

Chapter 14

When the *Other* Arrives to the School

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Abstract In the last 40 years, Spain became from a country of emigrants to a destination for immigrants. The 0.46% of immigrants of 1975 (165,000 of 36,012,682 people) went up to 12% (5,598,691 of 46,063,511) in 2009. The sudden demographic, economic, social, cultural, political and educational consequences of this move have been considerable. In this chapter, after offering an impressionist picture of this new scenario, we focus on the implications of this phenomenon in the educational system during two periods of the recent Spanish history, before and after the social and economic crisis. In these two periods, the arrival of immigrants was considered as *a problem* and maybe now could be an opportunity to rethinking schooling and develop a more comprehensive curriculum. Immigrants have arrived to school to remain, and that opens the possibility of promoting a more inclusive education for all in a more open and fair society.

Parents left me their children, nervous and frightened. I was in charge of teaching them to read and write. In some cases, the alphabet was the same as ours, in other Cyrillic. Further afield were Arabic and Chinese and, out of orbit, a child who came without knowing to say a word, unable to read or write not even his tongue. (Francés Serés 2015: 43)

Spain: From a Country of Emigration to One of Immigration

Since the mid-1980s of the past century, Spain went from being a country of emigrants to one receiving a good number of immigrants. A movement of massive immigration from Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa (mostly from Morocco

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and some sub-Saharan countries) and Asia (China and Pakistan) arrived to Spain. There are several elements that can explain this shift, which made Spain, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the world's second country, after the United States, in receiving immigrants. According with Arjona and Checa (2009), this phenomenon was fuelled by (1) the return of the previously emigrated generations of Spaniards from abroad, particularly from Europe and Latin America, because they have retired and could enjoy their pensions in Spain, and the improving of living conditions in the family country, (2) the arrival of foreigners from other European countries and (3) the entrance of low-income countries inhabitants, especially from Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe, into a flourishing Spanish labour market. The key reasons for Spain becoming an attractive country to immigrations could be also explained by the positive improvement of the living standards derived from its integration in the European Community, in 1986, the development (and benefits derived) of a welfare state, the ageing population and low birth rate and the deficit of labour in growing sectors such as building, food industry, old people caring and agriculture.

Under these circumstances foreign population in Spain has considerably grown and transformed. It is not only the numbers that are changing but also the population's origins and distribution around the country (Arjona and Checa 2009). According to the Ministry of Labour and Immigration, on September 30, 2009, 4,710,757 foreigners were either registered or had valid residence permits. This accounts for around the 10% of the total population of Spain. However, if we also consider municipal census data, where to-be registered people do not require valid legal documents, these figures increase to 5,598,691.

Going into detail about these numbers, 38% of the immigrant population came from the European Union, of which Romania was the most prominent country with 728,580 people; 30% were from Latin America, of which Ecuador was the most relevant with 441,455, followed by Colombia with 288,255; and 20% were from Africa, with the most numerous group of this continent coming from Morocco, with 758,174 residents. Regarding destinations, 67% of immigrants were concentrated in four autonomous regions: Catalonia (21%), Madrid (20%), Andalusia (13%) and Valencia (13%). The rest of the regions had lower percentages, with the highest one in the Canary Islands (6%), Murcia (5%) and the Balearic Islands (4%). So Spain went from 165,000 foreign residents in 1975 to over five million in 2009. This was a predominantly economic migration, characterized by being a low-skilled workforce resulting essential to maintain current levels of production and development (Alonso and Furio-Blasco 2007).

The arrival of this foreign population had also direct consequences on demographics. For example, this immigration led to a change in the composition of age and sex of the population, both in the configuration of the family (mixed marriages) and the birth rate. The Spanish people were older, with 29% over 54 years, compared to the 5% of non-European Union foreigners. However, these differences vanish in groups of people under 20 years. All of this leads to another differentiating aspect, the proportion of active population. Whereas 63% of Spaniards were of working age, in the case of non-European Union foreigners, the percentage was

77%. With regard to sex, the percentage of Spanish women was slightly higher than men (51% and 49%, respectively), while the proportion between the foreign men and women was higher, 54% versus 46% (Arjona and Checa 2009).

