with them. (Dália, 29 years old, Nicaraguan, elderly caregiver)

[...] and in the meantime, I took some courses with *Alianza por la Solidaridad*, and with the *Asociación de Emisoras Municipales y Comunitarias de Andalucía*, where I currently work. (Magnólia, 44 years old, Cuban, broadcaster)

After participating in these training programs, Dália became known to professionals at the *Centro Social María Inmaculada* and was recommended for jobs— one of which was as a caregiver for elderly people, the position she currently holds. A similar situation occurred with migrant woman Magnólia, who, after participating in courses at *Alianza por la Solidaridad*, was eventually hired. Thus, Third Sector institutions appear to fulfill their pursuit of the common good (Botero, 2001) and act as mechanisms of articulation and connection among stakeholders in the process (Ferreira, 2009)— which aligns with their foundational purpose. However, they also contribute to the reproduction of the status quo, as their educational programs largely focus on training for underemployment.

In the words of expert Patrícia, who works as a labor counselor at *Movimiento por la Paz*, we can see confirmation of what was previously stated by Dália:

In our case, since they are the majority, we organize cleaning and elderly care courses exclusively for migrant women. (Patrícia, 49 years old, labor counselor)

However, the condition of being confined to underemployment experienced by migrant women does not go unnoticed. They find themselves in situations of social exclusion solely due to their migrant status (Méndez-Fierros & Hlousek Astudillo, 2023). Gardênia expresses her critique:

What strikes me most at Claver is, above all, the perception of the migrant woman as someone destined for cleaning work— as if she had no other option available to her. Because that is what Spanish society needs, and Spanish women are not going to take on that task. (Gardênia, 45 years old, Venezuelan, elderly caregiver)

Indignation is a recurring theme in these women's narratives. They openly criticize the fact that they are overlooked in favor of Spanish women—even when they hold similar or higher levels of education and professional experience—simply because they are migrant women. In this context, critical political culture influences how individuals behave within the collective and provides insight into both their self-perception and their understanding of social reality (Rodrigues, 2021).

Violeta, a migrant woman who initially moved for educational purposes and later stayed for love, shares her active participation in training programs offered by the Third Sector:

[...] in recent years I have taken a seminar; I am specializing. I am currently participating in a very comprehensive leadership training program at Loyola. It is intended for individuals from various organizations affiliated with the Society of Jesus. It is similar to a training course for staff members in general—those who hold some level of responsibility. On a personal level, as part of a project

—as someone who supports migrants—I have received training in accompaniment, and therefore I took a seminar that lasted four years [...] (Violeta, 50 years old, Paraguayan, migration technician)

Through this excerpt, it becomes clear that Violeta both receives training and works within an institution belonging to the Third Sector. She coordinates activities for migrants and, at the same time, attends courses of personal interest—ever since she arrived in Seville for training focused on solidarity. This illustrates the active role and broad reach of Third Sector institutions in supporting migrant populations (Martínez Buján, 2006; Romão, 2010; Denda et al., 2013). The services provided to vulnerable individuals are increasingly well-qualified yet remain far from meeting the full scope of demand, or from reaching what would be considered ideal or necessary.

At the same time, securing formal employment—as opposed to underemployment—is often linked to a migrant’s legal documentation status. The absence of legal documentation exposes migrant women to a range of challenges. Calêndula, who did not pursue training through either of the sectors investigated, chose to hire professional assistance, despite her limited financial resources:

When I started my legal procedures to obtain my documents, I did it through a lawyer. Because I did not know how to do it myself. (Calêndula, 29 years old, Nicaraguan, waitress)

This excerpt demonstrates how lack of knowledge and the bureaucratic barriers surrounding legal procedures (Pajares, 2005; Alemán Bracho, 2011) go beyond the control and will of migrant women. Present in their everyday lives, these barriers impose emotional, temporal, and professional harm on this political minority—a group whose intersectional condition further complicates and challenges their life experiences (Crenshaw, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2021).

Regarding the training offered by Public Sector institutions, it is understood to follow a trajectory similar to that of the Third Sector. In the words of expert Pedro, who works as a sociocultural facilitator at the City Hall of *San Juan de Aznalfarache*, in Seville, within the Eracis Program, we see a focus on training and referring migrant women to underemployment:

Here, women who need or want to work find jobs mostly within “feminine” areas—more often than not, cleaning, caregiving [...] (Pedro, 56 years old, sociocultural facilitator)

The combination of these two elements—training and underemployment—can contribute to the reproduction of the existing social order. Thus, it perpetuates social inequality and prejudice, as noted by Freire (1996) and Rodrigues (2021).

