Inclusion in secondary school: perspectives and voices of immigrant families

Inclusão na escola secundária: perspectivas e vozes de famílias de imigrantes

Inclusión en la escuela secundaria: perspectivas y voces de familias inmigrantes

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Highlights

Educational inclusion demands dialogue among teachers and active participation of families to be effective.

Barriers such as work-life balance and lack of resources hinder the equitable participation of immigrant families.

Intercultural education requires avoiding forced assimilation and promoting the recognition of underrepresented cultures.

Abstract

The article examines the perceptions of immigrant parents about the education system in Spain. Using a qualitative methodology, 35 first-generation parents participated in 4 focus groups. The analysis covered: a) The relationship between cultures of origin and school inclusion; b) Barriers faced by these families and proposed solutions; c) Limitations in the academic development of immigrant students with regard to interculturality and social justice. The importance of valuing cultural diversity is highlighted to avoid segregation, urging schools to revise resources and promote intergroup relationships.

Resumo | Resumen

Keywords

Intercultural communication. Intercultural education. Secondary school.

Introduction

Disparities in equity along with social and political conflicts have intensified the global migration phenomenon (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2022). As of 1 January 2022, the population of the European Union was estimated to be approximately 446.72 million. Of this total, roughly 61.8 million individuals were of immigrant origin, accounting for 13.8% of the entire EU populace. Within this demographic, about 4.4% were foreigners originating from outside the EU territories, equating to 23.8 million non-EU citizens (5.3% of the total EU population) and 38 million persons born outside of the EU (8.5% of all EU inhabitants) (European Statistics [Eurostat], 2022). These population movements are currently a focal point of debate within the social sciences (Santisteban et al., 2018).

The 'Qualification for Minor Migrants Education and Learning Open access - Online Teacher-training' project (QuaMMELOT), funded through the European Union's Erasmus+ KA2 programme on a competitive funding basis, represented a transnational collaboration among four European countries (Biagioli et al., 2020). Its aim was to enhance teaching skills to facilitate the educational integration of minor migrants, particularly those unaccompanied. This initiative materialised in an online course comprising 10 modules designed for secondary school teachers. Subsequent analyses were conducted to assess perspectives, learnings, and the impact on both educators and students.

Spain, as a recipient country of immigrants, has seen its foreign population increase from 923,879 in 2000 (2.3% of the total population) to 6,335,419 in 2023 (13.10% of the total population) (National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2023). Andalusia, a historical migration hub towards Europe, has experienced both internal migration towards Madrid, Barcelona, and Bilbao and external migration to other EU countries. Olmos-Alcaraz (2016) acknowledges the cultural hybridisation that has enriched Andalusian identity over time. Similarly, Falco (2021) highlights the significance of intentionality and responsibility in inclusive education.

This article investigates the barriers and deficiencies faced by migrant adolescents and their families in their inclusion process in Spain. It is structured in four sections: context, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions, with the aim of analysing the role of the school in the social mobility of these vulnerable students.

Contextualisation

Between 2000 and 2007, prior to the economic crisis, Spain emerged as the second-largest recipient of immigrants within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), surpassed only by the USA. The growth of the immigrant population from 2.3% in 2000 to 11.4% in 2008 had significant repercussions on the number of foreign students in Spanish schools and on the

implementation of integration strategies. These measures included Spanish language classes, tutoring, and socio-emotional support (Torres, 2011). The challenges faced by immigrant students, such as language barriers and social adaptation, have been extensively analysed (Arroyo-González and Berzosa-Ramos, 2021), demonstrating their potential impact on academic performance and dropout rates (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). In this regard, Mendes (2019) addresses the schooling of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, highlighting the challenges of interculturality. This may reflect parallels with the adaptation and communication challenges faced by immigrant students in various contexts from a global perspective.