These immigration movements also affected to schools population. In 10 years, the number of foreign pupils in compulsory education increased rapidly from 43,481 in the school year 1996–1997 to 432,800 in 2006–2007 (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 2007). In the case of Catalonia, which was, as mentioned above, the region where more immigrants have arrived, in the 2001–2008 period, witnessed one of the greatest population growth in its history (16.7%) as a consequence of immigration from abroad (Generalitat de Catalunya 2009). The number of immigrants in classrooms increased from 0.58% in 1999 to 12.5% in 2008.

Taking into account this situation, in this chapter we explore the political, social and educational consequences of this massive arriving of immigrants to Spain and, particularly, to Catalonia, as a case where some of the tensions and possibilities derived from this situation are visible. The main data sources used in this text are policy documents, articles and reports, particularly from the 1992 to 2008 period, when more political and educational initiatives took place and more studies were developed in response to the unexpected situation of the arrival of such number of immigrants. We have also conducted interviews with teachers and school advisers and have developed research on young immigrants' professional trajectories (Sancho-Gil et al. 2012) to take a vivid account of people's experiences regarding the arriving of this massive number of children and youth, with different cultural and educational backgrounds, to Spanish and Catalan schools. We try to signify what happens when an unexpected *other* arrives to stable institutions and how policymakers, academics and teachers respond, react and adapt their values, preconceptions and practices to a situation, which puts into question what should be taught and how learning takes place when dealing with people with different cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

Immigrants at School in a Context of Educational Tensions

To frame the situation of immigrants at schools, it is necessary to point out some key issues and characteristic of Spanish educational system. The first one is linked to the different kinds of schools shaping the system: public, private and *escuelas concertadas* (similar to charter schools – from now we will use the term 'sponsored schools', taking into account that the sponsor is the government), which are partly financed by the state and partly by their owners (in most cases the Catholic Church). This structure is the result of the political agreement that took place in the democratic transition period after Franco's dictatorship and was fixed by the Ley Orgánica del Derecho a la Educación (LODE) – Organic Law Regulating the Right to Education (BOE 1985) – passed by the Socialist Government in 1985. According to the statistics, immigrant students were concentrated in public schools (80%); only the 20% were enrolled in private and *sponsored* schools):

This has not only resulted in educational inequalities between Spanish public and private schools, because students from minority backgrounds perform at lower academic levels than their peers, but also led to the politicization of the question of segregation of immigrants. Second, in spite of the decrease of influence of the Church, Catholic religion is a compulsory course in both primary and secondary education, which means that it must be offered by educational establishments, but pupils now may take it on a voluntary basis. The arrival of immigrant alumni with beliefs other than Catholic has given rise to demands for education in other religions. (Zapata-Barrero and de Witte 2007: 4)

The second issue relates to the recognition of Spain, under the Spanish Constitution approved in 1978, as a country administratively organized in autonomous communities, with their own political institutions (government, parliament and, in some cases, even police) and wide administrative competences. In this context, the Spanish education system is regulated both by the central government and the autonomous communities. Decisions about the school curriculum were regulated by the *Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo* (LOGSE) – Organic Act on the General Organisation of the Education System (BOE 1990). The contents of the core curricula cannot take up more than 55% of the school timetable of autonomous communities with an additional official language other than Spanish – like Catalonia, Basque country and Galicia – and not more than 65% for those that do not have another official language (Zapata-Barrero 2010). That means that autonomous communities can decide upon 45–35% of the core curriculum contents.

As an example:

The Laws of Linguistic Normalization (1983) gave Catalan, Basque and Galician an official status in their respective territories and also provided regional authorities with control over the educational system and the possibility to develop bilingual education programs and distinctive curricula. In regions like Catalonia and Basque country the authorities consequently started a process of “normalization” of Catalan and Euskara [<https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/1990/10/04/pdfs/A28927-28942.pdf>]. In both regions linguistic departments were established to enforce laws that put the national language on an equal status with Spanish, also in compulsory education. The social reality of multi-nationality thus explains some current demands from these Autonomous Communities and ways to manage bilingualism and now (due to immigration) multilingualism in schools. (Zapata-Barrero and de Witte 2007: 4–5)

Before immigration became a social reality in the 1990s, the cultural diversity factor was introduced by the gypsy minority, on the one hand, and the issue of the local language in Catalonia, Basque country and Galicia, on the other.

