

Spain (Basque Country)

Intercultural policies in a multicultural neighbourhood: experiences in three primary schools in San Francisco, Bilbao

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Summary

With the international migrations that began to settle in the Basque Country from the 1990s onwards, its educational system experienced a relatively novel situation: schoolchildren who were foreign or the children of immigrants arrived in its classrooms with different cultural heritages that were to a certain extent alien to the autochthonous forms of socialisation. The new reality in the schools revived old, local debates on “who we are” and “what we want to be”; it became an urgent necessity to consider and put into practice forms of inclusion with respect to those new schoolchildren who, in one way or another, were considered as ‘others’. Intercultural policies thus resulted in an atmosphere that was favourable to conceiving culture in the singular, or in that binary form that characterises the conflict of identities in the Basque Country. And in this case they did so in the field education, which is singularly prepared for social reproduction and, therefore, for the projection of the communitarian “We”.

This paper analyses the intercultural policies in the field of compulsory education in the Basque Country, and it does in a special context: the San Francisco neighbourhood in Bilbao, characterised by a significant presence of immigrant population and of the Gypsy ethnic group, and by a social imaginary that situates it between marginality and multicultural exoticism. The three schools that have been selected for this research are situated on the perimeter of that neighbourhood. The peculiar ethnic distribution of the schoolchildren that can be found in this triangle of schools makes the case into a phenomenon of special relevance for our object of study; it shows: how the schools respond to cultural diversity; the reminiscences and

influences of old debates and identity conflicts in Basque society, the linguistic crossroads of the new multicultural reality with the complex local bilingualism and its expression in the educational system; the reception of the intercultural policies facing the new multicultural situation; and the conceptions and treatment of the 'other' and diversity in the educational setting.

On the basis of this problematical conformation of the school reality, and recognising the increasing multicultural reality of Basque society, the educational authorities have been developing a series of regulations and programs that accept and promote the value of cultural diversity and interculturality. Nonetheless, against the background of that identification of the 'other' with vulnerability and social exclusion, the cultural variable that normatively constitutes diversity as a desirable goal, declines in favour of the social problematisation of the 'other'. In this context there appears to be a movement that goes from the racial question to the social question. Thus, the school performs the role of a transforming agent of society, not so much, or not only, because of its function as an agency of socialisation of the schoolchildren, but also because it endeavours to intervene in that field of family socialisation that, in the case of the immigrant or Gypsy 'others', is assumed to be precarious and vulnerable.

Introduction

With the international migrations that began to settle in the Basque Country from the 1990s onwards, its educational system experienced a relatively novel situation: schoolchildren who were foreign or the children of immigrants arrived in its classrooms with different cultural heritages that were to a certain extent alien to the autochthonous forms of socialisation. The new reality in the schools revived old, local debates on "who we are" and "what we want to be"; it became an urgent necessity to consider and put into practice forms of inclusion with respect to those new schoolchildren who, in one way or another, were considered as 'others'. Intercultural policies thus resulted in an atmosphere that was favourable to conceiving culture in the singular, or in that binary form that characterises the conflict of identities in the Basque Country. And in this case they did so in the field education, which is singularly prepared for social reproduction and, therefore, for the projection of the communitarian "We".

This paper analyses the intercultural policies in relation of (anti-) racism in the field of compulsory education in the Basque Country, and it does in a special context: the San Francisco neighbourhood in Bilbao, characterised by a significant presence of immigrant population and of the Gypsy ethnic group, and by a social imaginary that

situates it between marginality and multicultural exoticism. The three schools that have been selected for this research are situated on the perimeter of that neighbourhood. The peculiar ethnic distribution of the schoolchildren that can be found in this triangle of schools makes the case into a phenomenon of special relevance for our object of study; it shows: how the schools respond to cultural diversity; the reminiscences and influences of old debates and identity conflicts in Basque society, the linguistic crossroads of the new multicultural reality with the complex local bilingualism and its expression in the educational system; the reception of the intercultural policies facing the new multicultural situation; and the conceptions and treatment of the 'other' and diversity in the educational setting.

In order to carry out the research ten in-depth interviews were held with different educational agents and two focus groups were organised involving about as many informants from the teaching sector. These informants were chosen in a way that attempted to reflect the complex management structure of compulsory education and schools in the Basque Country. For the purposes of clarifying the position of enunciation of each of the agents interviewed, they have been classified following a triple criterion: on one side, those informants who carry out their work in the *school* itself are identified with the nomenclature "EEce"; on the other, the *government* agents (technical personnel of the corresponding administrative department), who are listed as "EEg"; finally, the persons who we term *intermediate* agents (EEi) are those who, for different reasons, do not belong either to the professional management of the school, or to the government educational administration, but are directly related to the compulsory education sector (trade unions, representatives of the parents of schoolchildren, and advisory councils). Following this classificatory arrangement, the second type of informants and some agents of the third type often frame their discourses at a more general level of enunciation, frequently referring to the totality of the system or to educational policies, while those of the first type have been questioned on issues concerning their respective schools.

The focus groups were organised with agents of the typologies detailed above: one with representatives of School Councils and of associations of parents of the schoolchildren of the three schools; and another with a pedagogic figure who is especially significant for our case study, the "Intercultural Motivators", who carry out their functions in certain schools.

Also of fundamental importance during the field work was the analysis of the profuse educational legislation, at the levels of both the autonomous community and the state, and of the diverse and also abundant documents that establish the protocols of action, propose programs, formulate official announcements, suggest "good

practices”, etc. Some non-participatory observations were also formulated at meetings with school personnel at which issues related to policies and practices of interculturality were dealt with.

1. The Field: local specificities and the crisis of the school

Anyone who approaches the world of education today, especially basic education, that is, covering the stage of compulsory schooling, will in the first place notice, both in the specialized bibliography and in the first impressions given by the professionals, that the school is an institution in crisis. A crisis that, as Dubet justly remarked, does not only refer to the difficulties of adapting to a world in constant change for which the training offered by school is always lagging behind. This is a crisis that affects the fundamental purpose of the school institution itself, which is the function of socialising, of creating society. It is therefore a process that reaches the fibre of the institution in so far as it is inscribed in “a deep mutation of the work with the other” (Dubet, 2006: 2010) and affects social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1995; Willis, 1977).

The school constitutes an “institutional program”: in the image and likeness of its predecessor and inventor: the Church (Durkheim, 2002), it distributes a series of sacred values and principles that, with the modern project, are directly aimed at sustaining living together; it provides authority, charisma and vocation to its professionals, the teachers; it constructs subjects, that is, schoolchildren who, by obeying the rules, are understood to become autonomous individuals; it institutes a differentiated space, separated from society and “made into a sanctuary” – the sanctuary of the school itself – with its symbolic rites and classifications (Dubet, 2010); spaces that, as an instance of socialisation in itself, produce encounters with others, who, in so far as they are schoolchildren, belong to a category of equals (Gatti, 2006). These are all characteristics of an ideal modern type of school, especially republican in its character, which is of interest to sociological perspectives – and to us in this case as it is a field in which a special type of practices is inscribed that refers to the encounter with the ‘other’ and to tolerance – because it always presents deviations, undesired effects and historical particularities that escape from that classification.

The local narrative on the crisis of the educational institution provided by the school agents offers interpretations that correspond to the general tendencies of a “decline” founded on the very reasons of modernity that inspired the modern school: a loss of sacredness of the values that sustain it; a breakdown between the primary and secondary instances of socialisation, that is, a progressive rupture between school and

family and, consequently, between school and society; and, of especial relevance with respect to the aim of this study, the school is undergoing a form of democratization that is especially affecting its original homogenising vocation (Dubet, 2006; Gurrutxaga and Unceta, 2010). Basic education is increasingly having to face the challenge of diversity with a set of antique tools, more suitable for the production of a homogeneous society than for attending to the needs of the new minorities. Thus, rather than producing society, in the speech of the professionals and in some bibliography, the school seems the school seems to be obliged to adapt itself to an increasingly heterogeneous society (Dubet, 2010).

In the narrative of the school agents consulted, the schoolchildren seem to be individuals even prior to going through the process that is supposed to construct them as such. The situation is as described by Dubet with respect to the passage from the *school of pupils* to the *school of children* (Dubet, 2006: 108). In many cases the schoolchildren are – especially according to the hegemonic version of the “autochthonous” population – offspring of the first generation of the Basque educational project, the first generation of schoolchildren who went to the democratic school, the massive school, the school which formed individual autonomy and the autonomy of Basque autonomy, the movement of the *Ikastolas*¹. They are the children of families that are integrally inserted in the labour market and they are individuals on the basis of the individuality constructed by their parents:

“The typical thing in the past was that the teacher scolded you, you went home saying the teacher had scolded you, then they scolded you at home as well, but now... I think there’s a lot of exaggeration. Now they say to you that if the teacher has scolded you, one’s going to stick up for one’s child and blame the teacher, isn’t that right? These situations happen, but there’s a lot of exaggeration as well. It happens more than before? Yes. The teaching staff has lost authority. The parents have lost authority. There’s also that... Why? What is it that has been done badly? I don’t know” (EEi-3).

Then there is the crisis of the egalitarian school that, in the appreciation of the informants, seems to express itself in social inequality overlaid with discriminations of a different order: racial, cultural, ethnic, and also of gender:

“The question of dropping out of school early and the question of failing at school. It is much lower in this Community than in others. Our figures are almost at the European level. But having said this, it really shouldn’t be like that in our case, because we have clearly identified the communities that are failing, which are the immigrants and the Gypsies. And within these communities, the boys much more than the girls, very much more; that’s a general tendency in Europe, male school failure, which is also closely linked to issues of equality and male behaviour models. So, we have pretty well identified boys of immigrant origin and Gypsy boys. And we’re not able to put an end to the problem, when we have it so clearly identified” (EEi-1)

¹ The movement of the *ikastolas* in the Basque Country dates from the decade of the 1960s and developed a type of schools on the basis of a new educational model that combined teaching in Euskera with a marked identity stamp. It arose as a response to the state public school, which had a strong Francoist heritage. At present there are 101 educational centres of this type and they come under the regime of private and semi-private education.

