Immigrant Adolescents in Catalonia and the Construction of Cultural Identity: Life Stories and Inclusion Processes

Miquel Àngel Essomba (Coord.), Muriel Casals, Montserrat Casas, Virginia Dominguez, Pilar Garcia, Edgar Iglesias, Sònia Latorre and Pau Mota
ERIC Team– Educational Science Institute (Univerita Autonoma Barcelona) (Spain)

Abstract

This paper describes a research project on immigrant adolescents in Catalonia and the construction of their cultural identity through life stories and inclusion processes. The results help understand the identity of these adolescents from a dynamic and complex perspective, which involves the interaction of several elements (ethnic issues, gender, social class). As young citizens who have recently arrived in a new society, they still retain strong aspects of identity with their place of origin, and automatically transfer the values and the expectations learnt in the place of origin to their new context. However, it is necessary to speak more about identification than identities, as well as the processes of identity reconstruction in relation to the new social context.

This article is linked to the research entitled "Immigrant adolescents in Catalonia and the construction of their cultural identity. Life stories and inclusion processes", carried out by the ERIC research team from the Educational Sciences Institute of the UAB. This research was undertaken between February 2006 and June 2007.

The main research results aid us in understanding the identity of these adolescents from a dynamic and complex perspective, which involves the interaction of several elements (ethnic issues, gender, social class). As young citizens who have recently arrived in a new society, they still retain strong aspects of identity with their place of origin, and automatically transfer the values and the expectations learnt in the place of origin to their new context. However, it is necessary to speak more about identification than identities, as well as the processes of identity reconstruction in relation to the new social context.

In this article we emphasize the key questions that emerged from the construction of the theoretical framework, and the main recommendations which are addressed to the public administration. These recommendations cover two dimensions: the school (where it is recommended that measures to reinforce and develop counselling and tutorial processes are implemented) and the social (where it is recommended that social resources for leisure and culture become available to these adolescents, as well as an emergency plan to promote the social use of Catalan).

Introduction

From the perspective of identity construction, immigrant adolescents face a series of socially contextualized situations that their local peers can overlook, and it is precisely this distinction which forms one of the central pillars of our work. The situation of having recently come to Catalonia does not prevent immigrant adolescents from

developing a sense of identity rich in nuances, where different answers are given according to various development contexts within which they participate. However, sometimes this awareness translates into a feeling of exclusion when, although they feel they are part of the country, they watch with surprise as they are viewed as perpetual or immutable immigrants by the majority of society.

Inclusion policies are sound when they neither make nor enhance distinctions between persons on the grounds of ethnic or cultural origins. However, this very inclusion might be diluted if we do not push for affirmative action with those who, because of being considered members of a minority, face the risk of growing up in Catalonia as second-class citizens. For this reason it is important to promote specific activities to facilitate the balanced construction of the cultural identity of these adolescents.

Social cohesion is necessary for the generating of spaces and areas where people have the opportunity to realize their life project on an equal footing. Only by undertaking action in this regard can we prevent discrimination and racism wherever it has not yet appeared, or prepare interventions in places where regretfully it is already a reality or social practice.

The investigation which has been concluded intended from the outset to contribute to this field through concrete and applicable contributions. Thus, the specific objectives were:

1) Identify the mechanisms of identity construction in immigrant adolescents.

2) Design a pedagogical proposal to facilitate a harmonious construction of identity in multicultural contexts.

3) Validate a proposal for intervention in the construction of identity in multicultural settings within the Itaca campus framework.

4) Develop a publication in order to disseminate research findings among the network of secondary schools of the Educational Science Institute at the UAB.

This research has been part of a wider programme of intervention, with the participation of adolescents from different high school institutions called Campus Itaca. This programme is aimed at 15-year-olds who have nearly completed the compulsory secondary education and that during the next academic year, the last of the compulsory phase, must choose between entering the world of work, attending some medium level training, or continuing their education in order to obtain their certificate of secondary education. In relation to the most specific profile of the students involved, we can say that they are students with good capabilities, but as a result of their family and social environment or for other reasons (adolescence crisis, a desire for more money for her/his personal consumption etc.), they are sometimes not attracted to the option of further study, which on the other hand, they see as a costly and difficult task. Furthermore, often they are not made aware of the importance of training for their professional and working future, which they see as something very distant. Campus Itaca already has a tradition of being in operation and is known to the secondary schools in the Vallés, Maresme,

Barcelona, Penedés, Berguedá and the Bages, and there is therefore a wide dissemination of the research results.