While the gypsies highlighted the differences in academic performance between social groups, the issue of language was an explicit challenge in specific Autonomous Communities with a second official language. After a period of exclusion and segregation of gypsies within so-called “bridge” schools, they were incorporated into ordinary classrooms with the backing of *compensatory programs*. These initiatives were firstly directed at those “disfavoured by economic capacity, social level or place of residence” (Constitutional Law of 19 July 1980 regulating school statutes). While cultural diversity was not regarded as factor of inequality, “the program did [...] include “cultural minorities” as specific area of action for orientation to the enrolment of the infant population, the regularization of attendance at class and the avoidance of early drop out” (Garreta 2006: 266). The development of these programs should be understood in the context of Spain adopting the notion of equality of

opportunity much later and different than in other Western countries. (Zapata-Barrero and de Witte 2007: 6)

That law (LOGSE) was the first one to mention the need to fight ethnic-cultural (and sexual) discrimination. Following the proposals of the Council of Europe, introduced was the idea of intercultural education programs (Terrén 2001). This law established links between intercultural education and special educational needs, considering with especial needs those pupils that suffer physical, mental or sensory disabilities, serious behavioural disorders or are in unfavourable social or cultural situations. Culture was therefore understood as one of the variables that could lead to disadvantages and inequalities. The idea was setting out an educational system capable of addressing (*compensate*) for inequalities without parallel action, disregarding the difficulties and impossibilities of educational systems to *compensate* by themselves social inequalities (Bernstein 1970). This meant that all students in spite of their sociocultural background, ability levels or physical and mental conditions have the right to be educated in general classrooms (Garreta 2006). However, the implementation of this law at schools, without a robust and determined support, had/is having arduous practical implications (Padilla and Gómez 2007; Verdugo and Rodríguez 2012). As Zapata-Barrero and de Witte (2007) argued, intercultural education was aimed to adopt curricular and structural changes that celebrate the diversity of culture, gender, religion, etc. However, in spite of the attention for cultural diversity, in that 1990 law, the implementation of intercultural education was ambiguous and found multiple difficulties due, in part, to the lack of human and economic resources.

As mentioned above, the *compensatory programs* initiative were developed to *integrate* the gypsy minority in mainstream schools and were later applied to immigrants when they started to arrive to schools in the 1990s. The main aim of these programs was to solve the linguistic difficulties as well as to bridge cultural and ability gaps. As an example, the Autonomous Catalan Government (the *Generalitat*) developed the *Pla per a la Lengua, la Interculturalitat i la Cohesió Social* – Plan for Language, Interculturality and Social Cohesion (Generalitat de Catalunya 2004), in order to attend the immigrant population. This *plan* defined the aims and objectives, the areas of operation and the predicted resources. Results of this initiative were the *ales d'acollida* (reception classrooms), understood as places where students who are late in joining the education system learn basically the Catalan language. For the remaining time, they are integrated into the ordinary classroom, following a transition curriculum program starting with those subjects considered as *non-academic* (physical education, music, art, workshops), to later go on to the one requiring a more complex linguistic input (social and natural sciences, mathematics and so on) (Arnau 2010–2011). As a signal of the extension of this compensatory action, in Catalonia, during the academic year 2008–2009, there were a total of 24,505 pupils attending 2236 *ales d'acollida* (Departament d'Educació 2008) in compulsory schooling. The pupils (with or without residence permit) joined the schools at any moment of the academic year, which created serious planning and practical problems in educational terms (Arnau 2010–2011).