There are diagnoses and evaluations, internal and external, referring to one aspect or another, but the result is always a critical one:

“In my opinion, the problem is the ‘other’, the one that Pisa and these international evaluators are pointing to, who are attributed with having a greater precariousness in society and in the family itself by the indices; in the long run, they also generate less satisfactory organic results amongst the schoolchildren.” (EEi-5)

Racism appears on the agenda of the new problems of the school. In the light of the situations of diversity and in the framework of a heterogeneous society, the arrival of new schoolchildren of immigrant origin appears to be activating old racial discriminations, bringing them up to date, reissuing them and giving them a new problematic weight. Racism appears as a new language that provides old inequalities with new meaning:

“In the past, a long time ago, there was also a type of classroom that gave support to the Gypsy schoolchildren; an attempt was always made to do something, but look, we always managed to sort something out, I don’t know how; but I don’t think there was so much of it, the question of racism; I didn’t see of it as much as we are seeing now, or attempts at racism, I don’t know how to put it, but now I do think that in some schools and some situations it does exist.” (EEce-1)

“It is very easy to say it on paper but then it’s very complicated in practice. But what is really worrying is not so much a foreign population as a foreign population in a situation of exclusion. But I think that this has been a longstanding question in education, centres that have taken in the more marginal populations.” (EEg-1)

Narratives proliferate in this general order of crisis of the basic educational institution. There is also another problematic and varied panorama that is more closely related to local circumstances, which we will now report on, starting with a detail in the regulations establishing the attributions of the autonomous authorities in educational matters.

1.1. Education in the Basque Country: autonomous jurisdictional capacities and the specificity of compulsory education

The educational institution has not been exempt from the process of politico-administrative decentralisation that contemporary societies have been undergoing and that, in a specific way, found expression in the Spanish state following the construction of the State of the Autonomous Communities. The degree of complexity in the attributions in the management of education shown by Spain is particularly high, and combines at least three administrative levels: central, autonomous and local. At the first level, the Spanish Constitution establishes regulations of a general character, such as that of guaranteeing equality in the access to education, the conditions for obtaining qualifications, the statutory regime of the civil service personnel and academic freedom. Nonetheless, it is in the autonomous sphere where the majority of the jurisdictional capacities in educational matters are to be found. This has been the case since 2005, when the autonomous communities developed their own curricular decree for the stage of basic education, from 6 to 16 years. This is a question that has served

to accentuate the culturally differentiated character of each community – and especially of some like Catalonia and the Basque Country (Doncel Abad, 2010).

In a setting like the Basque Country, where collective identity is a highly valued issue in the political dispute, public debates over education, especially basic education, take on a singular importance and are affected by changes in the political administration. Decree 175 of 2007 established the curriculum of Basic Education in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC) following the recommendations of the European Parliament of 2006. On the basis of the four pillars of the Delors Report for UNESCO of 1996 (“Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be”), the decree established amongst its main points the “integral development of the skills of persons as well as the basic skills that they need for their personal realisation and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment”. These basic skills included in a special way those relating to the language and cultural patrimony of “*Euskal Herria*”². With respect to language, Euskera, the Basque language, is established as the principle tongue, and it is assigned an integrating role within the educational system, although Spanish is not neglected as a language of learning, and neither are one or two foreign languages besides.

The controversy over languages, cultural belonging, the questioning of who we are and what we want to be, has and continues to be the leitmotif of each educational reform³, thus updating the conflict over identities that, since the transition from Francoism and even earlier (Pérez-Agote, 1986), has characterised social life in the Basque Country. Of significance with respect to this questioning of belonging, and the successive and progressive incorporations of difference, is the paragraph that the decree, which establishes the basic education curriculum of the ACBC, dedicates to the objective of “learning to live together”:

To identify oneself as a Basque citizen in a multicultural setting, evaluating in a positive way both the Basque language and culture and the languages and cultures of belonging and reference, so that on the basis of multiple identities each one should build their own identity in an inclusive way, as well to construct a common framework of reference compatible with the respect for differences and that should facilitate living together.⁴

² “This Decree is therefore elaborated from the resolve to construct a global, plural and open vision, on the basis of the particular and specific vision of *Euskal Herria*, understanding by such the territorial area referring to the ensemble of Álava, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Lapurdi, Navarre (Lower and Upper) and Zuberoa.” (BOPV, 13 November 2007).

³ Some of these questions have been modified in a recent decree (97/2010) that, following the tone of the “non-nationalist” ideology of the Socialist party which has been in office in the autonomous government since 2009, eliminates the term “*Euskal Herria*” contained in the earlier decree on the understanding that it alludes to a cultural definition and that the strictly political definition is the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC). Other changes have also been introduced with respect to the status of the languages, basically Euskera and Spanish, in so far as the former ceases to be considered the “vehicular” language of the educational system.

⁴ Decreto 175/2007, artículo 8, 3, f, BOPV, nº 128.

1.2. Diversification and differentiation in compulsory education in the Basque

Country: public-private and linguistic models

The Basque public school is defined as “plural, bilingual, democratic, at the service of Basque society, socially and culturally rooted in its milieu, compensatory with respect to inequalities and integrating of diversity”.⁵

The educational system of the Basque Country has a long history of dealing with, and disputing diversity that should be understood in the context of its nationalist movement and its relation with the central government. There are two principal instances of differentiation in compulsory education in the Basque Country: that concerning the distinction between public and private schools; and that referring to the use of the language in the different schools, the so-called linguistic models. With respect to the first aspect, since the approval of the Organic Law on the Right to Education of 1985, the Basque Government has established a system of coordination for the private schools, by which public funding for them is established with the aim, on the basis of the right to education, of guaranteeing free education. In this respect, what we are dealing with a singular private system, given that nearly 100% of these educational centres are attached to the system of coordination, and due to the fact that about 50% of Basque schoolchildren are inscribed in them (Gurrutxaga and Uncueta, 2010).

For their part, the implementation of the linguistic models, establishing the use of Euskera and Spanish in education, dates from 1983 when, by means of Decree 138, the use of official languages in non-university education in the Basque Country was regulated. Since then, in both private and public education, three models have been established: model A, in which all the classes are given in Spanish, with Euskera as just further subject; model B, in which teaching takes place in both Spanish and Euskera; and model D, in which teaching takes place integrally in Euskera, with Spanish as a subject. Although there are variations depending on each historical territory, model D is predominant, with A and B showing a tendency towards becoming an ever smaller minority⁶.

It can be affirmed that the establishment of the linguistic models in compulsory education is the principal factor that is traversed by the social divisions and distinctions in the Basque Country: the fact of being a Basque-speaker or not, or of having been born in the Basque Country or not, are questions that are especially reflected in the school and the choice of one or another model (to a much greater degree than registering in a public or private educational centre) is determinant in an individual's

⁵ Ley 1/1993 de la Escuela Pública Vasca. Artículo 3º.

⁶ Thus, during the 2009/2010 school year, 69.9% of schoolchildren were registered in model D, 24.7% in model B, and only 12.7% in model A. By historical territory, Gipuzkoa is where there the greatest concentration of schoolchildren in model D is found (76.5%), followed by Bizkaia (57.9%) and Álava (42%). (EUSTAT, 2010).

biography (Gatti, 2006: 126). Thus, the linguistic models reproduce especially the differentiation between the autochthonous population and foreigners, sketching a school cartography that, in general terms, places autochthonous schoolchildren in model D and immigrants and Gypsies in model A:

So this school is a model A one. You know that the model A schools in the educational system of our communities are “residual” models, in inverted commas, that is...

“Minority ones.”.

“Minority ones, and where certain types of schoolchildren come together, above all immigrant schoolchildren, which means our school, ninety something percent of the population is immigrant. Let’s say eighty percent, although that isn’t true, since... it depends on who’s opinion it is.” (EEce-2)

And the differentiation increases due to the fact that teaching in Spanish residual and on the decline, and it is in these “residual” schools where the greatest quantity of immigrants is concentrated to the point of being situations that are qualified as “ghettoisation”. This is an expression that is habitually used both by the informants connected with the schools selected for this research project and in the sociological diagnoses dealing with the question (See Gurrutxaga and Uncueta, 2010).

Within this panorama of linguistic models, it is supposed that teaching in Spanish is what most attracts the immigrant population, either because they value it instrumentally since Spanish does not involve so many limitations when it comes to choosing another migratory destination, or because it is the mother tongue of the Latin American schoolchildren, for example. In this situation, model A produces a type of call effect for the concentration of immigrant schoolchildren. And the affair is not free of claims. When subjected to debate, that tone of making demands and the accusation of politicising the issue appear, making apparent the lack of political resolution of the conflict of identities that traverses public affairs in the Basque Country:

“The Department (...) would have the capacity if it really considered that immigrant schoolchildren have to go to model A schools, that model A schools should be opened. That’s why I said that these options should be more... that they should open model A schools; but from the beginning they said that under no circumstances were they going to open a model A school. It’s a political question.” (GDce-1)

And that is how it is in the opinion of others, whose interpretation is that the persistence of model A puts a brake on the *euskaldunización* of society – where *euskaldunización* means to socialise, to convert those who learn the language into “new Basques” (Gatti, 2007); a type of political weapon for those who consider that the identity question should be resolved by a complete socialisation in Euskera:

“It’s well known the with model A the kids don’t learn Euskera, so one of the aims that education should have is they when they finish compulsory education they should be able to speak and communicate more or less normally in both Euskera and Spanish.” (EEi-3)

But this is a question that does not only involve the choice of the parents of the schoolchildren but also concerns the teachers, their working rights, their ideologies, coexistence in the school, etc. That is, this is a process of socialisation that emerges and shows the existence of some teaching professionals who, for generational reasons do not have sufficient linguistic skills to carry out teaching in Euskera:

"Well, I realise that by law each school has the option of autonomy with respect to the linguistic project. This has never been the case in this school because, in reality, if you make fun of model A then you are causing problems for the staff. I don't know if I'm managing to explain myself (...) if we are the ones who have to define how it is, and by a wide majority, then that's impossible." (EEce-3)

Thus, in the opinion of some "autochthonous" accounts, favourable to teaching in Euskera, the existence of model A is due to two basic factors: the labour rights of teachers who don't have linguistic skills and the special fondness of the "non-autochthonous" for Spanish. However, in the opinion of those same accounts about how the linguistic question ought to be, teaching immigrants in Euskera would be a guarantee for their integration:

"Well, integration would be ideal for them. Obviously, what happens is that the immigrants are not given a welcome in Euskera either. I suppose immigrant people are received in Spanish, they don't even say Ongi etorri to them, that is, "You are welcome". I don't know, the first words, so that they know that another language exists. But it's obvious that for getting integrated in Euskera would be a good idea for them, don't you think?" (EEi-1)

And it would also be beneficial for a normalised positioning in terms of social structure, even overcoming the stigma that previous immigrations have faced because:

"The fact is that, in the final term, the models don't establish differences amongst linguistic models, instead it is social classes that we find, there is a brutal division into social classes." (EEi-3)

And another differentiation is added to the linguistic division: public and private schools⁷:

"... there is an imbalance between the educational networks, that is, the public network and the semi-private network are not receiving these schoolchildren in the same proportions; it's a clear analysis, the numbers appear there, I mean, it's well known that these analyses always have to be given a nuanced reading." (EEce-2)

It is a question of divisions and differentiations that, according to the interpretation of some, go beyond the knowledge of the recent arrivals, both at the practical level (payment or non-payment in the public and semi-private schools) and at the level of sensibilities concerning identities (the linguistic models):

"We are finding immigrant people who are moving from semi-private to public education in the higher courses. We are detecting... they are small figures but... clearly, because semi-private education costs you 200 Euros a month. And obviously, in a period of crisis, when many immigrant people can't meet that expenditure, although they're in the fourth year of primary, they try and make the leap to public education." (EEi-2)

⁷ According to data for 2008, 73.4% of immigrant schoolchildren in Araba attend public schools, 68.5% in Bizkaia and 53.7% in Gipuzkoa (Gurrutxaga y Unceta, 2010 : 114).