For our investigation we decided to interview fourteen of the seventeen adolescent immigrants who participated in the Itaca campus in 2005, coming from countries as diverse as Argentina, Canada, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Peru, Dominican Republic, Romania, Ukraine and Chile. With the results obtained from these interviews, we designed an applied work proposal that was tested at the Itaca campus in 2006. This proposal consisted of a programme of activities aimed at working on aspects of the cultural identity of adolescent immigrants, but within an inclusive environment; in other words, in groups with both young immigrants and locals present but without making any distinctions on the grounds of origin. As a result of the first findings produced by the interviews and experiments on the ground, we built a set of educational and cultural policy proposals aimed at institutions responsible for education, culture and migration.

As one can imagine, there is a large amount of information obtained through research. In light of this, this article presents readers with a summary of two of the issues that may generate interest among scholars working on the topic as well as those with political responsibility. On the one hand, we have provided the theoretical reflections that have served as a point of support for the entire design and investigation route, thereby precisely expressing what our position in this regard has been. Secondly, we offer a compendium of policy proposals that has been taken from the research carried out, with the desire to invite those responsible for local and autonomous administration to take into consideration and incorporate all those proposals within their area of responsibility, which may in turn be result in improvements.

Theoretical perspectives

The bibliographical sources used in this research have been rich and numerous. The reading and collective discussion of their contents has enabled us, among other things, to identify the key categories in order to design our study and expand our vision in relation to the issue of identity.

This theoretical approach was developed by moving from the general within the social framework, to the particular, which involves the school. As a result of this journey we have begun to introduce notions such as multiple identities in our discourse, or reflections about "project- identities" or "cultural identifications". Specific details are offered in the following sub - paragraphs.

Collective Identities in societies post modernity. Emerging identifications in nation-states in crisis

Castells provides us with one of the visions that has most captured our attention regarding the meaning and structure of identity dynamics in Western societies today. According to this author (1997, 2006), the legitimacy of institutions (in a broad and general sense) that make up society is in crisis due to their lack of meaning and direction. This crisis and transformation originates largely from the loss of legitimacy of the very same nation-states, which are seen as unable to provide responses to the

demands, needs and abilities produced by the new power dynamics, which in turn and according to Castells, is a scenario characterized by global information networks. This new scenario suggests a change in identities, which are also in crisis as a reflection of these new power dynamics, where markets, networks, excessive individualism and strategic organizations, are presented as the factors which explain the transformations which are underway.

Nevertheless, globally shaken identities do not only incite a trend toward building a global identity, but also, at the local level, create processes of identity resistance. Somehow, local identities attempt not to be diluted by the same logic of domination and homogenization. For this reason Castells proposes a move towards shaping an identities–project; a perspective that is based on the fact that social subjects will, in the near future, have an important role and presence, explaining and shaping new symbolic projects and, in turn, producing and distributing new cultural codes. It can be said that we are facing a new transfer of power (from institutions considered as traditional to information networks) which suggests the acceptance that the construction and maintenance of certain images is a key element to address, starting with the extensive space and ability that the individual has with which to establish and build these symbolic contents and values. In the words of Castells (1997) 'one indicates the change, affirms the values and acts as broadcasters of symbols, converting them in a way that the message is inseparable from who emits it'.

Identities, generally speaking, also deserve to be read from the angle of the nation-states in crisis. Traditionally, national identity calls on individuals and groups for exclusive loyalty and fidelity. This is certainly a dynamic that collides with the new frameworks and trends that we have discussed, and about which there is a need to devote efforts to find formulas that offer a way out of the contradictory tension between an ancient way of understanding social power and a new way of shaping relationships, culture and social symbols in a particular country.