Some unions and teachers considered this initiative as discriminatory, because it stigmatizes newcomers by labelling them as *lacking*, especially of the Catalan language. A primary school teacher who acted in one of these *aules d'acollida* told us about the pressure she received to put more emphasis on learning the standard language than on creating favourable inclusive relations. The same teacher told us about the opportunity of transforming the schools into places of *acollida* (welcoming places) not reducing it to a classroom, taking advantage of the potential offered by immigrants to think about a more inclusive school. This program was part of the discourse, which considers the arrival of immigrants as a 'problem' (the problem of immigration) and not as an opportunity for a more inclusive fair schooling. We will develop this idea in the next paragraphs.

In these two compensatory programs, cultural diversity was dealt with from a *deficit approach*. It is thus a form of positive discrimination, including special treatment for special students and performed by specific teachers. While compensatory programs were aimed at marginalized groups in general (the ethnic groups among them), the mentioned *aules d'acollida* were specifically directed at immigrants and consisted of separate classrooms for immigrants to learn the language and forms of behaviour in school. These insertion spaces should be understood, in the context of a political orientation directed at what Spanish and Catalan policymakers called *normalización* (normalization), as a way of incorporating immigrants within the mainstream of society, avoiding direct or indirect segregationist effects. It was also common for secondary school students to be placed in a classroom a year below their actual age, in order for them to learn the language and to cope with standard schoolwork. Some schools also have a specialist teacher, the so-called cultural mediator, that helped immigrant children and their parents with the social integration in the education system, by solving conflicts related to language difficulties or cultural differences. According to the Centre for Educational Research and Documentation (CIDE 2005), some autonomous communities also adopted special education programs, including the modification of the organization of schools and curricula adaptation, which were in line with the idea of the so-called intercultural education.

Zapata-Barbero and de Witte (2007) mentioned a conversation with the subdirector of Language and Social Cohesion (LSC) of the Catalan Government, who explained that the policy to manage cultural diversity developed by the Catalan Department of Education could be understood through the metaphor of a highway. The reception classes (*aules d'acollida*) were the first step of immigrant pupils towards the highway, while the Catalan language was the vehicle. The second step occurred in the schools as institutions, where an 'intercultural approach' needed to be implemented and it should affect all students and teachers. The third step was to be found in the adaptation of the school environment to the cultural diversity and the intercultural approach, which should result in local educational plans. The point of departure was to guarantee equality for all and respect for diversity. The representative of the Interculturality and Social Cohesion Service (ISCS) described this as the following: 'We were mono-cultural and now we have to recognize that we have to exist together with different cultures' (Zapata-Barrero and de Witte 2007: 58).

Discourses as Narrative to Fix Social Imaginaries on Immigrants at Schools

These actions illustrate two regulatory discourses. Compensatory education programs took place, segregated from the standard curriculum and were performed by specialized teachers, in order to *compensate* students' differences in language, culture and ability levels. The notion of *lacking* was fundamental in this approach, even when many of young immigrants were multilingual when they arrive to Spain or Catalonia (Sancho-Gil et al. 2012). Intercultural education, on the other hand, was aimed at producing tolerance and solidarity necessary for educational equity and social justice for all students. Therefore, it should not be identified with education for immigrant students but for all pupils to coexist and cooperate within a multicultural society (Muñoz 1997).

According to Etxeberria (2002), the historical evolution of the discourse on multiculturalism in Spain – and, we add, in Catalonia – can be summarized by a movement from assimilation to compensation, to multicultural and to intercultural education. While the latter two are often used as interchangeable, intercultural education is different from multicultural education, because it does not focus on cultures as separate groups but aims at communication and dialogue and responds to the terminology of the Council of Europe (Etxeberria 2002). It thereby goes beyond the liberal-assimilationist world view, by demanding both a real change in curriculum contents and strategies and changes in the level of cultural competence (Aguado and Malik 2001). Carbonell (2005), on the other hand, argues that intercultural education should be based on two fundamental pillars: education to foster equality and education to promote the respect for diversity. In so doing, it should include compensatory education within an intercultural approach.