Some studies differentiate between first and second-generation immigrant students (Olmos-Alcaraz, 2016), noting that the age at migration can influence inclusion. However, at certain ages, such as 6 or 7 years, these differences are minimal compared to native students, regardless of linguistic level as demonstrated by Carabaña (2004). Furthermore, this issue has been scientifically validated (Felgueroso-Fernández, et al., 2009; Franzé Mudanó et al., 2011) and the differences in academic trajectories are due to structural and social classification issues present in educational systems (Emmerich and Hormel, 2021). Generally, comparing academic trajectories, there is scientific evidence that the performance of immigrant students does not markedly differ from that of native students with a similar socio-economic profile (Escarbajal-Frutos et al., 2019). Moreover, the research by Moreno-Fernández et al. (2021) underscores the need to implement methodological strategies that dismantle prejudices and stereotypes about immigrant students, emphasizing the importance of awareness and acceptance of intercultural diversity in secondary education.

The concept of "migrant optimism" refers to the aspirations of the migrant population to achieve social mobility (Fernández-Reino, 2016). Although education is seen as a primary pathway towards this progress, the outcomes obtained do not always align with the initial expectations. This observation has been confirmed in various educational contexts (Engzell, 2019). Factors such as the educational level of parents and their expectations play a crucial role in these outcomes (Engzell, 2019). Fernández-Reino (2016) suggests that this optimistic attitude may be a response to experiences of discrimination, as well as to an intrinsic desire for improvement that immigrants convey to their descendants. Therefore, it becomes necessary to address teacher training in interculturality to develop attitudes and practices that perceive diversity as an asset in the educational environment (Bueno, 2019; Biagioli et al., 2020).

At present, it is crucial to consider the composition of the school and the individual factors that influence performance. The school, with the expectations and attitudes of the teachers, plays a central role in shaping the students (Anttila et al., 2018).

Methodology

A qualitative interpretative methodology based on mixed methods was employed to understand the perspectives of immigrant parents from diverse social, academic,

and professional backgrounds. Emphasis was placed on comprehending their interpretations of reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2015), focusing on the cultural and linguistic challenges encountered with teaching staff (Arroyo-González and Berzosa-Ramos, 2021). Moreover, the influence of schools on the cultural identity of immigrant students and their relationship with inclusion was analysed (Anttila et al., 2018).

Critical discourse analysis was used to expose the power dynamics between immigrant families and teachers, grounded in the theory of Fairclough (2003). The goal was to decipher interpretations concerning the inclusion of immigrant students, utilising focus groups as platforms for debate (Frisina, 2018).

This interpretive approach, alongside critical discourse analysis, aligns with Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) bioecological perspective to understand the interrelations in the development of immigrant students and their families. It seeks to discern how the practices and values of immigrant families coexist with the educational and social systems of the host country (Hadjisoteriou et al., 2015).

Within classrooms of growing cultural diversity, this study aims to understand the perspectives of immigrant parents on their culture of origin and their integration into the society and schools of the host country. Three objectives are pursued: A) To explore the cultures of origin and their interaction with community contexts and inclusion in secondary school; B) To identify barriers these families face in school inclusion and propose solutions; C) To evaluate the challenges in the socio-educational trajectories of immigrant students in reference to intercultural ideals and equity, and suggest strategies to address them.

In the study, focus groups were used to collect data, focusing on the interaction of immigrant families' values and practices with their children's educational experience, as well as the linguistic and cultural barriers in communicating with teachers. These barriers can influence educational inclusion. The focus groups, complemented with critical discourse analysis, allow for the exploration of daily negotiations and tensions related to belonging to multiple communities (Boland, 2020). It is relevant to consider potential biases in participant selection and group dynamics. The scripts for the discussions were based on the project (name and details removed to ensure the anonymity of this proposal).

The focus group transcripts were coded using a tailored checklist that responded to criteria linked to the research objectives. An inductive logic was applied for emerging categories and a deductive approach for units of meaning (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). NVivo 12 was used for qualitative analysis, organizing and analyzing the data. The coding resulted in categories aligned with objectives such as understanding the cultures of origin of immigrant students, community integration processes, and the educational trajectories of immigrant students in secondary education.

To carry out this study, four focus groups were organized with 35 immigrant parents. The participants were divided into three migratory profiles: Latin America-Central

America (19 participants), Europe (11, mostly from Eastern Europe), and Africa (5, mainly from the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa). Several of them did not have Spanish as their first language, which could influence their ability to express themselves and feel integrated into the study.