Placing ourselves within this scenario of tension, which ends by transforming itself into cultural heterogeneity and, at the same time, to the restricted use of some cultural elements over others in order to maintain the status quo as defined by the dominant groups, it is necessary to note the presence, within the representations of the social reality, of categories of an ethnic and racial nature in western countries when referring to minorities. These categories are based on a defined ideological body, as well as on territorial differences and origin, cultural differences, self perceptions and behaviours, which are understood and interpreted by a dominant majority and in most cases, are a key factor of fear and threat. Many subjects belonging to the minority construct their identity not so much from what they are or who they claim to be, but rather around that which the social majority wants them to be, a perspective of identity far from equality and, above all, freedom.

A third aspect of the general analysis returns to the impact of social dynamics in the construction of a sense of belonging to one community or another. Bauman (2004) distinguishes between the intensity of affective bonds and identity. By linking the definition and distinction of identities with the communities where the individual is found, Bauman distinguishes between the communities of life and those of destiny, in

which its members live together forming a bond which is impossible to dilute, and which are different from communities united only by ideas or principles. According to this author, and situating ourselves in the present, it is necessary to understand and analyse identity from this perspective, bearing in mind the multiplicity of important choices, principles and ideas with which the individual as a social subject interacts, reviews and chooses. It is from this attribution and dynamic dimension that the idea of liquid modernity is introduced, the framework within which identity is the result of a process that has no end, the result of an ongoing negotiation that characterizes and defines the same old identity as a relation of problems where the fragments are found, in the words of Bauman (2004), poorly coordinated with individual lives in different episodes which are badly connected.

It is at this point that we identify one of the key elements of conceiving the current processes of identity construction in general terms: throughout ones lifetime all individuals pass through different communities of ideas and principles, where identity is not the result of an invention, decision or discovery, but rather it must be perceived as evidence of a construction based on choice and constant negotiation. Identity is thus the result of interactions and negotiations with others, and this self-definition is therefore not done in isolation but rather from the dimension of the social subject of the individual.

Individual identities in a globalized world. Effects of migration on personal identification processes

After indicating the most general elements regarding the dynamics of identity in Western societies today (global-local tension, tension between nation-states and networks of power, and dynamic-static identity tension), we must take an in depth look at one of the most influential phenomena on cultural identities at the present time: migration processes. In fact, this serves as the core of our research.

According to Maalouf (1999) one of the effects and characteristics of the current globalized world is the conversion of many citizens to immigrants and, upon their arrival in their host society, into members of a minority. In practical terms, this means that the person is forced to confront some accommodation processes with the aim of achieving her/his process of identity construction in a new social context different from their origin.

However, the difficulties of the processes of identity construction for these citizens are remarkable, especially regarding the pressure and conditions imposed upon them by the societal majority. Identity is what makes us different from others; it is that which ensures we are not identical to anyone else. But soon we realize that some are more 'different' than others. In this way and as evidence of the important social influence of identity, as well as using the words of Maalouf (1999), we realize that the process of identity construction far exceeds that of the conventionally called 'documentary' identity and nationality, whose role is solely to accredit the administrative aspects of the individual but that ends by converting itself into the clear identity of citizens par excellence. We know that the identity of each individual is shaped by different elements which are not limited to or looked at in official records, but rather incorporated and shaped by different aspects such as membership, religion, ethnicity, language, social and family group,

profession, territory, certain emotional aspects or the social network, among others. But we also know that, depending on the nationality, one will have complete or restricted access to the rights and freedoms - both formal and informal - that facilitate the development of linguistic, religious, family or professional values.

We note, therefore, that the cultural, social and legal environment is an element which provides meaning, approval or disapproval in relation to the identity of the person, considering that it is the vision of otherness which is a factor capable of opening or closing a certain sense of belonging as regards the individual. However, there are those who acknowledged the existence of the inevitable tension in this process of dynamic reconfiguration of the identities of immigrants who form part of social minorities. According to Beristain (2004), the distance or culture shock occurs when an individual needs to be recognized and is not, which shows a lack of necessary cultural interaction. Following many contributions, the strategies in relation to such circumstances may be diverse. Here we indicate two: the first is the option of being assimilated quickly to avoid the emotional cost the clash. This is a strategy that could provoke an identity crisis at a later stage if, in the words of Naïr, the migration plan does not allow for the improvement of social position and membership before starting the migration plan. The second strategy, as considered by Beristain (2004), is that which happens when an individual undertakes a kind of superficial adaptation (called the segregation process), which results in the maintenance of the culture from the place of origin and the avoidance of contact, interaction and cultural values of the host society. With regard to these types of strategies, other inputs are referred to as bi-cultural identities. Even though we do not necessarily provide any novel information, it is important to note that before becoming an immigrant it is necessary to be an emigrant, which assumes that important aspects that give meaning to a person's life have been renounced, often generating important feelings of guilt, ambiguity, fear and/or hope.