In this regard, one of the problems in Spain was that politicians and policymakers seemed not ready to foresee the increasing immigration movement and its implications for education. In 1982, one of us did her master's thesis at the London Institute of Education on 'Issues on Bilingualism in Urban Catalonia' (Sancho-Gil 1982). During the research process, she was called by the head of the *Servei d'Ensenyament del Català* (SEDEC) (Catalan Teaching Service), as he knew about her research topic. Thinking of her experience in multicultural, multilingual and multi-ethnic schools in England, she asked him what will happen when a greater number of immigrants began arriving at Catalonia. His answer was clear and forceful: 'This never will happen here'. However, 13 years later, in the scholastic year 1995–1996, 12.6% of the pupils attending the infant, primary and secondary schools were foreigners (Carbonell 1998).

Some years later, the impressive arrival of immigrants to a country such as Catalonia – where the *immersion* into the Catalan Language and Culture was considered a priority by the nationalist coalition party *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union), who was running the Catalan Autonomous Government since 1980 – generated a series of tensions reflecting not only the imaginaries about the *other* but also the adopted education policies to cope with this unexpected phenomenon. The

Interdepartmental Immigration Plan – *Pla interdepartamental d'immigració* (Generalitat de Catalunya 1994: 44) – stated:

[...] The perspective of cultural integration is seeking to build, in a dynamic and living manner, a country able to consolidate some shared identity characteristics: language, knowledge of the own reality and history, freedom, equality and justice values, all that respecting and integrating in a group of people and cultures, the set of values and assets of all people living in the same country, from those who were born here to those who came from outside.

This approach to cultural integration is defined by Carbonell (1998) as acculturation, which, according with the anthropologist Teresa San Román (1992: 187), means that:

[...] integration and acculturation are related but different approaches and the school has an acculturated role that is only meaningful if there are, moreover, elements of social acceptance and participation of the minority, positive aspects of integration.

One of the consequences of this praxis of integration is the obligation of the foreigner to adapt (to the values of the 'owners' of the new country), but this adaptation necessarily 'involves submission' (Carbonell 1998: 208). The imaginary represented in this ideology transmitted in schools was that 'the majority group is something compact and unitary, and whether the society is "disintegrated" is precisely due to the presence of minority groups, this is the main reason on why "they must integrate" to ensure that this compactness fosters common good and social peace' (Idem: 210). However, in Catalonia (and Spain), we know (and experience everyday) that the majority group is not homogeneous culturally, socially or economically. Only when 'the majority group is willing to accept minority groups as counterparts, which means being eager to share both the exclusive privileges it enjoys, and the poverty of others, ultimately to share power and making possible genuine equal opportunities between human beings living in a given society', a true integration will be possible (Carbonell 1998: 208).

In 2006, the *Fundació Bofill* published the first report on the situation of Catalan education (Ferrer and Albaigés 2007). In that study, the authors said that Catalonia had a less equitable distribution of immigrant students among public and *sponsored* schools than in the rest of Spain. According to this report, in Catalonia, public schools cater for 84% of immigrant student. This percentage is more than the triple they should have if the distribution was made equitably with *sponsored* schools, also financed by public funds.

The concentration of eight out of ten students in public schools in Catalonia, according to the authors of the study, produces a clear duality in the education system (public versus *sponsored* schools), encourages the *ghettoization* of some schools and favours students' social exclusion. According to the report, the unbalanced distribution of students represents a social polarization with respect to the families' origin regarding the access to public or *sponsored* schools (let alone the totally private schools, even if somehow they also get public funds).

This study also highlighted the fact that 31% of 17-year-old foreigners were neither studying nor working. The authors of the report warned that this situation *encysted* the educational processes and proposed reducing the students' ratio in

schools with greater number of immigrants to ensure a higher quality of education. The data are conclusive, private and sponsored schools graduate the 82.7% of secondary compulsory education students, against the 64.9% in the public schools. At the same time, the arrival of immigrants has significantly increased the demand for public schools in kindergarten and primary levels.

From a comparative perspective, immigration had a greater impact in Catalanian educational system, by being one of the Spanish regions and European countries with greater rates of migratory growth and percentage of foreign students in compulsory education. The comparison also demonstrated that immigration increases the complexity of the educational system and consequently also affects its effectiveness (Albaigés and Ferrer-Esteban 2013).