In Focus Group 1, 9 individuals with various migratory profiles participated, including Latin America-Central America, Europe (mainly Eastern Europe), and Africa (mainly from the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa), some of whom did not have Spanish as their first language. Focus Group 2 brought together 8 participants with migratory profiles similar to those of Group 1, representing continental and linguistic diversity. Focus Group 3 consisted of 10 participants with different migratory profiles, including Latin America-Central America, Europe (mainly Eastern Europe), and Africa (from the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa). Focus Group 4 included 8 participants with a diversity of origins and full linguistic competence.

Participant selection considered purposive sampling in centers with a high concentration of immigrant students, quota sampling, and "snowball" sampling of recognized school spokespeople (Taylor and Bogdan, 2010). The focus group process continued until theoretical saturation was reached, where additional information did not yield new insights (Schiffrin et al., 2001).

Results

In this section, the results from the focus group analysis are related. The primary objective is to foster dialogue and debate concerning the educational needs of the immigrant community and the school community at large, with the purpose of promoting a more inclusive and effective secondary school environment. Detailed examination of the results obtained from the focus groups is undertaken, and concrete recommendations are formulated to improve the educational inclusion of immigrant students. The focus is on educational agents and those responsible for the development of inclusive educational practices, as well as those working daily in classrooms, aiming to identify and address the specific needs of the immigrant community.

The process of inclusion in schools begins with effective welcoming and reception mechanisms to ensure the successful integration of immigrant students. Once these mechanisms are established, it is necessary to have adequate channels to foster the active participation of families and the educational community in various school activities, which will help to solidify the relationship between the school and immigrant families. Concerning the initial phase, parents highlight issues such as the school climate and the treatment of students. Fátima confirms:

> In this school, there is a positive attitude towards multiculturalism. The teachers are very involved with the children, it's like a small family [...] The teachers know everyone. It's a special bond, I see a lot of motivation and unity among the teaching staff. (Fátima: mother of Moroccan origin, FG2)

The connection between the immigrant community and the school is a key factor for the success of the educational inclusion process. According to Dryden-Peterson

(2018), the relationship between demographics and school culture is essential in creating an effective bond between both parties. Furthermore, the creation of an inclusive school climate is crucial to empower parents, educational agents, and students and to overcome social inequalities and discrimination, especially in schools with students from ethnic groups or disadvantaged environments. Additionally, the adoption of inclusive leadership by teachers and an open approach towards the community and the territory by schools can enhance the performance of students in vulnerable situations (European Anti-Poverty Network [EAPN], 2021).

Findings by Berkowitz (2022) indicate that improving the school climate can increase learning opportunities for all students and provide specific benefits for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, environments with high diversity offer an opportunity to foster the inclusion of immigrant students and their families through formal and informal welcoming mechanisms. As Isabel, a mother of Colombian origin, states:

> I believe that the cultural integration that occurs in schools is natural. But beyond the natural interactivity, it is something driven from an institutional, organizational, and thoughtful perspective. (Isabel, mother of Colombian origin, FG1)

In the context of immigrant students facing disadvantages from their origin, it is particularly relevant to consider their sensitivity to changes or transitions between educational levels. As discussed in the focus groups, this aspect becomes a key element in the process of cultural hybridization (Bhatia and Ram, 2009). As mentioned by Ana Paula, a mother of Brazilian origin:

> Schools should start promoting cultural diversity from a young age [...] We like our culture and will never leave it behind. But it is also important to know the culture of the country where we are going to live and raise our family. Moreover, I believe that managing cultural diversity is a two-way process. (Ana Paula, mother of Brazilian origin, FG1)

In their study, Sorando Ortín and Leal Maldonado (2019) point out that immigrant students experience challenges related to their migration status, including economic and cultural difficulties, even though many of them are considered "second generation." Despite these challenges, it is important to recognize the cultural and community richness that immigrant families bring through their children and to value their contribution in the educational context.