In this regard, Maalouf (1999) already draws our attention to the need for an individual immigrant to primarily go unnoticed, to be one more citizen. However, if frustration is generated as a result of the difficulty of immediately obtaining ones own socio-economic objectives; newly arrived citizens can easily fall into rejecting this very same environment. This attitude leads to a contradiction, since it comes from the same strategy of wanting to go unnoticed.

Life in the classroom. Stereotypes and prejudices that condition the processes of identification during daily life at school

In this third sub-paragraph we situate ourselves alongside the research participants: immigrant adolescents in the school context and identity dynamics in relation to themselves. A current work which is very profound in this sense is the one by Serra (2006), which confirms how categorizations are constructed among students, which leads to the consideration of ones peers based on their origin. Students of foreign origin respond to a well-defined category, immigrants, and although they correctly speak or write in the language of Catalan, they are seen by the rest of the group as immigrants. However, students born in or with roots in different territories of the Spanish state, although some of them show little fluidity in the use of Catalan, are not considered to be either foreigners or immigrants. Such observations allow us to come to the conclusion

that, for example, language does not appear to be a marker of identity among adolescents, but rather that many other factors serve as influential, such as nationality and social representation that installs itself in the society .

Another interesting aspect of the analysis consists of the use of stereotypes and prejudices among adolescents in the secondary school, especially in multicultural environments. The studies which have been analyzed show us how, in most cases, the use of stereotypes of an 'ethnic' nature respond to the need to refer to students of immigrant origin, as opposed to those that can be considered local, who are in turn treated more in relation to their individual characteristics than their hypothetical ethnicity. In general, it can be seen how pupils using an 'ethnified' vocabulary to refer to fellow newcomers from other countries who do not perceive this as derogatory.

It seems as if this is a conscious exercise to highlight a simple collective stand against migration. It is obvious to state how these visions should not be interpreted from the margins of society, on the understanding that pupils often emit these prejudices as subjective reproducers of the messages that are formed and rebuilt in other contexts such as that of the family or the media. In fact, one should consider how what happens at school so accurately corresponds with what is happening in society as a whole.

We end this third sub-paragraph with some information relating to the interaction between teachers and immigrant pupils, and how such interactions favour a specific construction of identity, especially regarding the professional and academic aspects of these adolescents. Some of the studies reviewed alert us to the possible confrontation between the expectations of the student and the teacher, in the sense that the latter is considered as the institutional agent that confronts the student's possibilities with the future possibilities that the student believes s/he should have. This confrontation of expectations between the wish of the student regarding her/his professional future, for example, and the elements from the school and community context, do not converge in the same direction. This tension has a significant impact on the process of identity construction of the immigrant adolescent in the way that it erodes the representation that s/he has about her/himself; not so much as an ethnic subject, but as a social subject. We also wish to show evidence here of specific pedagogical discourses of the teaching faculty, loaded with stereotypes and prejudices, and which results in the categorizing of students as confrontational, with special educational needs, or with low academic performance. This is undoubtedly one of the elements that we have taken most into account when undertaking this research, which positions us within a context whereby educational action should not only be limited to the immigrant students, or to the student body, but should take into account all educational agents involved.

Areas of priority for political action

According to the results obtained both in the exploratory phase as well as the experimental phase, we can highlight some priority areas for political action, as well as a course of action that will allow the increase in support for the process of identity construction of adolescents who are from immigrant backgrounds.

The two priority areas, consistent with the analysis outline used throughout the course of the investigation, are the schools and society. The secondary school is a place of reference in relation to finding and being able to develop actions on account of compulsory education until the age of 16. Without this space it would be difficult to identify spaces where there could be universal and direct access to this segment of the population. On the other hand, we know that this is a priority area if we heed the fact that different studies show that the socio-educational dynamic inherent to these institutions does not exactly harmoniously facilitate a process of identity construction, either by default (the burden and density of the curriculum contents hamper the core work - more socially affective that what we propose), or by indiscriminate action (the culture of secondary education, which is consistent with the social framework in which it finds itself, continues to be ethnocentric and hinders the recognition processes necessary for adolescent newcomers to avoid implicit assimilation or segregation processes).