This could be the picture, in general terms, about how the arrival of immigrants affected the school system over the decade of 1998–2008 and the policies and discourses developed to cope with this situation. During this time governments, policymakers, researchers and schools faced the challenge of receiving and incorporating the other, not only in the society and the labour market but also in the education system. In this process, sometimes, there has been more rhetoric than affective actions. More initiatives that promoted superficial changes (knowing the other through festivals where food and customs are shared) that by incorporating the diversity of views that the others bring to school into the curriculum. There has been more willingness to foster integration through acculturation than celebration of diversity. More multiculturalism (being together but separate) than interculturalism (being part of a common social project) has been promoted. Immigrants have been mostly placed in public schools, sometimes creating ghettos, rather than distributing them, as required by law, also in *sponsored* schools. The immigrants' arrival has been interpreted as a culture and religion issue and not as a social class matter. Nevertheless, after assuming the surprise that supposed to meet to an unexpected other, there has been commitment and multiple initiatives, mostly from schools and civil society to establish effective bridges with the other. It happened during a time when there was budget to take and develop those programs, when Spain behaved like a country rich and affluent, where it was easy to find work and progress. But suddenly the situation changed. This brings us to the present.

And the Crisis of the Economy (and Social Values) Arrived

Since 2007 the world economy has undergone a phase of marked instability. This has been characterised by successive shocks, feedback effects between the financial and productive sectors, a rapid deterioration in many countries' fiscal position, the difficulties of many of them in creating jobs once more and, lastly, the worsening euro area sovereign debt crisis. Such factors are all undoubtedly making the pace of exit from the recession slower than initially expected and are heightening uncertainty considerably, especially in Europe.

The Spanish economy has been much affected by these developments, as the imbalances accumulated in the boom period made it particularly vulnerable to changes in macroeconomic and financial conditions, and in expectations about the continuity of the upturn.

The international financial crisis precipitated the correction of the real estate and private-sector debt excesses marking the high-growth phase which preceded the recession. The deterioration of the macroeconomic scenario and, most particularly, in employment bore most adversely on public finances and on the position of financial institutions whose balance sheets showed greater exposure to real estate risk. Spain went into recession in 2008 and remained there until 2010, when a modest recovery ensued that came unstuck in the second half of 2011, as the sovereign debt crisis heightened and spread to an increasingly large number of countries. (Ortega and Peñalosa 2012: 7)

Under this crisis, Spain (as other countries in Europe) suffered the effects of the interventions of the so-called Troika (the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission) in their economies and citizens' lives, having special incidence on the cuts in education and welfare benefits. OECD data relating to the year 2008 indicate that education spending in Spain was 4.6% of GDP, compared with 5.4% on average among all OECD member countries. Now things are even worse, and the stability plan sent to Brussels by the Spanish government, run by the Popular Party's, expects investment in education falling to 3.9% of GDP in 2015 (Navas 2012). In the case of Catalonia, according to the government budget, since 2010, the Department of Education has lost 1076 million Euros (20.6%), while in global, the accounts of the *Generalitat* have fallen by 15.4% (4100 million). Bonal and Verger (2013) criticize that this considerable budget reduction has affected mainly to public education, while barely touched *sponsored* schools, which have increased their weight in public spending on education from 18.5% to 18.7 % in that period. This has resulted in the collapse of investment per student, 27% in the last 4 years in Catalonia. In the same direction, but related to teachers' working conditions, while students in the Catalan educational system grew by 6.3% between 2010 and 2012, the teaching staff has been reduced in the same period by 5.5%.

While the cuts are affecting education in particular and public investment in general, a consequence of these restrictive policies is the increase of unemployment. According to the reports by the National Statistics Institute (INE, available at http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/en/categoria.htm?c=Estadistica_P&cid=1254735976595), the figures of unemployment move from 13.79% in 2008, at the beginning of the crisis, to 25.77% (more than 5,000,000) in 2012, at the pick of the implementation of the restrictive policies.