Transitions between educational levels are complex moments where family support can be crucial for the development of minors' academic trajectories, especially for those with social disadvantages from their origin. According to Contreras and Kiyama (2022), immigrant students often receive support and knowledge from their families to overcome obstacles in the transition to university. These authors emphasize the importance of knowledge funds and community cultural wealth as support mechanisms against social disadvantage.

Besides fulfilling their responsibilities, it is advisable for teachers to perform a critical analysis of students and avoid using abstract labels such as "immigrant

students," as a way to promote inclusive and equitable education. As María, a mother of Ecuadorian origin, states:

> In many cases, the children were born here and are as Spanish as anyone else. It's not fair to label them as 'foreigners' [...] When I traveled to my country with my son. At the airport, a police officer asked where he was from and he was five years old. He says: ''I am Andalusian; I am from Seville. (María, mother of Ecuadorian origin, FG3)

Effective inclusion of immigrant families with a migratory background in school can be hindered by various barriers, such as the lack of work-life balance, economic inequality, discrimination, and inadequate guidance. These barriers can limit access to education and the ability to take advantage of learning opportunities for immigrant students and their families.

Research shows that the distribution of immigrant students is not uniform regarding the ownership of schools (Valiente, 2008) and location in neighborhoods (Franzé Mudanó et al., 2011), which can result in mechanisms of covert exclusion. In line with this, Valentina commented:

> There I noticed a double discourse. Because you are supposed to, with this system, your child does not run out of space. That's why there are five options. I don't know. And it turns out that there were several institutes where we went to ask just for the sake of asking and right away they told you that there was no space at all in two years or something like that. (Valentina: mother of Venezuelan origin, FG2)

This phenomenon is related to the growing connection between economic inequality and the increase of residential segregation in historically diverse urban areas (Sorando Ortín and Leal Maldonado, 2019).

In terms of effective educational inclusion of immigrant students, it is crucial to consider the various challenges that may arise in the educational context, as well as the opportunities to address these challenges effectively (Arroyo-González and Berzosa-Ramos, 2021). Barriers to inclusion may include structural and social obstacles, as well as discriminatory attitudes and perceptions that can limit the learning opportunities of immigrant students (Bayona and Domingo, 2018; Bonal et al., 2019).

In this regard, it is important that schools not only focus on the academic outcomes of students but also provide adequate conditions for learning, participation, and sociability in the initial inclusion into new socio-community environments of reception. In the focus group, María, a mother of Ecuadorian origin, highlighted the importance of receiving clear and accessible information about the educational system and the admission process in in secondary school:

> No one explained to us the point system or the school enrollment process at the secondary school. We learned everything on the fly and by asking a lot here and there. (María: mother of Ecuadorian origin, FG3)

On some occasions, negative stereotypes about immigrant communities that relate them only to problems of economic resource scarcity can be perceived in the host

society, overlooking cultural differences and ways of life. It is important to take this situation into account and work to promote a broader and more positive understanding of cultural diversity in the host society. These stereotypes can influence discriminatory attitudes in interactions with the immigrant community (Dietz, 2001). As Juan in the focus group states:

> Immigrant families are not the only ones looking for cheaper housing, but they also face unemployment, depression, and other factors that affect many families. These problems can create conflicts in schools and there are not enough adaptation resources to help them overcome these challenges. (Juan: father of Bolivian origin, FG4)

Identified as a significant barrier was the difficulty in reconciling work life with school life, which can affect the participation of immigrant families in the educational follow-up of their children. Anca, a mother of Romanian origin, mentions in the focus group the problem of school schedules that do not adapt to her work schedule:

> Well, the morning schedule to come to school is generally the work schedule for people. There are days I have not been able to come to pick up my son's report card. Why? Because the teacher was available until twelve, which I find a bit selfish. It's true you can come at one thirty, but then it's not his tutor who gives it to me, it's another teacher. (Anca: mother of Romanian origin, FC4).

The lack of flexibility in school schedules can limit the involvement of families in the educational process of their children. Moreover, a correlation between the sense of belonging and the participation of immigrant families in school was discussed by Hernández-Prados et al. (2019).