In the interpretation of the educational authorities, an imaginary is being reproduced in which the concentration of immigrants in certain schools reduces the learning capacity of the schoolchildren, over-exposing this function of primary education and mitigating the school's function of integration (Dubet, 2006) or of equalisation (Gurrutxaga and Uncueta, 2010), which seems to be a characteristic and a priority of primary education. This is a classical difference of the modern school that puts socio-economic level into relation with educational performance (Cardús, in Gurrutxaga and Uncueta, 2010: 116).

"The question of where the immigrant schoolchildren go is very worrying. And it worries them a great deal that there is an overrepresentation of these schoolchildren in certain schools. So studies start to come out saying that starting from a certain percentage, they can have a determinate effect on learning, then there is a whole debate which later doesn't find any reflection in the research proceeding from the educational world." (EEg-1)

Thus, the Basque educational system seems to be "plagued" with differentiations, sensibilities, identities, beliefs... that counteract the possibility of a centralised management of this fundamental socialisation involved in primary education. Educational policy seems to be adapted to the rhythms and forms of the local political executive and thus, instead of being an instance of public decision-making, it appears as a constant management of difference, of the proportional representation of each enclave of interest or identity. This is how it is expressed by the body that incarnates these differences, the School Council of Euskadi:

"Then in the Basque Country, since you know the system you will be aware that we have a slightly peculiar system, in the sense that we have a very strong semi-private network; 50% of our educational system is not public, it's semi-private, that is, it's funded with public money but its ownership isn't public but private; and it is practically half of the educational system, which produces a lot of complications, a lot of complications. On one side, it is enriching because they are two different versions, but, on the other, it complicates everything to do with the management of education and it also often creates situations, let's say that, comparatively, it creates situations that can be non-equitable. So, we always have to be vigilant." (EEi-1)

And from centralised management to practice: the differences are reproduced inside the schools and the parents of the schoolchildren play an important role in resolving them. To a large extent, these are questions subject to choices, both with respect to educational models, which can be differentiated in the same school, and with respect to religious matters, although with much less intensity than in the first of these questions:

"On some occasion they asked me why my son couldn't be taught the Moslem religion. And someone else asked me, of course, you have to... when you make the request, when you enroll, you can mark "I want my child to receive classes" in the Catholic religion, and you can put Islam, everything, you can put all of them. What happens is that for there to be classes, there has to be X percent of schoolchildren that have requested them, if not, no." (EEce-1)

In this context the educational policy is developed through “projects” that are elaborated by the schools themselves⁸ based on the principle of their autonomy that the law establishes⁹. These are projects based both on “problems” and on the differences that are found, first in the educational system and then in the particularity and autonomy or decision-making capacity of each school:

“Well, they’re different because they are... Well, in reality they start out with projects... Let’s see, what the Department of Education does every year – around this date, they will be closing the period if it isn’t already closed – is offer the schools different work plans for the following year; one might be the interculturality plan; another might be the plan for linguistic normalization; another might be the plan for living together. Up until this agreement that we signed in 2010, all these plans meant added resources for the school, human resources, extra teaching staff for the school in different categories, part-time teachers, that is, nine hours, or whatever.” (EEi-5)

Public/semi-private; model A, B or D, religion/no religion/which religion, are the crucial differentiations in the schooling of the immigrant schoolchildren and of those of the “eternal others” (the Gypsies) who are the subjects identified as being vulnerable to racism and intolerance. These are differentiations that threaten the possibility of a centralised educational policy and that result in a management of education by programs, a form in which the interventions that attempt to stop these and other types of discrimination are inscribed. Thus, school management, far from being posed in terms of a homogeneous and single vocation of socialisation, seems instead to be the management of difference.

1.3. Specialisation and spatialisation: a triangle of schools in a multicultural neighbourhood of Bilbao

The singular and complex differentiation of non-university education in the Basque Country, produced by the linguistic models and the public and the semi-private schools, is carried out using the tool of the “school map”. This plans the offer of school places according to criteria of equity, participation by the school agents, optimisation of resources and adaptation of the educational offers to the demographic and geographic reality of each zone in relation to the different criteria of the applicants. This is how it was explained by an administrative agent:

“The schoolchildren who enrol in the ordinary period: how do they do it? The mothers appear, make the triple choice and decide “my child is going here, here or here.” And she sends the child along; the school receives them and that’s it. And the child who gets in gets in, and the child who doesn’t goes to the second, and if not to the second, then to the third. The system is like that. For admission we take account of income, proximity, whether or not there are any brothers or sisters. Let’s say, that’s the model we have.” (EEg-1)

⁸ *Guía para la elaboración del proyecto educativo del centro*, Departamento de Educación del Gobierno Vasco, 1997.

⁹ Decreto 175/2007 de Currículo de Educación Básica en la CAPV.

But, as can be deduced from the agent's tone, the result is not always satisfactory and frequently reflects the tension between compulsoriness and the right to education. There is thus frequently a conflict between the parents' right to choose the education of their children, that is, the school in which to enrol them, and the capacity and limits of the government to intervene in favour of social balance. The result is a demographic disproportion between school and neighbourhood when, in some cases, the school population does not correspond to that of its geographic location, generating the risk that the actors involved themselves describe as the "ghettoisation" of certain schools:

"And in fact, well, we're here so that some things don't get out of proportion. I mean, the schools that are, for example, in a neighbourhood where there is a foreign population of 15 percent, so that the school isn't overrepresented. There are currents, aren't there? So that the school represents the reality of its neighbourhood. But, obviously, how do you materialise that? Saying to a parent: "No, you can't come here because you have to be part of this 15 percent". Clearly, you are infringing on rights, you are infringing on... the right, which right do they put first? And some say that there is a right of the parents, which is the right of identity, the right of integration and the right of social cohesion." (EEg-1)

Questionings of this type are common in neighbourhoods like San Francisco, in Bilbao, where our empirical research was located. The concept of neighbourhood employed here is that of its wider meaning. San Francisco belongs to District 5 (Ibaiondo) of the 8 that make up Bilbao and it includes other residential zones, like the Old Town and Atxuri, where two of the schools selected are located (Mujika-Soloetxe and Maestro García Rivero respectively). Other studies (Pérez-Agote, Tejerina and Barañano, 2010) have sought to plot a triple cartography in order to characterise the neighbourhood. From a geographical point of view, San Francisco occupies a central position in the urban layout of Bilbao, but at the same time there has been a historically constant tendency to enclose it on the margins of the city's urban developments. What stands out on the demographical map is the sustained development of the foreign population since the 1990s; this reached figures of about 30% in 2008, a significant quantity when compared with the city as a whole, which registers barely 7.05%. In any case, one characteristic of the population of San Francisco, which is underlined by that study, is its great heterogeneity regarding nationality of origin, as well as a significant presence of the Gypsy population. Finally, on the cartography of the social representations of the neighbourhood, besides endorsing its character of being a poor quarter that has always characterised it, there is an imaginary of a historically problematic place that has been overlooked by the successive projects to develop the city. This question contrasts with the present-day situation, in which there is a predominance of the discourse and some practical manifestations of "rehabilitation"; especially that manifestation posed in the forms of a gentrification which makes the marked presence of immigrants into an opportunity structure for "developing interculturality and the

multiethnic component of the neighbourhood in all its potential”, as one of the development plans of the City Council specifies (2010: 61). In this context, the position of the immigrants in the zone appears in an ambiguous way: on one side, they occupy the problematic place associated with marginality but, on the other, their image personifies the neighbourhood’s projection towards the future. In any case, amongst the representations of this historical neighbourhood of Bilbao, what predominate are those of a space broadly inhabited by the “eternal other” – the Gypsies – and by a more recent ‘other’ – immigrants.

Map of the neighbourhood of San Francisco and the school triangle:



A. Escuela Mujika-Solokoetxe. B. Escuela Miribilla. C. Escuela Maestro García Rivero

The schools studied demarcate this urban zone, which is demographically, socially and culturally special, in a triangular way; and each of the vertices of the triangle concentrates a type of ethnic specialisation into three big groups that, adopting their own social definitions, are identified as “immigrants, Gypsies and autochthonous people”. On this basis, the demographic composition of the schoolchildren of each educational centre can be characterised as follows: Miribilla School, with a large proportion of Gypsies, together with a percentage of immigrant schoolchildren or children of immigrants, and a minimum presence of those who, facing such reference

groups, consider themselves to be “autochthonous” or “*payos*” [non-Gypsy], “so to speak” (EEi-4), as an informant declares, assuming with that expression the difficulty of identification and its dependence on the “position” of enunciation; the Mujika-Solokoetxe school, with a majority proportion of immigrant schoolchildren, fundamentally of Latin American origin, and a scant “autochthonous” and Gypsy population; and, finally, the Maestro García Rivero Centre, where the majority of the schoolchildren are autochthonous, with very little Gypsy and immigrant population. This is a differentiation that, since it is made by the social actors themselves, is only partially reflected in the official statistics through the single distinction drawn between immigrant schoolchildren and total number of schoolchildren: 3.6% of immigrant schoolchildren in the García Rivero School; 47.1% in Mujika-Solokoetxe and 38.61% in Miribilla during the 2009/2010 school year. Breaking this down into linguistic models and by educational grades, we find the following figures:

Miribilla School

IMMIGRANT SCHOOLCHILDREN				TOTAL SCHOOLCHILDREN				IMMIGRATION as % of TOTAL	
<i>Linguistic model</i>	A	B	D	TOTAL	A	B	D		TOTAL
Pre-school Education	19	1	19	39	73		74	147	26.53
Primary Education	101		4	105	215		11	226	46.46
TOTAL	120	1	23	144	288		85	373	36.61

Mujika-Solokoetxe School

IMMIGRANT SCHOOLCHILDREN				TOTAL SCHOOLCHILDREN				IMMIGRATION as % of TOTAL	
<i>Linguistic model</i>	A	B	D	TOTAL	A	B	D		TOTAL
Pre-school Education	5		3	8	20		37	57	14.04
Primary Education	56	1		57	81			81	70.37
TOTAL	61	1	3	65	101		37	138	47.1

Maestro García Rivero School

IMMIGRANT SCHOOLCHILDREN				TOTAL SCHOOLCHILDREN				IMMIGRATION as % of TOTAL	
<i>Linguistic model</i>	A	B	D	TOTAL	A	B	D		TOTAL
Pre-school Education			6	6			175	175	3.43
Primary Education			10	10			269	269	3.72
TOTAL			16	16			444	444	3.6

SOURCE: Departamento de Educación, Universidades e Investigación, Gobierno Vasco, 2010.

