

Monographic / Monográfico

'On Both Sides of the Strait': Discourses and Policies on Cultural Diversity in Southern Mediterranean Spain

'A ambos lados del Estrecho': Discursos y Políticas sobre Diversidad Cultural en la España Mediterránea del Sur

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyse the evolution, and current situation, of discourses and policies on cultural diversity in primary schools on both sides of Southern Mediterranean Spain around the Strait of Gibraltar (Andalusia, Murcia, Ceuta and Melilla). To do so, the methodology designed is based on two techniques: documentary analysis of secondary sources (regulations, statistics) and personal interviews with administrative and political personnel from the regional education administration (discourses). Based on the data analysed, the article shows how the arrival of students of foreign origin in the 1990s stimulated education policies of exogenous cultural diversity, whereas endogenous cultural diversity is inherent to historically multicultural societies ('diversicracy'). The data lead to the conclusion that there is a need to re-politicise educational policy on cultural diversity to promote interculturality based on citizenship rights and social justice, for which a rights-based approach is particularly appropriate.

Keywords: Discourse; education policy; cultural diversity; primary school; interculturality.

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RESUMEN

Este artículo pretende analizar la evolución, y situación actual, de los discursos y políticas sobre diversidad cultural en los centros de educación primaria de ambas orillas del sur del Mediterráneo español en torno al Estrecho de Gibraltar (Andalucía, Murcia, Ceuta y Melilla). Para ello, la metodología diseñada se basa en dos técnicas: análisis documental de fuentes secundarias (normativa, estadísticas) y entrevistas personales a personal administrativo y político de la administración educativa autonómica (discursos). A partir de los datos analizados, el artículo muestra cómo la llegada de estudiantes de origen extranjero en la década de los noventa estimuló políticas educativas de diversidad cultural exógena, mientras que la diversidad cultural endógena es inherente a las sociedades históricamente multiculturales ("diversicracia"). Los datos llevan a concluir con la necesidad de re-politizar la política educativa sobre diversidad cultural para promover una interculturalidad basada en los derechos de ciudadanía y la justicia social, para lo cual el enfoque basado en derechos resulta especialmente apropiado.

Palabras clave: Política educativa; diversidad cultural; escuela primaria; interculturalidad.

INTRODUCTION

This article has the objective to analyse the evolution, and current situation, of the discourses and policies on cultural diversity¹ in primary school expressed and implemented by education administrations in Southern Mediterranean Spain. It corresponds to the first phase of a project² carried out between 2018 and 2021.

The location is of special interest since it is a 'border' territory (Albornoz et al., 2019; Martín, 2017), where the Strait of Gibraltar, geopolitically strategic, is placed. The Strait³ connects the two autonomous Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla, physically located on the North coast of the African continent (on the border with Morocco), and the two autonomous communities that shape the Southern 'cone' of Spain (Andalusia and Murcia), which form the southernmost part of the European continent. It is the narrowest point between the European and African continents, with only 8.9 miles of sea between Point Oliveros (Spain) and Point Cires (Morocco), and only 49 English fathoms at its maximum depth. This makes this Spanish territory an important region for the transit of populations between both countries –Morocco and Spain– and continents –Africa and Europe– (Ramírez, 2006). In addition, it is the passageway to the Mediterranean Sea and links the American and Asian continents. For these reasons, the Gibraltar Strait is a privileged geopolitical space to research education policies on cultural diversity.

This article addresses the research question that prompted this paper, namely: what are the discourses and policies on cultural diversity in Southern Mediterranean Spain, and how do they address interculturality?

The starting thesis of the research from which this article comes is as follows. In an increasingly multicultural world (Andrés & Giró, 2020; Diallo & Maizonniaux, 2016; Garreta, 2001; Olmos & Contini, 2016), education discourses and policies on cultural diversity have evolved from assimilation, segregation and compensation towards the ideal of interculturality. Despite this ideal, there is still evidence of those previous models.