Another perspective comes from the story of a migrant woman who moves to Seville to study, but still faces challenges and finds herself in constant reflection and vulnerability. Adelfa, who holds a research contract at the university—where she both studies and works—shares:

[...] I think some people are born wanting to do a PhD, but that was not the case for me, you know? For me, it was something that came along, and I embraced it. And I think that is also a migrant trait, because people embrace whatever comes their way. (Adelfa, 27 years old, Brazilian, researcher)

Adelfa questions her place in the city—why she left behind her career and former life. These kinds of questions shape the experience of migrant women and can generate what is known as migratory grief. The lingering sense of not belonging to the city where one resides weighs heavily on their thoughts, sparking homesickness, complicating their integration and inclusion in society (Moreno & Aierdi, 2008; Terrón-Caro et al., 2022a), especially in the absence of social capital.

The training and employability acquired by migrant women through participation in academic selection processes reflect the exercise of rights—not privileges—although society at large often misconstrues this, promoting false narratives that frame these women as occupying spaces that “belong” to native-born citizens.

In addition to the points discussed above, it is evident that the professional histories of migrant women are often disregarded and devalued in Europe (Agrela Romero, 2004; Grimson & Jelin, 2006)—either due to the lack of official recognition of their diplomas or the absence of formal documentation of their professional trajectories. Several factors contribute to this situation: high fees charged by public institutions, the circumstances of departure from the country of origin, the bureaucratic demands, and the lengthy duration of the recognition process.

I never tried to validate my high school diploma to start anything here. I was interested at one point, but I thought it would be more trouble than it is worth, so I gave up. I decided not to do anything. (Azaléa, 45 years old, Brazilian, entrepreneur)

I understand that being a migrant woman is more difficult—yes, it is definitely more difficult. Because first of all, you do not have financial resources. Second, you do not have social networks; you find yourself alone in a country without your family, with three children—and what do you do in that situation? You have no support, no connections. It is very complicated. It is much harder. (Camélia, 52 years old, Uruguayan, entrepreneur)

Neither Azaléa nor Camélia sought out institutions for training or guidance (see Table 1). The reasons may be personal, such as embarrassment in asking for help, lack of knowledge about the existence of such institutions, or simply not seeing the need. This may have further complicated their training processes and, consequently, their ability to find employment.

Attending work-related training in Third Sector institutions does not guarantee employment, but not attending significantly reduces employability—especially considering that, even though the certificates awarded through these programs do not have legal value, they often make a difference during the hiring process. In the case of domestic work, for instance, families in Seville commonly request proof of training—just as they do for training offered by the local government. Meanwhile, training in the Public Sector through universities does, in some cases, guarantee

employability— thanks to the scholarship and the fact that the training itself is carried out in Spain.

## **| Training of migrant women for social integration and inclusion**

The training provided by the Public and Third Sectors has, among its objectives, the goal of responding to the specific needs of migrant women. One of the main challenges they face is language, which often constitutes the first barrier in a migrant's life (Pajares, 2005; Terrón-Caro et al., 2022b). The situation is so complex that it goes beyond simply sharing the same language. In Seville, most of the migrant women interviewed are native Spanish speakers, yet communication does not flow as smoothly as one might expect. Communication is often complicated by local expressions, culturally embedded meanings, body language, and the specific vocal intonations characteristic of Sevillian speech. This can be better understood through the words of one migrant woman:

[...] they would call me “*illo*,” and I had no idea that meant “*chiquillo*” [...] They call me “*tía*,” which to me means your aunt. There are aspects related to the accent, of course, but I think what I struggled with the most was not understanding certain words or expressions, or simply not being able to read the situation [...] (Orquídea, 23 years old, Argentinian, researcher)

Orquídea, like 10 of the other women interviewed, did not take a Spanish course because it is her native language. Instead, she chose to learn informally through daily routines—by talking to Spaniards and managing migration-related tasks. Through this, she gradually built a repertoire and assimilated the unique communication style of Sevillians, though not without experiencing uncomfortable situations.

Thus, when we talk about training aimed at helping women inhabit the city and communicate, we are referring to the field of non-formal education— which is predominantly offered by the Third Sector. In this regard, it is important to highlight the value of the courses provided by institutions in both sectors.