However, as we have pointed out, this work in secondary schools must be complemented by action in the social field. Working from within this field means working to cover those adolescents who had no opportunity to gain access to the last phase of compulsory education, as well as to provide continuity for those that were able to access this phase. In practice, it is in the social sphere where the adolescents whom we reflect on in this study end up feeling included or not. And it is in this area where they build and reproduce much of the content, values and representations (sometimes loaded with prejudices and stereotypes) that influence social dynamics. These dynamics are what ultimately conditions, to a large degree, psychological well-being and access to full citizenship, as well as those that enter the educational sphere daily through the school door. Next we outline some action plans that emerged from the results obtained for each of the areas.

Plans of action in relation to the school environment

Guidance programme and support for post-obligatory education
Today, and in a manner common throughout society, the processes of academic and vocational guidance which takes place along the sword of secondary education occurs in informal spaces. Certainly, secondary schools increasingly involve more time and training to better orientate their students, but there is still a way to go.

In the specific case of immigrant adolescents, there is a set of elements added to the ordinary situation that requires special attention: the absence of informal channels, or the difficulties in accessing a comprehensive reading of information, are good examples.

In some cases these adolescents directly import the representations and the values about the academic and working world that they have built within the family environment and in their country of origin. They come from heavily meritocratic societies, in which a diploma means an automatic move up the social ladder.

At other times, these adolescents feel that although they have high academic and/or professional expectations, their continual effort and work may be hindered as a result of discrimination against them as foreign citizens by the local population, and that this may decrease their motivation or personal position towards their future within the society.

As a result, what is needed in order to work with these adolescents is not necessarily based on information on academia and the working world, but rather on two major elements: the reinterpretation of their representations about this world in light of the new society, and the taking of a personal position in possible cases of discrimination as a result of being of foreign origin. According to some preliminary studies, 80% of newly incorporated students do not continue with post-obligatory studies. If this is true we are, without a doubt, faced with the need for an urgent action plan of great magnitude.

Tutorial action programme regarding reflexive competence in secondary schooling
Tutorial action, in the same way as academic and vocational guidance, is also an area that requires significant advances within secondary schools. However, it is necessary to point out that this issue presents better health than the previous one. Increasingly, there is awareness regarding the need to open spaces for reflection and dialogue with students to talk about everything that has nothing to do directly with the curriculum content, but which can have a meaningful impact.

In this case, it is pertinent to state that these spaces are essential for newly incorporated adolescents. Mentoring can be a space where many of the expectations, fears and implicit personal projects of these adolescents can be learnt about and understood.

Within a mentoring group adolescents can gain fundamentals in order to situate themselves in relation to the operation of the school and system, which does not always coincide with those of the country of origin. In Catalonia the proposed operation of educational institutions is democratic and participatory, and many of the adolescents who come from different backgrounds have to learn to about this way of relating with others as well as living together.

In addition, the tutorial is a place to talk about living together and how we feel as a group, which helps to improve the classroom atmosphere as well as personal skills required for conflict analysis and the complex situations of daily life. For many of these adolescents it is possible that the tutorial is one of the few areas whereby they have the opportunity to contrast their values with those held by others from an egalitarian point of view, while noting the points of friction which generate tension or dilemmas for them. It is within this tutorial group situated in a multicultural context that the real difficulties of building a collective project of truly intercultural coexistence can emerge, and it is within this very same tutorial that we can facilitate the reflective maturity that these adolescents need to develop in order to feel fully included in society.

Specific funding for research experiences – action regarding reflective competence
A review of existing scientific literature on issues of identity in multicultural societies in general, and on the processes of identity construction with adolescent newcomers in particular, reveals an important lack of teaching materials and resources to work on this socio-educational dimension with these youth.

Except for some remarkable exceptions (such as materials produced by Sandín, or the SANDUK guide), the issue of identity construction among newly arrived adolescents from immigrant backgrounds has been developed from a theoretical point of view,

without practical applications that provide teachers and educators with the opportunity to introduce some of the research results or conclusions into their regular approaches.