In the development of the focus groups, some barriers related to the pandemic emerged that had not been initially considered in the focus of the research. Regarding contact and communication channels, some families mentioned difficulties in speaking with teachers because appointments were by phone. As María Ángeles highlights:

> I hadn't spoken to the teacher all school year, then I asked for an appointment and of course, the appointments are by phone. (María Ángeles, mother of Venezuelan origin; FG2)

Furthermore, the pandemic has complicated the development of activities, scheduling, and participation under normal conditions, as Juan, a father of Bolivian origin, points out:

> There are, but I do think that right now, given the pandemic, everything is very complicated. And yes, before it was difficult in some respects to propose a talk or something like that, and it had to be organized a long time in advance. Now I think it is quite more complicated, basically because of the COVID protocols and all that. (Victor: father of Bolivian origin, FG1)

The education of immigrant students can be limited by various factors, such as lack of coordination in the participation of the school community, lack of involvement of the teaching staff, and openness of the secondary school. These factors can create inequalities in access and educational development of immigrant students

compared to their native peers (Contreras and Kiyama, 2022). The feeling of discrimination and bureaucratic disinterest can generate a negative perception of education and the host society, as expressed by Ana, a Venezuelan mother in the focus group:

> In the central area is the typical student population here, the natives. I think there is a way of assigning to the peripheries the migrants coming from other countries. (Ana: mother of Venezuelan origin, FG2)

Residential segregation and the presence of subsidized supply in neighborhoods are also factors that contribute to educational segregation and isolation, especially in those neighborhoods with a high concentration of foreign students (Franzé Mudanó et al., 2011; Bonal et al., 2019).

Moreover, it is necessary to consider how the conditions inherent to adolescence as a stage of changes can affect the processes of incorporation into school life. As described by Dalila, a mother of Moroccan origin:

> This communication and the entrance to the school, when he was in school, now high school, I can't even get close, and when he lets me because your children don't let you, yes, but you also don't see. (Dalida: mother of Moroccan origin, FG1)

The lack of organization and involvement of the community of parents fosters a feeling of detachment from the institution and reduces the possibilities for active participation (Campbell, 2020). Moreover, it is important to consider the structural limitations of resources in the poorest neighborhoods in the provision of public services and resources, which can limit the opportunities for the development of activities and exchange spaces. As mentioned by a mother of Colombian origin in the focus group:

> I have been looking for that kind of offers, because as you all know, it's economical, but it has been extremely difficult. They don't have a space for them to practice, or play and exchange. And that's even though I'm always on the lookout, precisely looking for that kind of offers (Daniela: mother of Colombian origin, FG3).

This lack of resources can negatively affect the integration and development of immigrant children and youth in the educational and social environment.

The participation of immigrant families in school can be limited by various barriers, including the organization of activities and institutional neglect (Torres, 2011; Bonal et al., 2019). These barriers can lead to mechanisms of subtle discrimination, as in the case of Bobby, a mother of Bulgarian origin, who was rejected by the school principal when she wanted her son to participate in an activity:

> There I saw a bit of rejection of a culture that is not European. (Bobby: mother of Bulgarian origin, FG3)

Moreover, the lack of a call for the participation of parents and representatives in school activities or in possible solutions to problems of the secondary school, can

result in low participation of families, as indicated by María Elena, a mother of Ecuadorian origin:

> Participations have been very exceptional (…) if they asked for the participation of parents and representatives in those possible solutions, it would be much easier. (María Elena: mother of Ecuadorian origin, FG4)

The participation of families in school is essential for the development of students, so it is important to promote positive school dynamics through communication and participation of families in secondary school (Arroyo-González and Berzosa-Ramos, 2021). Moreover, intercultural relations between immigrant and native families require spaces for meeting and trust in the local school (Boland, 2020).

The perception of some parents is that the teaching style in schools focuses excessively on the unidirectional transmission of knowledge, rather than addressing moral and social aspects that are essential in culturally diverse environments. Carla assesses this limitation:

> The curriculum is not the most important aspect, because ultimately it is a compulsory stage and it is assumed there are a number of moral components, etc., on which the teacher should focus, and this does not happen if everything is taught as if it were a lecture in which knowledge is unidirectional. (Carla: mother of Venezuelan origin, FG3).