And this official distinction is by no means trivial, given that, as we shall see later, it serves for the implementation of specific programs of the Education Department aimed

at schools with determinate percentages of immigrant schoolchildren, such as the one containing the figure of the “Intercultural Motivator”. Nor is this differentiation questioned by the educational agents, except perhaps for its lack of precision, given that it considers the children of immigrants born in the Spanish state to be “autochthonous” and therefore...

“if you want the percentages of autochthonous schoolchildren, I don’t know, about 30 percent for example. And where is that 30 percent? Because, obviously, in your imagination you picture people like that, don’t you? What happens is that the children who were born here, although their parents are from Senegal, or wherever, are counted as... they aren’t counted as immigrants, are they?” (EEi-3)

The interpretation made by the informants of such spatialisation and specialisation of the difference in the schools of the neighbourhood is clear and unanimous. It is once again the so-called educational models that explain it. Miribilla and Mujika-Solokoetxe are model A schools, that is, teaching is done in Spanish (although they have model D for the pre-school level), while García Rivera is model D, in Euskera. Thus, attempting to reproduce the social imaginary of the different school agents, the map of the spatial differentiation of the educational centres of the neighbourhood can be drawn as follows: Miribilla = Gypsies; Mujika-Solokoetxe = Latin Americans; Maestro García Rivera = “progressive autochthonous people”.

“Nor is there a clear public policy for avoiding this ghettoisation, in reality ghettoisation in every respect, because we have a school in the neighbourhood for immigrant people, two schools, I’m talking about primary education, and...”

“Those would be...”

“Mujika and Miribilla, and then another two schools in the neighbourhood, I’m only talking about primary education, which would be Karmelo Ikastola and this one, García Rivera, the school in Atxuri.” (EEi-2)

The diagnosis and the denunciation coincide: a marked spatial distribution of difference, which specialises the educational centres in the treatment and management of the ‘other’ in such a way that it leads the different educational agents to speak of a clear tendency towards ghettoisation. And two factors stand out amongst the structural reasons explaining this: the existence of different linguistic models rooted in the local society’s conflict of identities that stress the division between autochthonous and foreign schoolchildren; and the increasingly differentiated management of education, shown by a school system that is more subject to the heterogeneity of the social structure than a producer of equality and homogeneity. Both factors seem to question the school as a space for meeting with the ‘other’, in an “inclusive” sense in the assumption of the official programs and plans¹⁰.

¹⁰ Departamento de Educación, Universidades e Investigación, *Plan de acción para el desarrollo de una escuela vasca inclusiva. Documento de consulta*, Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2009.

2. The 'other' in the school

2.1. The characterisations of the 'other' and the principle of equity in education

The tension between homogeneity and heterogeneity to which we referred above finds expression in the educational legislation in two terms that coexist uneasily: equity and difference. Thus, Spanish Organic Law 2/2006 on Education establishes in its Second Title the principle of equity of education, tending towards the egalitarian treatment of all schoolchildren¹¹ but, immediately afterwards, although as a way of guaranteeing that equality, it details a series of groups with special needs, for which the institution must ensure a series of resources so that the schoolchildren achieve their full educational development: those with special educational needs; those with specific learning difficulties; those with high intellectual capabilities; those who have joined the educational system late; and those who have specific personal situations or a school record¹². These are questions that, in the Basque version, are summed up in the principles of the "inclusive school"¹³. These categorisations of the schoolchildren are defined according to educational needs; there is, however, a sociological reality that inclines the educational agents to identify that type of 'other' who is vulnerable to the discriminations with which this paper is concerned, basically the immigrants but also schoolchildren of Gypsy origin, with the latter two categorisations of special needs.

In this way, facing the normative conceptualisation of the legislation, the school agents, as we have seen, sketch a panorama of ethnic specialisation in the neighbourhood's schools in relation to the distribution and differentiated treatment of the 'others'. What is thus evident is a deep division in dealing with, and naming the 'other' in the school field. This is a type of nominative euphemism that is smaller the closer the people speaking are to the school institution, and greater the more distant those speaking are from teaching practice, aligning themselves in this way with the postulates of the Education Department. In line with the institutional regulations, the President of the School Council of Euskadi refers to the question as follows¹⁴:

"Is it necessary to specify that there are immigrant schoolchildren? I personally am inclined to think not, that all the schoolchildren are equal (...) Besides, when we are continually

¹¹ And its Article 71 makes the following clarification in that respect: "The educational Administrations will have available the necessary means so that all the schoolchildren reach the maximum personal, intellectual, social and emotional development, as well as the goals established in a general way in this Law". BOE nº 106, 4 de mayo de 2006.

¹² Ley Orgánica 2/2006, artículo 71, 2. BOE nº 106, 4 de mayo de 2006.

¹³ *Plan de acción para el desarrollo de una escuela vasca inclusiva. Documento de consulta*, Departamento de Educación, Universidades e Investigación, Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2009.

¹⁴ The School Council of Euskadi is the highest body that channels the participation of the educational community; it draws up reports prior to the educational legislation in the ACBC and reports on the situation of education (Ley 13/1988. BOPV del 23 de noviembre de 1988).

speaking of that, we always identify it with problems or we simply identify it with unwanted situations.” (EEi-1)

Naming is here synonymous with “problem”, and the strategy of not naming is assumed to guarantee equality between the different groups, placing both immigrants and people with different types of incapacity in the category of difference:

“We should not be continually naming the issue and, besides, creating distinctions between some schoolchildren and others, all are subjects with the same rights. For example, schoolchildren with special educational needs, schoolchildren with visual disabilities, schoolchildren with hearing disabilities, need a series of aids that enable them to be educated with normality, but we are not continually talking about children with special educational needs. Well, we have to reach a type of situation like that with the immigrant schoolchildren.” (EEi-1)

It would seem that a foreign origin or ethnic marks are clear indicators of a different point of departure that is unequal in this case, inasmuch as these populations are assumed to have initial deficits such as a limited knowledge of the language, but also due to social conditions, in an exercise of homogenisation of the immigrant population or the Gypsy minority.

In any case, these “purified” administrative categorisations of the ‘other’ come into conflict with educational practice. Thus, from those instances and profiles that have the management of that “unnameable” population amongst their tasks – the *Berritzegune* and Intercultural Motivators¹⁵ – a tension arises given their need to name and quantify the object of their work. On one side, the Central *Berritzegune* opts firmly to refer to that ‘other’ as “foreign schoolchildren”:

“I am going to speak of foreign schoolchildren because it is perhaps the only way of understanding who we are talking about. (...) So one has to, sometimes, when statistics and so on come out, I think one has to consider them as foreign schoolchildren, who don’t have Spanish nationality and that’s that (...) I think that, in general, speaking of foreign schoolchildren is spreading, because it better defines a situation we could call political, involving documents.” (EEg-1)

In general, hanging over the schoolchildren of the schools described as “problematic” (at least in two of those selected for this research and, in the majority of cases, those with model A) there is almost always a suspicion of the difference that is based on some type of foreignness that, beyond its politico-administrative meaning, is always alterity:

“That’s where we can begin to see that the definition of foreign schoolchildren is of no use at all. That is, there might well be 22,000, but how many need linguistic assistance? And amongst those there might be the child of a couple that has come from Valladolid to a model D. Is that child an immigrant? Yes, well, an immigrant since she’s come from elsewhere, but she’s an internal immigrant, she isn’t an immigrant...” (EEg-1)

¹⁵ The *Berritzegune* are centres of training and educational innovation that advise schools on implementation of different programs and plans. They are specially dedicated to the processes of linguistic normalization, but also to the implementation of programs of interculturality from which the figure of the Intercultural Motivator emanates, which we will discuss later on.

These tensions in naming that 'other' in the educational field of the Basque Country take us to theoretical territories concerning identity that go beyond the scope of this report. Nevertheless, we cannot avoid mentioning two questions revealed by these extracts: on one side, the fact that the new international migratory processes are reviving debates on how to qualify populations proceeding from that internal immigration that was the 'other' of the nationalist We until the 1960s and this thus refers us to the broad question of Basque identity (Pérez-Agote, 1986; CEIC/UPV, 2010). On the other side, and in relation to this first aspect, it is not a trivial question that the articulation of that 'other', which constantly escapes from the administrative categories in which the attempt is made to enclose it, is once again realised through the question of the language and specifically its absence (Gatti, 2007; Tejerina, 1992).

In short, the discursive discomfort in naming the 'other' in the educational field pivots between, on one side, a normative mechanism founded on the principle of equity and an evident sociological panorama that makes difference visible on the basis of the concentration of some minorities in certain schools; and, on the other, old disputes over identity in the Basque Country that take the debate back to those past 'others' that were essential pieces in the configuration of the local communitarian We.

2.2 The 'others' and their languages, or how language always constitutes the 'other'

While the current migratory process has particular characteristics, there seems to be a consensus in the narratives of the educational mediators on its similarities with the internal Spanish migrations of the 1960s and 1970s. The similarity is principally established through that call for Euskera to be learnt as a requisite for being a (*new*) *Basque*, as a Basque is someone who possesses the Basque language.

