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Involvement of immigrant families in the school life

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to analyze the involvement of families that live in Spain in regards to the educational process of students, in terms of country of origin of these families. A questionnaire was given out to a total of 14876. The study was a descriptive research. The results showed that families from a Spanish origin valued higher, than families from other countries the variables considered in the study, except the variable regarding feeling of belonging, which was higher at a sample level in the non Spanish families.

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1. Introduction

Despite the ample agreement in the relevance of the role played by the involvement of families in school matters within the civic academic development of children, we are faced with a value which appears differently in regards to different cultural factors. In that regard, the study by Lee & Bowen (2006) about the level of involvement of families in the academic performance of children in primary education according to ethnicity, showed different patterns of involvement depending on the demographic characteristics of the families, as well as a higher academic performance in the native families. This aspect is more evident when, in the decade of the nineties, the migratory processes began, the diversity increased and also the conditions of pupil intake. The necessity to deal with schooling needs of minors,

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in occasions ended up in a lack of attention to the welcoming and inclusion of families in the activities of the setting. As a consequence of this new school reality, it was felt necessary to promote the socio academic success of the entire pupil intake, with the involvement of families, including families of foreign origin, a mandatory condition.

The study regarding advantages linked to involvement of families (Castro, Expósito, Lizasoain, López & Navarro, 2014; Stewart, 2008) has generated evidences of the relationship between the involvement of families and the academic performance of students, the school atmosphere, decrease in violence in educational settings, among others. In the case of families from a foreign origin, the involvement contributes to the increase of the achievement of three aims of intercultural education: the building of knowledge, the reduction of prejudices and the creation of an integration culture through community dynamics with a focus on setting up competences on the students (Lozano, Alcaraz & Colás, 2013).

Families are co educators alongside the school, and their importance lies in the contribution that they bring to the teaching task. In order to put together the different school practices, families are considered a requirement because of their indispensable support (Bolívar, 2009). But this theoretical conception finds difficulties of all sorts in order to become a current reality in a continuous and global way in school settings, which encompasses secrecy and acceptance of teaching autonomy, the non effectiveness and lack of update of some participative procedures, and the delegation of family educational responsibility in teachers. Furthermore, as highlighted by Karoly & González (2011), the lack of involvement of immigrant families in early years education, is due to economic and linguistic reasons. However, we agree with Fuligni (1997) in highlighting the educational variables above economic ones, as only a small part of the academic success is due to the economic level. Because of all of this, the indexes of involvement are generally below what is desirable, mainly just chance encounters, sporadic and typical of early years, with a greater neglect of educational support of families in secondary. In the case of immigrant families, they are less familiarised with the educational system of the host country, particularly with the activities developed, as well as with the practices that improve academic success (Kirk, Lewis, Nilsen & Colvin, 2011). However, Santos & De la Rosa (2016) recognise, supported by the ideas shown by González Falcón (2007), that one of most influential factors in family participation is attitude and beliefs of the native population. Therefore, involvement in these cases, is narrowly linked to the welcoming of the immigrant families and the feeling of belonging that they develop.

Based on a previous and larger study, coordinated and financed by the School State Council (2014), the aim of this study was to analyze the degree of involvement of families that live in Spain in the educational process of their children in Early Years, Primary or Secondary education, in regards to the country of origin of parents of participants.

2. Method

The study is located within a quantitative non experimental research. It is precisely a descriptive study survey type, of exploratory character.

2.1. Participants

After carrying out a ranked random sample (which ranks were: autonomous community, educational stage and ownership of the setting), in the study there were 14876 families living in Spain, whose children attended stages in Early Years, Primary and Secondary education. The distribution of the sample of families, according to the country of origin can be seen on Table 1.

Table 1. Sample distribution of families

Families born in Spain	Families from other origin	Lost values
12241	2346	289

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