Along the same lines, Miguel, a teacher and expert with more than 12 years of experience in training migrants, argues that language instruction is the most essential way to provide proper support to newcomers. For that reason, *Fundación Solidaridad Candelaria* offers the *Proyecto Bienvenido*, a program with three areas of focus, including Spanish language and culture classes as one of its key components:

Knowing the language is essential when you leave your homeland in search of new opportunities. (Miguel, 65 years old, teacher)

Language instruction is considered a key tool for including migrant women in society (Pajares, 2005; Alemán Bracho, 2011), since the inability to speak Spanish and/or the need to improve communication due to unfamiliarity with local terms and expressions reinforces the necessity of courses in this area. Mastering the

language opens doors to employment, to education, and, consequently, to social integration and inclusion.

Another strategy developed by institutions for integration and inclusion consists of leisure activities designed to help migrant women get to know local tourist sites and/or the region's cultural history. These are offered by Third Sector institutions. Such as *Asociación Claver*, through the *Proyecto Mujeres Transformadoras*; and *Fundación Solidaridad Candelaria*, through the *Proyecto Bienvenido*, as well as by the Public Sector through municipal initiatives like Eracis. These activities can promote geographic and urban familiarity with the city and help foster relationships with local residents, as evidenced in interviews with Azahar and Bouganvilla, migrant women living in Seville who commented on the importance of such interactions:

[...] I participate in NGO activities, such as visits to emblematic sites. For example, tomorrow—Friday—we will take a preliminary tour of Holy Week celebrations, visiting these places with our families. These are spaces where we come together with families from different nationalities [...] (Azahar, 42 years old, Colombian, unemployed)

So I began to get to know the city, and with this *Bonobús* pass, I started using it with my son to explore the city. Not to stay locked up in a small, cramped apartment. I started to get to know things and tell myself: "If I'm here, it must be for something good." I started learning about the companies, falling in love with the city. You have to look at the bright side of life. (Bouganvilla, 39 years old, Honduran, cleaner)

Introducing the city and telling its story—offering migrant women the opportunity to situate themselves, to understand where they are, what the local culture is, how people behave, and what they eat—is part of a planned and coordinated effort by institutions seeking to promote integration (Moreno & Aierdi, 2008; Terrón-Caro et al., 2022b). These efforts may be led by either the Third Sector or the Public Sector, as in the case of Bouganvilla, which participates in the *Bonobús* social program provided by the city of Seville. Receiving this financial assistance gave her and her son access to leisure and cultural activities, as well as opportunities to look for employment and education, gain better knowledge of the city, and dream of a better life.

Another important aspect tied to integration and social inclusion is the presence of the cultural mediator— a figure featured in the *Programa Mediación Intercultural* of *Fundación Sevilla Acoge*, which operates in neighborhoods with high concentrations of migrants. Ana, a labor counselor and expert working with *Fundación Sevilla Acoge*, describes the educational role of this figure:

We have the figure of the mediator who goes to the building and mediates with the neighbors. Look, this person just arrived. She's here. During the month of Ramadan, she'll eat at night, she might make more noise, she wears a veil because that's part of her religion. So the role of the mediator has become increasingly important, and there's growing demand for this kind of work due to these types of conflicts. (Ana, 46 years old, labor counselor)

In addition to the efforts of institutions such as these— which have made significant and meaningful contributions to the well-being of migrant women— they also organize campaigns and events in the streets of the city, considered external activities, with the goal of mobilizing Sevillian society in favor of the common good (Alemán Bracho, 2011). These events address cultural themes related to the countries of origin of migrant women, as well as political minority issues, including gender. The NGO *Movimiento Por La Paz*, for example, in partnership with the City of Seville, runs the *Proyecto Con-enfoque: Miradas emocionales, creativas, críticas humanistas para la transformación social*, within school and community settings. Through this, it becomes possible to prevent conflictual situations and to present migrants as they truly are—through culture, diversity, and identity (Matos-de-Souza et al., 2022).