"Here, the only good immigrant in the 1970s... When the immigrants arrived from Extremadura above all, and from the zone of Castile, Salamanca, because the majority of immigrants to the Basque Country are from that zone, so long as they learnt Euskera and didn't make a fuss, in the small villages where Euskera was spoken, and they didn't draw attention to themselves, then fine, I mean, it was integration, it was assimilation (...) So we have now transferred that way of seeing immigration to the new groups of immigrants that we have" (EEi-1)

Language thus appears as the fundamental marker that constitutes the 'other' – we will deal with this question more precisely further on – and consequently the We as well. This constitution of the We through language, and not through race, makes it evident that in the Basque case *the body does not always say everything*, and in this way, the racially marked body is insignificant *a priori* in the definition of the We (Dorlin, 2006; 2008):

"I recall a Basque politician, Xabier Arzallus, who was a very nationalist politician from the PNV, who once said in a public speech, and besides it's very famous, he put it like this: "I

prefer a black black” – as if there were black blacks, non-black blacks, less black blacks – in short “a black black who speaks Euskera to anyone from the Spanish state itself who doesn’t speak Euskera, however white he might be”. That sums it all up.” (EEi-1)

This is also articulated in a growing population of children resulting from international adoptions by Basque families who, marked bodily by their diverse racial origins (Chinese, Indians, blacks...), are part of this We, in so far as they are Basque-speakers.

“Here then, there is indeed a population, well, Maghrebis, there are some, there are also some from black Africa, then there are adopted children, I mean, blacks; but I don’t know what the percentages are of those who have their direct parents, but it’s much less.” (EEi-3)

The world of education is probably where this tension over the definition of the We and the ‘others’ through language is best reflected. As stated above, the Basque educational system has been divided into a triple model on the basis of the distinction between Euskera and Spanish (model A, B and D). In view of the figures for the distribution of the immigrant population, the majority of whom take model A, in spite of its currently being in a very small minority position, the school system is doing no more than strengthen that position of ‘otherness’ of the immigrants, since the latter is constituted by the lack of Euskera.

“The residual model A was left, and at the time we were left with fifty, sixty pupils, with very few schoolchildren. So, from that time on, the immigrant population began to arrive and they were the only ones left in the model A area...” (EEce-2)

“It is related to the second imbalance, which is the imbalance amongst the models, the Spanish-speaking models are receiving more [immigrants].” (EEg-1)

In this respect, a criticism of the education system clearly emerges: it should do more to incorporate the immigrant population into the models in Euskera, and refrain from apportioning any type of blame to that population in their choice of model:

“Many immigrants receive their first shock when they arrive in our community and see that they don’t only have to learn Spanish, but that they also have to learn Euskera in the educational system.” (EEi-1)

“But at times it also happens in primary school that they say: if they’ve only just arrived, how am I going to teach them Euskera, or whatever. So they teach them in Spanish, in spite of being in model D.2 (GDce-1)

This construction of the ‘other’ through language also has the capacity to transform autochthonous groups into alterity – we have already mentioned the case of internal immigrants who are not currently reflected in the educational world since that type of immigration has disappeared – and that becomes patent in the case of the Gypsy population.

“At present they are mixing more, since those from the north of Africa and the sub-Saharan are in favour of it; the Gypsy population is the most averse to Euskera.” (EEce-3)

The Gypsy population is transformed into alterity for the same reason as the immigrant proceeding from international and internal migrations: their ignorance of Euskera, since language is the element that generates the position of alterity.

“The Councillor (...) even drew up a protocol for considering as foreigners all those who were not properly people who were here in the autonomous community, no longer just the people from neighbouring communities, who were therefore Spanish, but the category of foreigner was because they didn't speak Basque as such, and they therefore had to be treated in a different way until they started a process of learning Basque.” (EEi-5)

In this respect, and as we shall see further on in more detail, the Education Department created the figure of the Linguistic Reinforcement Teacher with the aim of giving support to those numerous ‘others’ in learning Euskera. However, the creation of this figure coincided in time with the arrival of the foreign immigration and their preliminary function was conditioned, in many cases, by the need to reinforce not only the learning of Euskera, but the learning of Spanish as well.

“From the first public announcement, it seemed essential to us for strengthening Euskera, and then it was done exceptionally for Spanish, because it became apparent that children were coming aged six, seven, eight, nine years, who didn't know anything and so something had to be done for Spanish too.” (EEg-1)

While Euskera becomes a “negative” language that constitutes two big alterity groups – the immigrant/foreign population and the Gypsy population – we are witnessing a second manoeuvre in which Spanish is also contributing to the construction of ‘otherness’. Although it might seem to be a situation similar to that of Euskera, but one where Spanish is again marking some of those ‘others’ as such, its specificity lies in the fact that two populations should escape from that marking of alterity since they are Spanish-speaking: the Latin Americans and the Gypsies. And it is true that the Gypsy population is immune to this exercise – the mechanisms of its constitution in alterity are highly complex and diverse, and do not involve the question of the Spanish language – but not the Latin American population. This population could be considered closer to the *We* with which they share one of the official languages, but in an exercise of establishing identity frontiers, we find numerous narratives that stress the difference between *their Spanish* and *our Castilian Spanish*, with it even being affirmed that this difference creates difficulties for the necessary understanding for an efficient use to be made of the school.

“Although they speak Spanish, they speak Spanish but it is not the same as here, so they lose out, and well, as we were saying at the end, it's good for their self-esteem, it's good that we should show an interest in their language.” (GDce-1)

Thus, language or languages are clear instances of the constitution of the ‘other’ in the school and the deficit this generates threatens another of the values that inspire

education at a time when it is a right and an obligation: quality¹⁶. The identification of those 'others' with linguistic lacks – although they are internally differentiated, as we shall see – adds more difference to them, those differences now related – according to the educational legislation – to “specific learning difficulties” (Ley Orgánica 2/2006, article 71). The situation only generates another breach with the “autochthonous” schoolchildren, who avoid those schools where those “others” are concentrated, attempting in this way to avoid falling behind in education.

2.2. Scales of representation of the 'other' and educational principles

The construction of the 'other' through language is made much more complex because it is articulated with a second scale of representation, which has to do with the question of the efficacy of the school in terms of results (“quality”) and its capacity to include those who are the same and those who are different. If the “autochthonous” population¹⁷ is the referent in terms of efficacy and integration, it is the basis for situating the collectives of immigrants and the Gypsies on a scale of representation where the Gypsies always receive the worst evaluation; they are the high point of alterity:

“I can tell you what anyone can tell you about the Gypsies, which is a culture that it is very difficult to integrate in the school curriculum, because those that I know don't give any importance to education. At times we make jokes and laugh, saying “they're not going to come – certain Gypsies – because there's no refectory.” (EEce-4)

“What most worries me about the school is not the immigrants, it's the relation with the Gypsies; at the moment it's my warhorse, that is, because I think it's the population that's treated the worst. They'll do their things which leads to them being badly treated, but there is... I mean, because they've always been here. I think people have less trouble in relating to an African than to a Gypsy. The Gypsy is the worst” (EEi-4)

In this respect, some voices are raised that recall the scant political intervention in the form of programs with the Gypsy population in order to improve their integration.

“With the Gypsy collective, the poor thing has been here since 800 years ago and we've got it just the same.” (EEi-1)

“In the past, a long time ago, there was a type of classroom that gave support to the Gypsy schoolchildren; they've always tried to do something, but...” (GDce-1)

And the placement of the Gypsy population at the lowest point on the scale is due to their threatening the principle of quality and education's function of integration. This is

¹⁶ Quality is one of the principles established by Organic Law 2/2006. Its 1st Article declares “quality of education for all schoolchildren independent of their conditions and circumstances” (BOE n^o 106, mayo de 2006). In this respect García Garrido says: “the concern for 'quality' is the leitmotif of all the recent reforms and experiments, as a counterweight to the effort made throughout the twentieth century in favour of 'quantity'” (Quoted by Gurrutxaga and Unceta, 2010: 105).

¹⁷ We exclude the Gypsy population from this because although it is autochthonous, we have seen that it is constructed as alterity. In fact, during the field work a lot of tension was noted when it came to defining that autochthonous We that excludes the Gypsy population, as can be seen in this quotation: “Yes, well, the fact is Gypsies are also autochthonous, but I don't know what to call them” (EEi-4).

how it was put by an informant from the Miribilla (Gypsies) and Mujika-Solokoetxe (Latin American) schools:

“And it’s not only the conflicts, the fact is that you would also have to consider, and nobody gives it to us, the rate of school failure of the educational centres, but I have no doubt that it’s higher in Miribilla than in the other schools. My doubt is with Mujika, I don’t think there are especially significant figures of school failure in Mujika, I would like to have them, I don’t have them, but... it’s a school of Latin Americans.” (EEi-2)

Thus, the Gypsy population does not only disturb the school’s aim of efficacy, but is also criticized for not integrating itself and for generating situations of conflict; they are also described as racists:

“The Gypsies are terribly racist. The most serious problems of racism are found in the schools where there are Gypsies, where there are gypsies and where there are some immigrants besides.” (GDce-1)

The position of alterity of the Gypsy population born here is of such significance that its position is emphasised by comparison with the Gypsy population from the East of Europe.

“Yes, yes, the Gypsy from here. The Gypsy who comes from the East is nothing like ours in terms of behaviour, respect...” (EEce-2)

In fact, it is the immigrant – whether Gypsy or not – coming next on that scale of representation of the ‘other’ who cannot, on the basis of the efficacy-immigration pairing, be considered as a whole. The diversity of the immigrant population means that it is subdivided on this scale in relation to its origin:

“Then, later, the teachers, obviously... you gain experience and they establish rankings. That is, the immigrants who get on better and those that are better integrated, those who cause the teacher less problems...”

“Due to their origin?”

“Due to their origin, due to their having a more similar culture even.”

“That is, it’s easier with the Latin Americans.”

“And amongst the Latin Americans, it’s easier with the girls; with the boys there’s the question of gangs and the question of things that are starting to appear in some places. Those from the East of Europe are the most valued.”

“Boys and girls.”