On the other hand, when we do find practical materials the majority of them approach the issue of identity construction from a multicultural rather than an intercultural point of view. These materials often help to further strengthen the presumed cultural differences, which have been constructed from the contents of the traditional culture of the place of origin, to the detriment of facilitating a dynamic, open and flexible vision regarding the processes of cultural identification. Goodwill is always present, but accuracy in the strategy and theoretical foundation is not.

In this regard it is urgent that the authorities responsible significantly invest financial resources in order to make a one hundred and eighty degree turnaround of the current situation. This is to promote, on the one hand, theoretical-practical studies based on development organizing processes in the secondary school, with the aim of providing more knowledge about the real and present situation in Catalonia. And, on the other hand, to replace the majority of existing materials with others that will, from the investigation conducted, promote authentic self-understanding and recognition by these adolescents within the new social scene.

Plans of action in relation to the social sphere

Support and expansion of space and community education dynamics during leisure time
Based on the research results we can observe how these adolescents carry out the most significant processes of cultural identification outside of the institute. It is watching television, playing sport or listening to music - like any other teenager –that weaves together the key aspects which allow them to know who they are, who they want to be, and how they want to present themselves in front of others.

However, unlike their local peers, these adolescents' lives are conditioned by two social factors that can limit their freedom and leeway in relation to the construction of the identification process with elements relating to their age. One of these factors is the family's purchasing power, which diminishes and conditions access to various services and cultural and leisure consumer goods. The other factor is the different representation that awareness and the value of leisure time have for these adolescents, taken from a source whereby organized leisure time which is of value to the community simply does not exist.

The reality is that these adolescents state that their way of spending free time is go to public parks, engage in some form of sporting activity and perform individual activities such as listening to music, playing computer or reading. And this is not a problem as long as these activities really respond to what these adolescents want and do not become an effect of their socio-economic inequality in respect to the group.

The other reality that generates concern is that the organizations that adjust their activities in order to provide education during free time from a community perspective (scouting, leisure centres, community education activities) remain fairly closed to those newly incorporated into the host society. These organizations could serve as a platform

for social inclusion of the highest order for this population, however, even with all efforts invested this does not end up being the case.

For all these reasons, it is urgent that the secretariats of immigration and youth pick up the thread of the Kaleidoscope Plan, expand their sphere of influence and funding, and offer direct and sufficient support so that these adolescents can participate in their activities, which promotes all the areas traditionally part of adolescence (music, sport, physical activity, going out, etc), on an equal footing. Only in this way will we avoid reinforcing implicit segregation that suggests a lack of public policies with regards to this matter, and the shaping of identities differentiated as a result of factors such as social and economic inequality.

In the second phase of Kaleidoscope, it is not about promoting the incorporation of these adolescents in leisure time organizations as the only way, but rather about making it easier for experts in community education (scouting, leisure centres, community education activities) to take the lead and have sufficient resources to expand and diversify their activities so that they are meant for everyone and available to everyone.

Cultural policy of the public and mixed masses
Adolescents from immigrant backgrounds, just like their local counterparts, form part of a mass society where the media plays a decisive role. They are faced with the shaping of their representations that construct the world and identifications, using the different elements and social factors which they shape. However, the difference between the two lies in the fact that the new arrivals face serious difficulties in trying to find references which enable them to feel positively viewed within these surroundings, and that when they do find acknowledgement it is not always positive but is instead related to social problems (not having the administrative situation resolved, irregular entry into the Spanish territory with boats, crime, etc).

On the other hand, the cultural content of the programmes that are offered (by both public and private organizations), are marked by a strong ethnocentric component. It is also the case that when these programmes incorporate elements from other cultural groups, that which is represented is generally elitist, unrepresentative or of poor quality.

In this area, newly arrived adolescents of immigrant origin only find positive references that help them adhere to the cultural content of the dominant society, by omitting that from the minority and situating themselves in the position of spectator rather than as real actors and active agents in cultural construction.

For this reason it is very important to promote experiences of cultural production and diffusion, which takes into account the wealth of cultural diversity already present in Catalonia, starting with a critical approach. In other words, not everything counts and it is necessary to select and organize, understanding that this process cannot be left solely in the hands of the market or the authorities, and should strive to be as comprehensive as possible.