## **| Collaborative perspectives**

Mutual support is a key feature in the daily lives of migrant women in Seville, especially when they are connected through training activities offered by institutions. Through WhatsApp groups, they exchange job opportunities and volunteer at the institutions themselves. In return, these institutions promote partnerships among migrant women and between institutions, which has contributed to social integration and inclusion. Dália, a migrant woman, shares:

Well, when they hold the workshops, they talk to us a bit about our rights and responsibilities, about how we live here. And when we finish, we ask questions to learn more. And the most beautiful part is that, at the end, we all share our life stories together—we share our journeys, and then we give each other information and learn from one another. (Dália, 29 years old, Nicaraguan, elderly caregiver)

The beauty lies in the mutual understanding and representation that emerge in these training moments— which also become spaces of listening, exchange, support, of seeing oneself in others and realizing they are not alone in their migratory condition. It is the awareness that other women face and experience similar realities. This collective practice draws people in, creates connections, and fosters a sense of belonging.

In addition to actively participating through suggestions, the institutions that serve as points of support and shelter for migrant women are also responsible for coordinating migration policies in collaboration with the Public Sector. As Terrón-Caro et al. (2022b) point out, gender issues have gained increasing space within migration policies.

José, a lawyer and expert at *Asociación Claver*, recounts his active involvement in this collective construction between sectors, which has become a valuable contribution to migrant women— and consequently, to society:

The *Plataforma de Empleo del Hogar*—well, modestly speaking, we were the ones who started it [...]. A project that, at the time, we presented to the *Junta de Andalucía* [Andalusian Regional Government], and which became consolidated as a space for coordination, awareness-raising, and public denunciation



regarding the rights of migrant women as domestic workers. (José, 53 years old, migration technician/lawyer)

Although conditions for reception and action are limited, institutions seek strategies to solve these problems. The collaborative perspective emerges as one such strategy (Alenius, 2016; Albuquerque, 2021), which not only contributes to improving the quality of life for migrant women but also enhances the quality of institutional work. Third Sector institutions have become key interlocutors and partners in public policy by participating in the implementation of the *Plataforma Empleo del Hogar* in Seville— a platform that supports the protection of migrant women's labor rights and fosters collective efforts in migration research. This platform is used by both sectors, as it is the outcome of debates, dialogue, and collective decision-making aimed at ensuring a dignified life for these women. It serves as a resource for consulting wage tables, labor rights, and more. In doing so, it reinforces the value of collaborative work by amplifying the voices of those who represent migrant women and aligning practice with academic debate.

Another example of collaborative perspective found in Seville is the Doctoral Program in Migration Studies, developed through a partnership between Spanish universities. Helena, a researcher and expert at Universidad Pablo de Olavide, briefly describes her role:

I coordinate a PhD Program in Migration Studies, which is an interdisciplinary program carried out in partnership with the University of Granada, the University of Jaén, and University Pablo de Olavide. It addresses the migration phenomenon through literature, social sciences, law, etc., and most of the students are women and migrants. (Helena, 52 years old, university professor)

The existence of higher education programs based on collaborative pillars may suggest the formation of a research network working in dialogue (Freire, 1996) around the theme of migration. With the majority of participants being women, we can begin to envision representation that secures space and time for meaningful debate on gender and migration. Recognizing this intersectionality is part of a process of discovery—one that unveils a reality far more complex and contradictory than it might first seem. It is, therefore, an analytical sensitivity (Crenshaw, 2019), a way of thinking about similarities and differences as they relate to power and the redirection of actions. In this sense, it may help shape better public policies that consider the migrant woman dyad.

Based on the above, working from a collaborative perspective demonstrates that when collective thinking prevails and representational voices are heard in appropriate spaces for public policy development, the gap between the needs of migrant women and the law can be narrowed. However, it is essential to acknowledge the difficulties faced— especially by the Third Sector— which has become a key interlocutor between the State and political minorities. Planning and implementing programs is often hindered by a shortage of material and human resources, as well as by the broad range of services provided, which limits the ability to meet the needs of migrant women.



## **| Conclusions**

In examining the educational programs offered by the Public and Third Sectors for the training of migrant women—based on the voices of the women themselves and of experts in Seville—it becomes evident that access to knowledge, social integration, and inclusion is largely facilitated through institutional programs. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of the Third Sector, which collaborates closely with the Public Sector in the development and implementation of these initiatives. At the same time, these programs serve as spaces of reception and exchange, acting as bridges between those involved—though not without facing challenges.

The voices of migrant women and experts regarding the training provided by educational programs offered by both the Public and Third Sectors reveal diverse experiences and opportunities, including: training of migrant women for the labor market (with no guarantee of employment, but greater reach of possibilities), training for social integration and inclusion (language, leisure, presence of the cultural mediator), and collaborative perspectives (connections between migrant women through institutional training activities, mutual support between migrant women and institutions, and shared experiences of complicity and representation during training sessions).