It is important to emphasise that teachers have a dual role: as agents of social inclusion and as managers of students' aspirations. Intercultural learning in curricular activities and consideration of students' aspirations are interrelated with educational performance. Thus, an individualistic approach can lead to a status-oriented positioning, instead of promoting an inclusive and participatory environment in the classroom (Anttila et al., 2018).

To achieve effective educational inclusion, it is essential for teachers to connect with their environment and promote collaboration among the educational community, the third sector, and parents. Isabella, a mother of Italian origin, highlights the importance of incorporating these entities into the process, but notes that bureaucratization can be a barrier that some teachers refuse to overcome. It is necessary to seek practical solutions to simplify and expedite these processes:

> Often, when there is the possibility of joining other entities, people give up because everything has to be bureaucratized. Everything that is not within the school means that we have to fill out 900 papers that most teachers refuse, etc. (Isabella: mother of Peruvian origin, FG1)

Conclusions

In this section, we relate the outcomes of the focus group analysis. The principal aim of this research has been to stimulate dialogue and debate concerning the educational needs of the immigrant community and the broader school community, with the goal of fostering a more inclusive and effective secondary school

environment. To achieve this, the results from the focus groups have been meticulously examined, and specific recommendations have been proposed to enhance the educational inclusion of immigrant students. The focus has been on educational agents and those responsible for the development of inclusive educational practices, as well as those working daily in classrooms, with the objective of identifying and addressing the specific needs of the immigrant community.

Our first goal was to comprehend the cultures of origin of immigrant families, including their community contexts and integration into the school. Our research has underscored the significance of the teacher's role, educational transitions, and active family participation in creating inclusive environments within secondary schools. While there is no ideal model for inclusion, this issue is closely associated with the generation of diverse models of family participation and their influence on the educational experiences of students (Hernández-Prados, 2019). Thus, it is crucial for educational institutions aiming for inclusivity to prioritize these areas, ensuring that the voices of their students are heard and valued.

In culturally diverse educational settings, the nuances in attention and support for immigrant students can significantly impact their school performance (Dryden-Peterson, 2018). Parents highlight certain attributes of the teaching staff and the school environment that they deem essential for the optimal development of academic trajectories: teacher sensitivity, group cohesion, and the creation of spaces that encourage natural interaction, ultimately fostering an institutional environment that promotes intercultural competence. Furthermore, it is not necessarily the most resource-rich schools that achieve a higher degree of interculturality in their practices and spaces, but those that have more effectively adapted to the needs and particularities of their students.

Another aim of our research was to describe the barriers that hinder the inclusion of immigrant students in schools. The findings indicate that these obstacles impede the desired social and community reception. Immigrant-origin families face challenges in participating on equal terms due to factors such as work-life balance; lack of resources in neighborhoods; absence of institutional support; and economic difficulties.

According to Contreras and Kiyama (2022), discourses of equal opportunities in education access can conceal exclusion mechanisms that adversely affect students of immigrant origin. Despite these barriers, immigrant families strive to overcome the challenges and demands, motivated by the belief in the correlation between education and social mobility, and the valuation of education (Ribeiro and Gaia, 2021). Thus, immigrant families adapt to the channels and spaces of participation, despite the prejudices and hidden mechanisms of discrimination. This demonstrates the resilience of these families, who, despite lacking a voice in decision-making, seek to actively participate in transforming the school.

Inclusion in a host society is never easy, especially without a family, economic, or social network. According to Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), academic success

relies on effective collaboration between schools and families. However, such strategies can be exclusionary for students with fewer economic or cultural resources, leading to discrimination mechanisms that prevent the academic success of immigrant students. Often, these mechanisms are justified by blaming these minorities for not wanting to integrate, without considering the structural injustices of the educational system that perpetuate exclusion (Bayona and Domingo, 2018; Arroyo-González and Berzosa-Ramos, 2021).