Promotion of self-managed community cultural initiatives for adolescents
Several European countries have contrasting experiences of social vitalization and the active participation of adolescents and young people from diverse backgrounds. This has to do with social centres being open to the community and being self-managed by the very adolescents and youth who pursue the following goals: the prevention of social exclusion, promoting intercultural coexistence, and cultural and artistic creation as a means of empowerment and social inclusion.

These types of experiences allow adolescents from minority groups to have a space of their own which feels like theirs, and in which they can develop a process of genuine identity construction without pressure from family or the institutional environment (schools, official centres, etc). Each one can experiment by testing various formulas and thereby discover and make themselves known to others.

Our country does not have much experience of this kind. The tendency of the authorities is to institutionalize all the activities of young people through formal channels that allows for social control. When there is an initiative implemented by adolescents or youth it is rapidly directed into the circuits that the authorities have already prepared, which in turn restricts the initiative.

It is urgent that the Catalan municipalities and neighbourhoods provide youth groups from various backgrounds with spaces and resources to start implementing their own projects which they have personally created or simply to spend their free time. The models and processes already exist and it is not only political will which is necessary to put them in place, but also the involvement of professionals in the areas of creation and social education.

Ultimately, this has to do with the promotion of an identity deeply rooted in the country, and not by supplying moderate doses of the contents of the dominant culture to be adopted. Opportunities must be offered in order for this identity to be transmitted rather than constructed, and which generates a recognition and cohesion effect, bearing in mind that these adolescents must be regarded just as other citizens, with initiative and creativity within a multicultural framework.

Shock plan regarding the social use of Catalan
Identification with the Catalan language by the adolescents interviewed during the exploration phase is quite weak. The arguments and comments which were collected reinforce this hypothesis. What is certain is that Catalan, generally speaking, is seen as a distant and formal language, as the language of the school, far from being the affective language, the language of social relationships and that of enjoyment with others. This place is reserved for the Spanish language, especially among newly arrived adolescents coming from the American continent.

However, the work of linguistic identification should be carried out not only with newly arrived students but with all students, as many of these immigrant adolescents state that it is often their local counterparts who deny them the possibility of communicating in Catalan, bearing in mind the strong media and social force that Spanish has throughout the whole of society.

Similarly, there is a lack of linguistic identification with Catalan on the part of those arriving, and there are sound reasons to promote a meaningful approach towards this language. On the one hand, that newly arrived immigrant adolescents use Catalan gives them greater opportunities, allows them to master two languages (Catalan, the own language of Catalonia, and Spanish, the common language within Spain), and provides a greater guarantee for equality in the event that only one language dominates. But it is also very important to ensure the equal conditions for those who are native Catalan speakers, since ensuring that an understanding Catalan by the whole population does not have strength to change the language in the social exchanges that these native speakers may have with Spanish speakers who understand Catalan. We believe that it is necessary from both a personal and social point of view to implement a shock plan to promote the use and extension of Catalan.

In fact, this is not about an innovative policy or an exemption of resources and projects, but from this investigation we want to emphasize one undervalued aspect that we consider to be key if we take into account what these adolescents expressed during the exploration phase. The educational policy in the matter of the reception language has been changing, always for the better, and this is a good sign. From the *laissez-faire* it changed to specialized language workshops and presently to reception classrooms; the most inclusive measure of those that have been implemented to date. In addition, continually there is more awareness about the need to move from the reception classroom to the reception centre, and that the environment is a key element in order for the classroom and the centre to be significantly welcoming: it is the embryo that gives meaning to the educational plans of the surroundings.

Similarly, newly arrived adolescents continue to state that they do not identify with Catalan, as the environment in which they live does not take this language into account. Catalan is not the language of the school. It is the language of formal activities that take place in school, in other words, the classroom. Life in the courtyard, in the corridors or through informal conversations is not conducted in this language. Thus, it becomes difficult for a strong identification with the language to exist on the street if within the institution where Catalan enjoys a preferential formal status this is not achieved.