“Yes, yes, because they learn Spanish at once, they learn Euskera, they learn English. They come from... often, although their families are doing domestic work, the majority have university degrees, in their countries; the way the situation is here, someone doing housework who has a qualification as a nuclear physicist from I don’t know where. Many of them have a lot of qualifications and, besides, they have... they have a lot faith in the school system and are highly motivated. So those kids progress fast and do very well in general. Then, there are the Latin Americans, because they can get by very well in the language and so on, and, of course, the last in line... or the Chinese kids are well considered, because they are also highly disciplined and very good; the last in the line are obviously the Maghrebis and the Africans.” (EEi-1)

Within the immigrant population we can see that position on the scale based on origin is articulated in such a way that the latter is not only understood in cultural terms, but that each origin is also assigned a specific class and educational position. The combination of both the meanings given to origin – that of culture and that of

class/education/social condition – is read as determinant for situating each immigrant collective on that sub-scale of representation generated by the debate on the efficient and inclusive school. Thus, educational practice, the daily contact of the school agents with that complex sociology of difference, once again clashes with the normative principles of the legislation, fundamentally with equality, equity and quality (Gurrutxaga and Unceta, 2010) and results in a distressing lack of correspondence between “theory and practice” in the discourse of the agents themselves:

“Measures are always appearing, or incentives for that situation, so that they can perhaps overcome that situation and think that it has worked out well... Let’s say it’s easy to say it on paper, but it’s then very complicated in practice.” (EEg-1)

3. Racism, antiracism and tolerance in the school field

3.1. “Institutional racism” and the social question

The singularity of the Basque linguistic model and the educational policy of the successive Education Departments acts, according to some of the interviewees, as a form of “institutional racism”, a type of structural determinism of the educational system itself, which, instead of mitigating discrimination due to country of origin or social background, foments racist attitudes in the field of primary education. Due to its operational logic it concentrates the children of immigrant parents and from the Gypsy ethnic group in the public schools with model A, converting them into ghettos and nuclei of social exclusion:

“It is not a question of direct racism, but of structural racism or of institutional racism, I don’t know what to call it; when it comes to planning the educational offer, the marginal populations are concentrated together, which in this society are generally the most excluded: the immigrant population or the Gypsy ethnic group. They are concentrated in some public schools and then many parents don’t want... who don’t belong to those groups, they don’t want to go to those schools.” (EEi-2)

“In my opinion, racisms are found elsewhere, I’m more worried about institutional racism, because what institutional racism does is strengthen the racist behaviour here.” (GDi-1)

This is due to the demand of the autochthonous – not Gypsy – parents, who, protected by the right to choose their children’s school in accordance with their own convictions and moral, religious, philosophical and pedagogical preferences, and facing the constant and insistent association of immigrants and Gypsies with difference, poor educational performance and the transgression of social and cultural norms and standards – “problems” – decide to educate their children in semi-private or public schools, but nearly always with model D. According to some of the interviewees, the solution should involve a greater and better intervention by the administration in order to produce an equitable distribution of the populations considered to be “problematic”:

“Not to overload a school with problems, so that the problems can be managed better, so that each school shares the same realities in a proportion that, while not equal, is at least similar; I mean, each school should have its Gypsy population that it has to work with and whose integration it has to favour. Each school should have a percentage of immigrant population that it has to work with, don't you think? (...) If instead of having ten families with problems, you have one hundred families with problems, obviously, in the end people get overwhelmed, the teachers get burnt out.” (EEi-4)

“We are always identifying immigration with problems for the school, immigration with school failure, immigration with problems of discipline...” (EEi-1)

“And then they tell you, they sell you the idea that: “No, no, if we give the parents the option of requesting model A, and so on and so forth”, but it's a cheat, a cheat, the administration is always dishonest.” (EEi-2)

This, together with the existence of a certain comparative aggravation in terms of infrastructure and the specific location of these schools, situated in the urban districts with a higher percentage of population in a state – or at risk – of social exclusion, aggravates the problem of the “ghettoisation” of the schools:

“It has to do with a public policy that has been put into practice for twenty years, which favours the creation of ghettos. So it isn't exclusively that people don't want to enrol the children there, it's a case of the administration having decided for the last twenty years that in this district, in the most marginal zone of Bilbao, there should be a model A, which until five years ago was gathering all the itinerant children and the children that they didn't know where to put.” (GDi-1)

And the fact is that social exclusion, or the threatening feeling it represents, strikes most directly against the “racialised” models by combining the social question and the racial or cultural question around them:

“I continue to insist: this is an economic question. It is not only a cultural issue. In my opinion, racism is above all economic differences. I believe that if these children, instead of having a mother who works cleaning houses, if their father was an ambassador, there wouldn't be any problem.” (EEce-4)

“But we've got a government that excludes the groups that already have problems of social exclusion; people automatically say that since they're all going to be grouped together there, I don't want to go there, I'm going somewhere else, I'm taking my family with me.” (GDi-1)

“Part of the population that we've had has been, and that we still have, is a population that lives from social security, from basic income, all those things. So when they come, the Gypsies I mean, when the immigrants arrive there are more people to share out the same cake. So there's a lot of issues over the question of local people and immigrants.” (EEce-3)

When interpreting that specialisation of difference produced by the linguistic models, the agents interviewed qualified the situation as one of structural or institutional racism. A situation of difference and exclusion that the agents understand it is determined by legal constrictions and administrative dispositions, even in opposition to the will of those who intervene in the school managing. And other elements came together in the analysis linking cultural or ethnic differentiation with the social question. The interpretation of the social causes of exclusion made by the agents, based in a unequal distribution of resources, silences or evades its racist determination by using mostly economical or cultural differences. Thus, racism and xenophobia once again undermine the normative principles of compulsory education.

3.2. Between the racial and the cultural

On many occasions, racist conceptions, practices and opinions are explained through certain culturalist metaphors that exempt parents and teachers of responsibility. This implies a rhetorical displacement from the racial towards cultural particularities, which oscillates between denunciation and self-exoneration:

“Let’s see, it depends a lot on the question of the cultures of, for example, the sub-Saharan African countries, doesn’t it? The African families say to you: “listen, we have our culture, what we know is that we have learned what we have to do at home”, but don’t ask us what has to be done at school; so, it depends a bit on cultures.” (EEce-3)

“No, it’s not easy. I mean, it’s not easy being forced to think, it’s not easy that I should in addition be forced to think about how the other is; it’s not easy... I mean, they are different ways of doing things, which one isn’t normally accustomed to.” (EEce-2)

A representation of social and cultural heterogeneity is spread that is characterised as being a recent and anomalous phenomenon, proceeding exclusively from outside. Consequently, it is always disturbing and acts as a solvent and, rather than contributing to values of meeting with difference, it leads to descriptions of the relations between non-Gypsy autochthonous people and immigrants in terms of “culture clash”:

“There is a lot of culture clash there because, of course, socialising in their country is very different from here, the conditions are different, the expectations they have in their country are different from those here; although it’s Spanish, the language is different, so, perhaps they don’t have a clear idea about the timetables, or the calendar; they don’t understand it clearly; or quotas in the refectory, or the papers for the refectory grants, they don’t fill them in. “You should have filled in this paper”; “I didn’t receive anything”, they tell you and they’re lying, but in their country it’s normal to talk like that, isn’t it?2 (GDce-1)

“In the Gypsy population, violence is a very important part, I mean, let’s see, it’s cultural. It’s neither good nor bad, I mean, a Gypsy family, “if a child hits you, hit him harder”. That is, it’s one way of resolving conflicts.” (EEce-3).2

“With that wave, a bit more reactionary, I didn’t mean to use that word... radical is the word, not reactionary, Arab people, well, families that already... There was a time, at first, well, we became more flexible, the scarves disappeared. And three, four years ago, people went back to using the scarf, which they had taken off. (EEce-2)”

Immigration is instituted as a metaphor of the strange, the unseasonable, due to its magnitude in a community without prior experience of receiving foreigners and to the supposedly vast and hostile cultural difference of the immigrant parents and children; this reduces the racist dimension to a quasi-anthropological dimension explaining, when not naturalising, it:

“The Basque Country hasn’t been a country with a lot of experience of contact and coexistence with such different cultures... And that is a bit frightening. I think it’s frightening because people say: “But what is that? Those other languages”. I don’t know if I’m making myself clear.” (EEce-3)

“But that sensation that the immigrant still has a halo of being strange, different, and that’s why one has a different relation with him. I think that is why we haven’t accepted the correct way of referring to those people, because it’s obvious they are different from us; they aren’t autochthonous, but they aren’t autochthonous because they weren’t born here; they aren’t autochthonous because they don’t participate in the culture, in what is understood as culture.” (EEi-5)

Nonetheless, the Gypsy continues to be the figure of radical alterity, the ‘other’ *par excellence*. The paradox is even found of some teachers explaining racist attitudes

towards children and parents of the Gypsy ethnic group – going beyond the store of anecdotes and behaviour hostile to integration, which are taken to be true but difficult to generalise – on the basis of the very fact of their being Gypsies. There is a pattern of interpretation that guides the suppositions and deductions about the conduct of Gypsy children and parents; prejudice, which is only given content in a second moment – in a typically racist construction – through the discretionary selection of a series of features – whether true or false, whether their exclusive patrimony or not, they act as a pre-text – of the behaviour of Gypsy children and adults.

“The Gypsy is a Gypsy.” (EEi-4)

“And there was some problem there because, obviously, you’re right next to each other in class and it’s possible, I’m not saying always, but it’s possible, that that person smells, that they don’t have the custom of using... perhaps there’s another boy or girl who smells too, but if it’s a Gypsy, it’s even easier to point to them. They pick on them more for the reason that they find it harder to study, due to being Gypsies.” (EEci-1)

Although on occasion political correctness permeates the everyday discourse of the parents of the non-Gypsy autochthonous children, this does not however hide certain prejudiced behaviours and attitudes: generalisation, projections about behaviour according to nationality, ethnic origin, skin colour, etcetera, that come to the surface in everyday behaviour when the filter of what is politically correct is relaxed. The intervention of the public policies aimed at integration, antiracism and interculturality has conditioned the quotidian discourse of the broad public, which has incorporated its forms into its conventional register:

“Sure. Do you know what I think? I believe that it’s a reality that exists in some way, but that it’s not fashionable to say it. I don’t know if anyone has ever come up to me to say something serious about... I mean, “Listen, this black schoolchild that you’ve got, no one can stand him” or “that’s enough of...”. No, they’re polite, they’re polite when it comes to talking. But that doesn’t get rid of the fact that, from my point of view, there are indeed some tendencies, well, more related to the conclusions they draw: if he’s black, he’s going to behave that way; if he’s a Gypsy, well, he’s going to act like that. Should I believe that when we are talking about some problem, a tutorial, the parents and I, of course, why this girl, why she has to hit my son, of course, since they’re like that... It is my belief that we have a tendency to classify and despise X.” (EEce-1)

The cultural factor appears in the subjects – the school agents interviewed – at times in their interpretation of social reality and, at others, in the description they make of their own practices, as a mitigated, authorised, legitimised form, one with greater political correctness, for justifying difference and the treatment it receives. Contrasted with those interpretations that speak of “institutional racism”, these other discourses tend to naturalise difference through cultural explanation and, in this way, they empty it of political content, they depoliticise it. The reasons for this type of argument are perhaps to be found in the institutional policies based on the philosophy of interculturality that we will now analyse.

