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The Use of ICT and the Mother Tongue in the Academic Performance of Immigrant Students in Secondary Education within a Vulnerable Context

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Abstract

This study analyzes the influence of ICT and the mother tongue at home in the academic performance of immigrant students in secondary education within a vulnerable context in the subjects of language and mathematics. Using an ad hoc questionnaire several indicators were collected and analyzed to meet the aims established. The statistical tests used to analyze the data of the study were Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon Z test. Among the conclusions it is important to highlight that there are no significant differences regarding linguistic, mathematical and general competences, between the students that do not use Spanish as their main language at home and the students that use this language in that way, but, on the other hand, it can be deduced from the study that there are significant differences in the academic performance of the students that do use ICT at home to do their homework.

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Keywords: academic performance; ICT; mother tongue; immigrant students; vulnerability; exclusion

1. Introduction

We are witnessing historical times in which the acceleration of social and technological changes, in all its manifestations, gives rise to new challenges for the educational systems as a whole. Just when the mandatory education process for children and teenagers seemed to have been concluded and the improvement of the inclusive education systems started to be established as an objective, it appears necessary to pay special attention and offer quality

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education to all the students from different cultures. This includes, naturally, the national students of foreign origin, and of course the ones that present some kind of necessity that requires specific educational support.

In that regard, it is important to remember that the attention towards diversity must be understood as a principle that has to rule the whole teaching process, aiming to provide the students education based on their characteristics and needs. It is, basically, to address the students' needs, considering their particular characteristics, and favouring equity, which will contribute to a better social and educational cohesion. Therefore, it appears clear "the necessity of revitalizing the ideal of an inclusive education, once this has started to become part of the school language that is politically correct" (Susinos & Rodríguez, 2011, p. 15).

Furthermore, education faces another challenge: the search for educational excellence; the improvement of the students' academic performance and the need to offer education that is coherent with the current hectic times and technological changes; and this search is only possible if it takes place in a context of maximum quality and equity, as stated by Echeita (2008, p. 11), "educational inclusion is not just a feeling of belonging that involves emotional and relational welfare that can be reached from the periphery of the educational action. Educational inclusion must be understood with the same intensity as the concern for a quality learning process and performance that is demanding with the capacities of each student".

On the other hand, in the last decades new forms of poverty, scarcity and vulnerability has arisen making society move inexorably from inclusion to exclusion (Ibáñez, 2002). In fact, social exclusion is an authentic sword of Damocles hanging over all (Núñez, 2000). Regarding Spain, the foundations Foessa and Cáritas, presented the study Analysis and Perspectives 2014, in which it is revealed that five million Spaniards are in a situation of extreme social exclusion, a figure that almost doubles the one in 2008. The most extreme cases are the ones of families affected by unemployment and difficulties to have access to social rights: education, housing, social participation... The situation is so serious, points out the report of the mentioned organizations, that the number of families with no exclusion problems is already the minority. And the Living Conditions Survey by the Spanish Statistical Office (INE, by its acronym in Spanish) (2015), about 2013 figures, concludes that the Spanish population in risk of poverty and social exclusion has increased by 29%. This is the main indicator of Eurostat (2013) to study the socioeconomic situation of European families, in its measure Arope (At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion), that has three variables: severe material scarcity, unemployment or precarious employment, and risk of poverty.

Likewise, the Living Conditions Survey, released on the 27th of May 2014 about data from 2013 (INE 2014), evidences a population in Spain that has been impoverished over time: 27.3% of residents in Spain live in danger of poverty. Moreover, the survey concludes that when the lower is the level of education, the highest is the level of poverty. The education level appears as a key factor to avoid poverty. The rate of poverty risk is 25.1% for people with primary education, 25.2% for whom finished the first cycle of secondary education, and 8.5% for people with university studies. Nationality is also a factor of difference: the Spanish population has a rate of poverty of 16.5%, a figure that is doubled in the case of residents that are of foreign origin from the European Union and that gets worse in the case of non-communitarian residents (rate 47.8%). Regarding the Region of Murcia, the Report Children, the most vulnerable in all autonomous communities (Educo, 2014), with data from 2012, concludes that the minors of Murcia (42%), Andalucía (40%) & Canarias (38%), in this order, are the ones in the highest risk of suffering child poverty.

Considering the information above, it is not surprising that social vulnerability is understood as a condition of immediate risk, but much more of future risk for social groups affected in the satisfaction of their welfare due to the characteristics of their sociohistorical and cultural contexts (Escarbajal, Izquierdo & López, 2014). There is a considerable number of researchers (Escarbajal e Izquierdo, 2013; Hernández Pedreño, 2007; Jiménez, Luengo & Taberner, 2009; López de la Nieta, 2008; Solano, 2008...) concluding that the educational-training elements are of key importance when it comes to social exclusion. In fact, it is known that educational deficits become the main cause of social vulnerability. Therefore, the educational work can help ease the situation of the disadvantaged social groups.

2. ICT, use of Spanish and academic performance

The challenge of providing education according to the digital culture sets new dares in the educational institutions where success is not guaranteed by providing each student with a computer in their classrooms (Kosma, 2011), but by the possibilities of information, communication, exchange and interaction in the activities carried out by students and

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