Similarly, the university has engaged in collaborative initiatives with other local and neighboring universities to contribute to the debate on migration through the Migration Studies program, which serves people from diverse groups and nationalities.

From this perspective, the access of migrant women to employment is often limited to underemployment in order to meet societal demands—most commonly represented by work in the care sector (elderly care) and domestic services. These roles are taken up as a means of survival, despite the women's higher education qualifications, and they are positions largely rejected by native women due to the working conditions involved. In other words, what we see is the violation of rights and exposure to vulnerability brought on by the intersection of gender and migration—among other dimensions. This situation does not go unnoticed by either migrant women or experts, both of whom criticize the organizational structure of training programs that rely on strategies of migrant subalternation—strategies that, in various ways, significantly shape and constrain the educational trajectories of these women.

The exception identified in terms of access to education in this study—unsurprisingly—is the training offered by the university, part of the Public Sector, which, by its very nature, has an academic and intellectual character. In contrast, the city government replicates an approach similar to that of Third Sector institutions—that is, it reproduces the status quo. The only notable exception identified in this study regarding access to education—unsurprisingly—is the training provided by the university; a Public Sector institution whose academic and

intellectual nature sets it apart. In contrast, the city government adopts an approach similar to that of Third Sector organizations—ultimately reinforcing the status quo.

Legal bureaucracy, homologation fees, procedural delays, and language barriers generate uncertainty and insecurity among migrant women, resulting in migratory grief and hindering their integration and inclusion in society. These are just a few of the many challenges embedded in the daily reality of “learning to be a migrant”—a condition inherent to those who choose, or are forced by circumstance, to follow the migratory path. This highlights the urgent need to revise and redesign public policies and programs carried out by the Third Sector and the Public Sector, whose labor purpose includes care and protection, so that the response to those who arrive is one of genuine welcome.

Finally, as both a limitation and a future perspective of this study, we suggest further exploration of external training initiatives offered through campaigns and events. These events are structured around raising awareness and fostering mutual reflection, with the ultimate goal of prompting changes in behavior from both sides. Such activities are carried out in public spaces, for instance schools and streets, specifically because of their mobilizing potential, as they involve both migrant women and the broader society— a dynamic that can significantly impact both groups and foster social integration and inclusion.

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## Resumo

Este artigo objetiva discutir acerca dos programas educativos de instituições voltados à formação da mulher migrante a partir das vozes de mulheres migrantes e experts em Sevilha. Desde o enfoque qualitativo, foram realizadas 18 entrevistas. Os resultados foram submetidos à interpretação hermenêutica e discutidos a partir da base de análise interseccional que considera diferentes eixos de desigualdade. Como considerações têm-se que os programas educativos oferecem formação e acolhimento, porém enfatizam uma formação vinculada a ocupações estigmatizadas de subemprego, com algumas exceções. Concomitantemente, se apresentam como espaços de integração, inclusão e intercâmbio.

**Palavras-chave:** Programas educativos. Mulheres migrantes. Educação não-formal.

## Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo fue debatir sobre los programas educativos de las instituciones dirigidos a la formación de mujeres migrantes, a partir de las voces de mujeres migrantes y de expertos en Sevilla. Desde una perspectiva cualitativa, se realizaron 18 entrevistas. Los datos fueron sometidos a interpretación hermenéutica y discutidos desde un análisis interseccional que considera diferentes ejes de desigualdad. Los resultados muestran que los programas educativos ofrecen formación y acogida, pero se centran en la formación vinculada a ocupaciones estigmatizadas de subempleo, con algunas excepciones. Al mismo tiempo, se presentan como espacios de integración, inclusión e intercambio.

**Palabras clave:** Programas educativos. Mujeres migrantes. Educación no formal.

**Linhas Críticas** | Journal edited by the Faculty of Education at the University of Brasília, Brazil  
e-ISSN: 1981-0431 | ISSN: 1516-4896  
<http://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/linhascriticas>

**Full reference (APA):** Rodrigues, M. dos R. (2024). Voices of experts and migrant women on educational programs in Spain. *Linhas Críticas*, 30. <https://doi.org/10.26512/lc30202451101>

**Full reference (ABNT):** RODRIGUES, M. dos R. Voices of experts and migrant women on educational programs in Spain. *Linhas Críticas*, 30, 2024. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26512/lc30202451101>

**Alternative link:** <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/linhascriticas/article/view/51101>

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