4. Multiculturalism and interculturalism

4.1. *The multicultural as fact and the intercultural as norm*

The questions about how to meet the challenge of the school facing the social changes are the administrative concern of the area of Educational Innovation of the Education Department of the Basque Government. From there – and more specifically from its implementing bodies, the *Berritzegunes* – proceed the plans, programs and actions that endeavour to deal with the new sociological reality of incorporating schoolchildren of foreign origin into the schools. And the form of apprehending this novel situation is through concepts that circulate profusely in the social sciences: multiculturalism and interculturalism are the fundamental ones, even though their meaning might prove elusive and ambiguous. The person in charge of the Central *Berritzegune* made the following clarification in that respect:

“Because, you know, this business of the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturalism, if you go to the North American literary tradition, they used multiculturalism, but perhaps in the sense of interculturalism. I believe that we use multiculturalism more in order to describe the situation, and we use the concept of the intercultural as a purpose, the idea of what we want to do, what we want to do with respect to what is different, to share, to somehow create that idea amongst everyone.” (EEg-1)

Thus, in the syntax of the preceding argument, the multicultural is the description, the fact, the presentation of novelty and even the diagnosis that discloses a need for intervention, while the intercultural is the purposive direction of that description and, eventually, its normative execution. Semantically, a substantive definition of the multicultural does not appear and the concepts employed in that respect speak of rejecting inequalities, respect for difference and the pursuit of inclusion. Although efforts are made to evaluate diversity positively, in the discourse of the documents and the different agents consulted there is a predominance of the problematic background of diversity in general and especially that deriving from the multicultural fact¹⁸. On the basis of the controversial local precedent of identities, the issue is frequently related to the question of languages – and in fact, as we shall see, the intercultural figures and practices proceed from there – but, in any case, there does not seem to be an epistemology that promotes well-conceived actions and a full use of diversity. This is recognised by one member of the School Council of Euskadi:

“And then there’s the teaching staff, which, it is true, needs more training in what is, first, the whole question of languages, and I think in views of multiculturalism as well. I think that in general we have a problem here, which is that what we aim to do is to integrate, assimilate the person who comes from outside, instead of creating physical spaces where everyone

¹⁸ In this respect, see: “Programa de interculturalidad y de inclusión del alumno recién llegado”, Departamento de Educación, Universidades e Investigación, Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2009.

can feel recognised. And, I don't know, I sometimes think, and from what I've heard, what I've seen in schools, is that the immigrant schoolchild who comes is taken to be a type of clean slate, who starts from zero, and this seems to me to be a great mistake. And I think that we don't achieve so much with these schoolchildren due to that starting point that we take, as if they were persons without culture, without language, without a way of doing things, without a previous life, from which you have to start to build something new and different. (...) So, as I see it, the tendencies in general are more assimilationist, rather than intercultural." (EEi-1)

In any case, the policies of interculturality are inscribed, on one side, within the treatment of diversity set by the decree that established the Basic Education Curriculum in the ACBC and that is orientated towards "responding to the specific needs of the schoolchild" with the aim of achieving basic skills and objectives¹⁹. On the other, they derive from the legislations that deal with coexistence in schools, which in the Basque Country are part of the so-called "inclusive school". That is, those that, in a local application of Spanish legislation (Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2/2006), attempt, on one side, to guarantee that all schoolchildren, considered in their diversity, should have access to the basic skills proposed by compulsory education and, on the other, to foster "active citizenship, equality of opportunities and social cohesion"²⁰. The challenge for the school thus consists in reconciling diversity and inclusion, which

"represents a pretty significant change, and that's where there is starting to be talk of school integration, isn't it? That is, taking all the children with physical disabilities to the schools, those who were in special schools. So that was the first change of paradigm. Well then, integration also has its highlights and shadows, it's no longer a question of having to be there, but of having to be there and learn. We have managed to get even the paralytic, the blind child, and whoever, to be there, but now what we have to achieve is that they should learn; so, there is talk about the inclusive school for getting them to learn. Our intention is to see what barriers there are not only to participating, but also to learning, to overcome those barriers." (EEg-1)

In the framework of that legislation, and more specifically within the framework of the intention of "learning to live together"²¹, Decree 85/2009 establishes the creation of the Observatory of School Coexistence of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country. Although this observatory is not exclusively concerned with dealing with conflicts that might be associated with cultural difference, the problematic conception of the latter held by the agents interviewed, basically those from schools with a high proportion of immigrant school children, the agents interviewed point to the case of the observatories to indicate the lack of organisational structures that could foment interculturality in the schools. While there appear to be movements directed at fomenting interculturality in the schools, they are still incipient forms and thus cannot at

¹⁹ Decreto 175/2007, article 24. BOPV.

²⁰ "Plan de acción para el desarrollo de una escuela inclusiva vasca", Departamento de Educación, Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2009.

²¹ Decreto 175/2007 que establece el currículo de Educación Básica de la CAPV. BOPV, 13 de noviembre de 2007.

present be considered as more or less stable structures; nor is this situation helped by the absence of a strategic vision on the part of the schoolchildren's parents and the political class in general:

"We don't have a specific organisational structure that could deal with questions of interculturality in the school (...) and now there is the Observatory of Coexistence, but it's only just been set up and one supposes that, yes, it will do some activities in that line (...) Yes, I believe that great advances can be made there; what happens is that we parents need to have strategic visions, which we don't, but the sensation I have is that the politicians that take decisions don't have them either." (EEi-2)

In addition, the programs of interculturality are subject to choice by the schools, that is, it is the latter that must ask the Education Department to be registered in them and, besides, in order to do so, the schools must have more than 25% of immigrant schoolchildren. In this way, it seems that interculturality is only concerned with the development of values in certain schools, thus limiting the sought after effect of socialising diversity and once again revealing the problematic conception of the latter:

"They don't usually participate in the question of interculturality, as far as I know, except in schools that already have over 20% of immigrant schoolchildren; it isn't a program that appeals to the teaching teams to get involved, unless they've seen the problem from very close up (...) the exact numbers, I think that if you go to the department they will give them to you, but there must be around 25 or 30% of the schools in Euskadi, taking part in the interculturality plans" (EEi-5)

There is also a clear need for these programs to go beyond realising certain occasional activities in the classroom; what must be sought, on the one hand, is that they should be increasingly integrated into the academic curriculums...

"Some years ago, we always endeavoured to deal with the children's countries during the intercultural week or day of the country (...) but since last year, instead of it being "the day of" or "the week of", we started trying to make it a project that was integrated in the curriculum." (EEce-4).

... and, on the other hand, that they should have a repercussion beyond the school itself, extending beyond the school walls and having a wider repercussion at the social level. That seems to be the complaint of one of the interviewees, who criticises the fact that multiculturalism or interculturality are only practiced within the school – and only in some as we have seen – but that nothing is done outside it:

"But not at home. We're all multicultural and intercultural, but at school..." (EEce-3).

In short, there are copious normative propositions, plans, programs and actions around interculturality, but meanings are scant and evasive: the interpretations repeatedly insist on the cultural determination of the local conflict – the linguistic and identity conflict in the Basque Country, ignoring any references to (anti-)racism policies; although normatively the beneficial character of diversity is declared, there is an underlying focalized and problematic conception of the latter term; finally, the limited

instrumentation of the interventions to those schools with certain percentages of immigrants makes interculturality into a philosophy and practice reserved only for those places that are indicated by the multicultural fact, such as the neighbourhood of San Francisco in our case, and certain schools within this.

4.2. The figures of the intercultural

During the fieldwork three figures were indicated as being central for carrying out these processes of intercultural integration: the Linguistic Reinforcement Teacher (LRT), the Intercultural Motivator and the figure of the Out-of-school Companion who forms part of the Program of Accompaniment (PA).

Thus, the first of the central agents in the field of fomenting interculturality and multiculturalism is the Linguistic Reinforcement Teacher, who is the first figure through whose hands schoolchildren who have newly arrived in the Basque educational system and who do not have linguistic skills in Spanish and/or Euskera must pass. The LRT is responsible for equipping them with the basic knowledge to be able to slowly start developing in ordinary classes:

“Linguistic Reinforcement Teacher (...) So that teachers’ function, the teacher who receives the children who come from abroad and don’t have linguistic ability, either in Spanish or in Euskera, and so you dedicate a little time to them, giving them the basics and putting them into the ordinary classroom, little by little.” (EEce-1)

Later, without replacing the LRT, another figure appears who in recent years has been acquiring greater importance in promoting interculturality and integrating foreign schoolchildren: the Intercultural Motivator, someone who goes beyond the merely linguistic question. While not ceasing to focus on the performance of schoolchildren who have recently joined the educational system, we could say that the emergence of this figure is inscribed in that problematic conception of diversity, more associated with the coexistence and integration of the recent arrivals who, it is supposed, will always proceed from a different cultural milieu. So much is this the case that the teaching corporation is to be found at the origin of this special educational profile, through one of the trade unions that represents it. This is how the process is recounted by the person responsible for coordinating the interculturality programs, the representative of the Central Berritzegune:

“Well, the origin is curious. You know about, don’t you? Due to these concerns that we’ve talked about, concerns about distribution, non-distribution; so the trade unions put pressure on the Administration: “Measures must be taken, measures must be taken”. So, at that negotiation between the trade unions and the Education Department it emerged that this measure was going to be taken, which involved, let’s say, compensation for these schools that had a high percentage of immigrant or foreign schoolchildren, and they were going to be supplied with a part-time teacher.” (EEg-1)

Beyond the corporative demand found at the origin of this figure, the public announcements of the Educational Department for those public schools that exceed the threshold of 25% establish the goals of strengthening cultural exchange in a way that would enrich school life, and promoting equality of opportunity for the schoolchildren from different cultural groups (“majority and minority groups”)²². The functions of the Intercultural Motivators are as varied as they are general, but the basic ones are aimed at: the elaboration of a plan for receiving newly arrived schoolchildren; giving visibility inside the school to the cultures of the schoolchildren of foreign origin; bringing the families of these schoolchildren into closer contact with the school, etc. The work of the Intercultural Motivators is coordinated by the *Berritzegunes* and there are usually frequent meetings where the experiences of the different schools that have this teaching post are exchanged. The research team had the opportunity to attend one of these meetings. What was proposed there was the discussion of a text and a presentation made by an expert in questions of intercultural education. In the discussions there is a predominance of several questions that those attending the meetings enumerate as problems of the Intercultural Motivators: the scant importance given to the task of the motivator by the rest of the educational community; the identification of this figure with problems of coexistence and, in relation to that, the neglect of efficacy in education and the association that is usually made between immigration and school failure.