Another surprise is the difference that these adolescents establish between the reception classroom and the ordinary classroom. For them, it is clear that the reception classroom is a space where they develop active, participatory methodologies, where they feel like the protagonists in the learning process, while the ordinary classroom is a place where written language is more heavily weighted than spoken language, where there is more transmission than an active construction of learning, and where the opportunity to feel a tie with the language used is more difficult because the type of task does not favour this.

This is not to say that the high school curriculum should be underrated, or that newly arrived adolescents must face the challenge of the new changes that come with leaving the reception classroom and entering the ordinary classroom on an equal footing with the rest. From a linguistic identification standpoint what we emphasize is that a radical transformation of the teaching methodologies that are used in secondary schooling are necessary, making the curriculum more meaningful and encouraging a positive feeling toward the language which can, in contrast to undertaking repeated written exercises in

the textbooks, be explored and investigated in cooperative groups or through work projects. Ultimately, the key to assist these adolescents and their native Spanish speaking peers to identify with Catalan, is that the activity already being done on a regular basis WITHIN the institute is attractive from a meaningful and functional point of view. Otherwise we risk that the complementary efforts undertaken with some strategies (classrooms for newcomers, for instance, or the initiative of Local Community Educational Plans) will be directed towards a bottomless pit.

References

Abenoza, R. (2004). I*dentidad e inmigración: orientaciones psicopedagógicasR.* Madrid: Ministerio de educación y ciencia. Secretaría General Técnica & Los libros de la Catarata.

Banks, J.A. (1997). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society.* Nova York: Teachers College Press.

Banks, J.A. & Banks, C. (1989). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives.* Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Bartolomé, M. i altres. (2002). *Identidad y ciudadanía: Un reto a la educación intercultural*. Madrid: Narcea ediciones.

Bauman, Z. (2001). *Globalització. Les conseqüències humanes.* Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

Bauman, Z. (2004). *Identitat. Converses amb Benedetto Vecchi.* València: Publicacions de la Universitat de València.

Beristain, M. a: Abenoza, R. (2004). I*dentidad e inmigración: orientaciones psicopedagógicas.* Madrid: Ministerio de educación y ciencia. Secretaría General Técnica & Los libros de la Catarata.

Besalú. X. & Campani, G. & Palaudàrias, J. (compiladors) (1998). *La educación intercultural en Europa. Un enfoque curricular. Barcelona*: Ediciones Pomares – Corredor.

Bilbeny, N. *La configuración de los valores individuales y colectivos en la Europa mediterránea*, a]: Roque, M.ª (ed.) (1997). *Identidades y conflicto de valores. Diversidad y mutación social en el Mediterráneo.* Barcelona: Institut Català de la Mediterrània d'Estudis i Cooperació.

Caballero, Z. (2001). *Aulas de colores y sueños. La cotidianeidad en las escuelas multiculturales.* Barcelona: Ediciones Octaedro & EUB (Ediciones Universitarias de Barcelona).

Casas, M. (coord) (2003). *També catalans: fills i filles de famílies immigrades.* Barcelona: Finestra Oberta 38. Fundació Jaume Bofill.

Castells, M. (1997). *La era de la información. Economía, sociedad y cultural. El poder de la identidad.* vol. 2. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Ciudadanía multicultural.* Barcelona: Paidós Ibérica.

Kymlicka, W. (2001). *La política vernácula. Nacionalismo, multiculturalismo y ciudadanía.* Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós Ibérica.

Maalouf, A. (1999) *Les identitats que maten. Per una mundialització que respecti la diversitat.* Barcelona: Edicions La Campana.

Parekh, B. (2000). *Repensando el multiculturalismo. Diversidad cultural y teoría política.* Madrid: Ediciones Istmo.

Ross, A. (coordinadora) (2004). *Interculturalitat. Bases antropològiques, socials i polítiques.* Barcelona: Fundació per a la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

Sandín, Mª P. (1998). *Identidad e interculturalidad. Materiales para la acción tutorial. Guia para el profesorado. Primer ciclo de la ESO.* Barcelona: Editorial Laertes.

Serra, C. (2006). *Diversitat, racisme i violència. Conflictes a l'educació secundària.* Vic: Eumo Editorial.

Soriano, E. (coord). (2001). *Identidad cultural y ciudadanía intercultural. Su contexto educativo*. Madrid: Colección Aula Abierta. Editorial La Muralla.