The Spanish census of 2015 shows how Spain lost population for the third consecutive year due largely to the fall in the number of foreigners. The latest data by the National Statistics Institute (INE) show that in January 1, 2015, Spain had a population of 46,600,949 people, 170,392 less than in January 2014 (-0.4%). Altogether the number of foreigners has decreased in 1,032,983 people since 2011 (Prats 2015). In Catalonia, in January 1, 2014, according to the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (Idescat), they were 1.09 million the number of residents of foreign nationality. This figure represented 14.5% of the total population of Catalonia, a percentage significantly above the 10.7% of foreign residents on the total of the Spanish population. Compared to January 1, 2013, this means a reduction of 69,258 people, representing a decrease of 5.98% in the number of foreigners, and 0.85 % in

the proportion of foreigners on total the Catalan population. This decline has affected most to residents of Latin American origin, as it is clear from *Idescat* data that recorded a decrease of 36,002 foreign residents from this geographical area, representing more than half of the total decline in the number of foreigners (data available at <http://www.idescat.cat/poblacioestrangera/?b=0&res=a&nac=a&lang=es>).

To this situation, we need to add the exodus of Spaniards who left the country to look for better job's opportunities. Although in the past 2 years the government talks of economic growth, in the first half of the 2015, 50,844 Spaniards set sail abroad, 30% more than in 2014, according to data by the National Statistics Institute (data available at <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np962.pdf>). The number of Spaniards who has packed in reverse and returned the country is far from matching those that are abroad. In the first 6 months of this year, 23,078 returned to Spain, less than half of those looking for opportunities outside. In fact, the number of Spaniards who go out of the country maintains an unstoppable upward trend. An example of this is that the number of those who have gone in the first 6 months exceeded the full year 2010, in the first stages of the economic crisis, when 40,157 Spaniards decided to establish their residence outside Spain (Sánchez 2015).

This situation also affected to the decline of the number of immigrant children at schools. According to Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (2015), between 2011 and 2015, 69,138 children left Spain. In the case of Catalonia, evolutionary data show that children and youth who joined the universal provision in the education system began to decrease from the academic year 2012–2013. While at 3 years old, the number of children decreased for the first time during that course, in first years of compulsory and post-compulsory education, the numbers are still increasing. To cater for this growing demand, the supply of places in secondary schools, predictably, will grow more than 25% to meet the educational needs of future students who are in kindergarten age.

One of consequences of the social and economic crisis has been the displacement of 'the problem of immigration' from the first page of the agenda of politicians, policymakers, schools and researchers to a secondary or marginal place. However, 712,098 of newcomers go every day to the Spanish schools. They with their families represent more than the 10% of the Spanish population (4,718,864). The lives of the majority of the public schools in regions, such as La Rioja, Aragón, Catalonia, Murcia, Madrid, Melilla and Valencia, are full of voices that speak other tunes and children and youth who look at the world through different lenses (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte 2015).

Despite the shift of interest, this situation still constitutes being a challenge, not only for teachers who attend that diversity but also for the supervision and monitoring of the education system. According to the report coordinated by Martínez and Albaigés (2013), two difficulties are generally associated with different groups of immigrant students: a lower socio-economic status than the average of native population and several obstacles linked to social and institutional processes of adaptation to the host society, such as language, religion, cultural references, previous educational experiences and academic discontinuity.

The cases of Spain and Catalonia could be located among those countries that have made, in the period of the explosion of immigrants' arrival, significant progress in political and legal mechanisms for giving attention to student diversity and special needs. However, funding deficits, since 2010, have significantly limited an adequate response of the system to meet real social and educational needs.

Immigrants came to Spain attracted by a flourishing economy in the early 1990s. Some of them have returned to their countries. But the world remains unstable and uncertain. Despite the difficulties, evictions from their homes, the worsening employment situation in Spain, there are some conditions for hope. Immigrants, by the fact of living in Spain, have the right to education, health services and social support. Although the crisis has marginalized especially those with less education, and underemployment and inequality are affecting more to higher layers of the population, expressions of solidarity and demand for more social justice are still in the air.

When we are writing this chapter, we observe in Catalonia a state of effervescence in schools for an education that embraces all students and enables everyone to find their place for learning. Perhaps immigration, after years of efforts, difficulties and cuts, is helping to think another school, more participatory, democratic and inclusive.

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