Besides, the Intercultural Motivators are figures who are given considerable freedom to carry out their jobs, as they are not provided with manuals or very specific lines of activity; instead they are given a series of guidelines for acting on and for adapting their practices to the specific problems of each school:

“When you were talking about us giving them a manual, and I said no, well obviously, there is no manual for this. We do say to them: Listen, set out from your real situation, get a good understanding of the context you’re in, check what the strong and weak points are, and establish your goals on that basis (...) If you see that there is, perhaps, very xenophobic or very racist behaviour amongst the schoolchildren, well, get to work on it. If you see that the parents don’t come through the school doors, establish some goal in that respect. I don’t know. Let’s say we have a fairly open perspective.” (EEg-1)

But the LRT and the Intercultural Motivator are not the only figures that seek to promote interculturality. There are also posts for accompanying the schoolchildren in the out-of-school area:

“Program of Accompaniment. The philosophy of the PA is similar to that of the LRT, and that is paid for by the European Community, and it involves a monitor or a person who takes it on themselves to accompany the kids outside school hours. In our school, we approach it as a kind of tutorial for those kids who don’t have support at home, I don’t mean an academy, but

²² Convocatoria de Promoción de la Interculturalidad. Departamento de Educación, Universidades e Investigación, Gobierno Vasco, 2009.

support, follow-up, supervision, so that in primary education they learn the norms, customs, so that they get used to using a timetable..." (GDce-1)

This is a way of seeking integration in a broader sense and focused on school performance for those who are in positions of social disadvantage with respect to those who receive support at home. In any case, these specialist teaching figures are not exempt from criticism and polemic, since there are voices that consider it problematic that the whole task of integration should be in the hands of these experts, technicians and specialists, and that other agents are not involved in a more committed way:

"... I believe that they are also introducing an element that could come to be harmful for the system itself, which is relying on these educational professionals being the only ones who understand multiculturality and who attend to these people; and so they are little less than protected by them, but with scant contact with the rest of the population in which they are taking part (...) And that's where I think the educational system still has an unresolved issue. (EEi-5)

In any case, what these figures reveal is the specialised, focused and differentiated treatment of interculturality, a question that enters into contradiction with the principles and conceptions of the "equality of differences", the inclusive school and work on interculturality, not only with the immigrant population but also with the schoolchildren as a whole.

4.3. Good practices

Good practices, explicitly and systematically considered as such, refer to two principal questions in relation to immigration in schools. In the first place, those referring to the reception planning that each school draws up according to a series of guidelines that the Education Department proposes. These guidelines are based on the recommendations of experts, following scientific research in the issues with which the actions are concerned and drawing on the experiences of other Autonomous Communities of the state. The aim of the Reception Plan is to achieve the integration of the immigrant schoolchildren, above all in the case of those who are ignorant of the official languages of the receiver society, on the basis of the principles of intercultural education, that is, in a way that "should favour exchange between the different cultures"²³. To this end it proposes contacts with the schoolchild and her family to not only learn about their cultural conditions of origin and so that they should get to know the school and everything regarding compulsory education in ACBC, but also so that the school authorities can make certain about the personal situations of the schoolchild and her family. At times, this requirement turns out to be a little embarrassing for the

²³ Ortega, I., *Orientaciones para la elaboración del plan de acogida del alumnado inmigrante*, Departamento de Educación, Universidades e Investigación, Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2004.

families, at least in the appreciation of an agent from one of the schools consulted, who relates the experience of the Reception Plan as follows:

“I believe that the Reception Plan in this centre might be seven years old now. So, the idea was to hold a first interview with the families, to tell them a little about what this about, the question of the educational models, and for them to bear in mind that if they had the intention of remaining here, then perhaps a model B would be more suitable, to explain a little how our timetable works... (...) That on one side; in the aspect of receiving families and the child, they would be shown round the school, they would be shown the rooms. What we do with the refectory would be explained to them, the type of meals we have, we would give them the menus, the three monthly menu, and we would explain to them a bit about how we work and our priorities. Amongst our priorities is that the kids, our schoolchildren, should always be happy coming to the school. (...) we're interested in the kids above all; each of them has to resolve what happens at home; if we can help, that's great, but there are other bodies that... And starting from there, that the kids should be happy to come, they have to do homework and [the parents'] help is essential. That is, they have to read a little with the kids and they have to establish a minimum timetable for homework. What happens with our families? When they come, there are four, six, eight people in one room. So it's complicated (...) And at first, I think they feel a bit supervised, because of the question of follow-up, we follow-up by asking them a lot of questions, but it is to try and clarify the situation and so that we can move forward together.” (EEce-2).

In this way, the Reception Plan also seeks to inquire into the cultural representation regarding the school institution and into the expectations that the family of the immigrant child might have about it, in order to then explain their culture of origin in the local society. Different conceptions are often discovered concerning this question. In part that is why the other big area of intervention in questions of good practices concerns the “relations between immigrant families and the school” that are contained in the document of the same name. The starting point there is the conviction that it is important for the families to participate and become involved in the schools in such a way that they come to feel the school to be their own, and that it should become “an instance of participation and of civic training”.

The starting supposition of this Guide is once again that of the association between immigrant schoolchildren and “problems”, in this case those related to marginality and social exclusion. That is why, on this occasion, culture and ethnic differences give way to socio-economic variables. This is made clear in the text of the Guide, which was first published by the Education Department and later – and significantly – by the Department of Employment and Social Affairs of the Basque Government:

In order to explain the problems that are encountered in integration and in school trajectories, the ethno-cultural hypothesis must be played down. It is obvious that the equivalent social sectors amongst the autochthonous population share similar situations with some immigrant people. Juridical and job precariousness that spreads to fields like housing and health, generate situations of subordination and marginalisation that might hold more explanatory weight than other variables. Therefore, as occurs in other fields, the processes of marginalisation have more to do with poverty and the precariousness associated with it, that is to say, with variables that are more connected to social factors than to ethno-cultural factors (Departamento de Empleo y Asuntos Sociales, 2010).

From the outset then, we find in both the practices proposed by the Reception Plan and in the plan promoting relations between immigrant families and the school, a declension of cultural aspects and intercultural relations in favour of a type of tutelary intervention in the social conditions of the immigrant schoolchild and her family. That is where there is a breakdown in the values of interculturality based on the principles of equality of differences, and in this way there is an endorsement of the pre-eminence of class over culture, of social exclusion over racial discrimination, of poverty over xenophobia. Thus, the conditions are given for the exercise of tolerance to be developed over an initial inequality, and for there to be a greater approach towards charitable, or even civilizational, actions than towards the socialisation of differences in favour of freedom (see: Bunting, 2011).

And this situation of the immigrant schoolchildren and their families is “equivalent” to those of some autochthonous people, as is made clear in the preceding quotation. The autochthonous people appear to be those ‘eternal others’ in local society: the Gypsies, who have long resisted the socialising institutions, and whose inclusion is sought, starting from the school, with the help of other administrative areas to which this minority appears to be more accustomed: the Department of Employment and Social Affairs:

“The more traditional Gypsy families, although this is starting to change, which is just as well, they see the educational system as the advance party of the payo [non-Gypsy] world to dilute their culture. On the other hand, there is an increasingly big movement within the Gypsy people to understand and to see that they can continue to be Gypsy, very Gypsy, and be successful in the school system and be educated, go to the university. So we’re working there with many of those associations and with the Department of Social Affairs and next year we want to organise one about the Gypsy schoolchildren.” (EEI-1)

From theory to practices, from the regulation to the facts, the racial question approaches the social question, the school ceases to be a world apart in order to open up to society, the administration of education meets up with the administration of social affairs, and the immigrant schoolchildren meet up with the autochthonous schoolchildren in that margin of exclusion that places them in a situation of equality in so far as they are excluded. And what emerges on that terrain is a tendency towards dedifferentiation, not so much of the schoolchildren and their social or cultural differences, as of the fields of reality that modern thought distinguishes and separates between, and that bureaucratic administration objectifies with its different departments and jurisdictions. In such conditions the school does appear to perform the role of a transforming agent of society, not so much, or not only, due to its function as an agency of socialisation through teaching but rather because of its penetrating action in the social sphere that constructs the schoolchildren – or at least some of them – before they become such. That, at least, seems to be demonstrated by the two more

systematic approaches of good practices when these are directed towards the families more than towards the schoolchildren.

Conclusions

Two principal questions stand out in the analysis of racial discrimination in the field of compulsory education in the Basque Country. On one side, one question that puts the new international immigration into relation with the traditional local conflict of identities, identifying those who come from outside as the 'other' and, in the same act of construction of alterity, associating them with marginality and social exclusion. In this latter aspect, an 'eternal other' appears, the minority of Gypsy origin. On the other, but in close relation to the foregoing, those 'others' are reaffirmed in that position by their ignorance of the language that is considered characteristic of the place, Euskera.

An educational structure is shaped on the basis of this linguistic question that divides the centres by linguistic models according to whether teaching is done in Euskera or in Spanish. The concentration of immigrants and Gypsies in the schools that teach in Spanish produces a spatial division of difference that shows a clear and recognised tendency towards the "ghettoisation" of certain schools, as is clearly shown in the triangle of schools in the neighbourhood of San Francisco.

On the basis of this problematical conformation of the school reality, and recognising the increasing multicultural reality of Basque society, the educational authorities have been developing a series of regulations and programs that accept and promote the value of cultural diversity and interculturality. Nonetheless, against the background of that identification of the 'other' with vulnerability and social exclusion, the cultural variable that normatively constitutes diversity as a desirable goal, declines in favour of the social problematisation of the 'other'. In this context there appears to be a movement that goes from the racial question to the social question. Thus, the school performs the role of a transforming agent of society, not so much, or not only, because of its function as an agency of socialisation of the schoolchildren, but also because it endeavours to intervene in that field of family socialisation that, in the case of the immigrant or Gypsy 'others', is assumed to be precarious and vulnerable.

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