The third goal of this study was to analyze the educational limitations affecting inclusive and intercultural education, as well as their impact on students' academic trajectories. Although the educational institution explicitly promotes inclusion, it is conditioned by various factors, such as cultural bias, lack of coordination among the school community, and social and school segregation (Torres, 2011; Bonal et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020). These factors disadvantage students who do not resemble the dominant culture, as they must continually justify the validity of their participatory or cultural proposals, or face a lack of community resources in their neighborhood. Often, these limitations go unnoticed day-to-day but are at the root of the reproduction of mechanisms of exclusion and social inequality (Franzé Mudanó et al., 2011; Bonal et al., 2019).

During the process of including immigrant students, individual actions by teachers without adequate training in cultural differences are common. These actions often obscure diversity and highlight suboptimal educational practices (Emmerich and Hormel, 2021). Inclusion should be a structured pedagogical approach that transcends individual responsibility, incorporating an intercultural approach to overcome prejudices and social distinctions.

The three central categories of this study have shown interrelation. Current barriers in participation and communication with families exacerbate integration difficulties. Limitations in human and material resources in schools heighten the challenges for immigrant students with cultural diversity.

Variability in migratory profiles regarding school inclusion has been observed. After analysis, it was determined that the last focus group did not provide additional significant information.

This study addresses the inclusion of immigrant families in schools from an intercultural perspective. Its goal is to influence debates and practices, proposing measures to enhance inclusion. Based on the findings and literature, practical implications for intercultural education are presented: A) Consider inequalities and their impact on performance; B) Promote equality and diversity in the school community; C) Review policies and practices concerning diversity; D) Avoid forced assimilation of immigrant students; E) Highlight underrepresented cultures in school; F) Enhance student self-confidence; G) Train teachers in cultural diversity; H) Stimulate critical thinking in students.

To advance these issues, networking of the involved individuals is necessary, including students, families, counselors and social educators, teachers, principals,

and other key elements. Commitment to an inclusive and fair secondary school involves a deep understanding of the voices and cultures underlying each person who forms the institution and the educational participation processes in the school. This challenge transcends the context of the research and is related to social and educational practices aimed at equity, emancipation, sensitivity, and cultural understanding. It is necessary to consider student inequalities so that schools can develop an inclusive role and contribute to the consolidation of democracy (Emmerich and Hormel, 2021).

Next, a limitation that could affect the interpretation of the results obtained is discussed. A limitation that emerged during our research is that immigrant parents may have limited knowledge about the detailed functioning of secondary school in relation to the processes of inclusion and participation of immigrant students and their families. To address this issue, strategies could be implemented to improve communication and information about the processes of inclusion and participation in secondary school.

It should be noted that intercultural education is a highly complex topic that is subject to variations depending on specific contextual and cultural factors. Therefore, when interpreting the results and applying them to similar contexts, it is essential to consider these differences and adapt the conclusions appropriately.

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Resumo

O artigo estuda as percepções de pais e mães imigrantes sobre o sistema educacional na Espanha. Usando uma metodologia qualitativa, 35 pais y mães de primeira geração participaram de quatro grupos de discussão. Analisamos: a) A relação entre as culturas de origem e a inclusão escolar; b) As barreiras enfrentadas por essas famílias e as soluções propostas; c) As limitações no desenvolvimento acadêmico dos alunos imigrantes com relação à interculturalidade e à justiça social. Destaca-se a importância de valorizar a diversidade cultural para evitar a segregação, instando as escolas a revisar os recursos e promover as relações intergrupais.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação intercultural. Educação intercultural. Escola secundária.

Resumen

El artículo estudia las percepciones de padres y madres inmigrantes sobre el sistema educativo en España. A través de una metodología cualitativa, 35 padres y madres de primera generación participaron en 4 grupos de discusión durante el curso escolar 2020-2021. Se analizó: a) La relación entre culturas de origen y la inclusión escolar; b) Barreras enfrentadas por estas familias y soluciones propuestas; c) Limitaciones en el desarrollo académico de los estudiantes inmigrantes respecto a la interculturalidad y la justicia social. Se destaca la importancia de valorar la diversidad cultural para evitar la segregación, instando a las escuelas a revisar recursos y promover relaciones intergrupales.

Palabras clave: Comunicación intercultural. Educación intercultural. Escuela secundaria.