1 In all the Departments of Education analysed in this article it has been found that the term 'attention to diversity' refers to a broad concept of 'diversity'. This includes what we call 'psychopedagogical' diversity and 'sociocultural' diversity, by which we mean cultural, religious, racial and ethnic diversity, which is the object of our research.

2 'Cultural diversity at school: Discourses, policies and practices' Project, financed, in competition concurrence, by the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness of Spain, with reference CSO2017-84872-R, and coordinated by Jordi Garreta and Núria Llevot, from the University of Lleida (Spain).

3 In Spain, the Strait of Gibraltar is often colloquially called 'the Strait'. This term is used in the article.

Therefore, this research draws upon for the rights-based approach, as it contains principles for re-politicising diversity as a strategy that makes it possible to educate society in interculturality.

To address this objective of research, the methodology designed is based on two techniques: documentary analysis of secondary sources (regulations, statistics) and personal interviews with administrative and political personnel from the regional education administration (discourses).

Based on the data analysed, the article shows how the arrival of students of foreign origin in the 1990s stimulated education policies to address cultural diversity insofar as diversity is considered an *exogenous* phenomenon. This means that cultural diversity becomes synonymous with immigration in general terms. However, when cultural diversity is seen as *endogenous*, i.e. inherent to historically multicultural societies, in the form of a 'diversicracy', such policies are not seen as necessary, because diversity is taken for granted as part of the identity and dynamics of society, as something spontaneous. Based on evidence showing the persistence of assimilationist, segregationist and compensatory elements of diversity policies, the article concludes with the need to re-politicise educational policy on cultural diversity in order to promote interculturality based on citizenship rights and social justice. As it will be discussed in the article, the rights-based approach offers a suitable framework for this aim.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DIVERSITY IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN SPAIN 'ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STRAIT'

In this section we present the theoretical frame of the research. It is divided into three parts. Firstly, there is a brief conceptual framework of the key notions we use, these are cultural diversity, multiculturalism, interculturality, the rights-based approach and re-politicisation; in addition, we briefly describe the structure of the Spanish education system that shapes the territorial distribution of educational competences. Secondly, we address the state of the art regarding our object of research. Thirdly, we outline the theoretical framework from which we approach our object of research. The object of research in this article is education policies on cultural diversity in primary schools in Southern Spain (Andalusia, Murcia, Ceuta and Melilla).

The conceptual frame

To define the central concepts of our research, we draw on the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, introduced by UNESCO in Paris in 2005 and ratified by Spain in 2007 (BOE, 2007). According to UNESCO (2005), *cultural diversity*

Refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies. Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used (Article 4.1 of the Convention).

Multiculturalism, on the other hand, refers to the culturally diverse nature of human society, not only in relations to ethnicity, but also regarding linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity (UNESCO, 2006). However, *interculturality* 'Refers to the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating

shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect' (Article 4.8 of the Convention). Thereby, interculturality is a dynamic concept that involves the presence and equal interaction of diverse cultures. It is this interaction that may lead to construct shared cultural expressions. Dialogue and mutual respect are the means to get so. In short, interculturality implies multiculturalism, and is the result of intercultural exchange and dialogue at local, regional, national and/or international levels.

Within Universal Values recognised by the United Nations, the first principle is the Human Rights-Based Approach:

The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind.

Under the HRBA, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law, including all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and the right to development (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2022).

As the United Nations Population Fund (2022) states 'The human rights-based approach focuses on those who are most marginalized, excluded or discriminated against'. Focusing on rights, this frame is of particular interest for analysing interculturality from the perspective of the recognition of cultural diversity, in the terms proposed by UNESCO (2005, 2006), as it will be seen below.

In relation to the concept of re-politicisation, the Real Spanish Academy (RAE) defines to politicise in its first meaning as '1. tr. To give political orientation or content to actions, thoughts, etc., which, currently, do not have it'. RAE does not give any definition for 're-politicise'. Nevertheless, as it will be explained in the theoretical frame below, there has been a profound change in the orientation of diversity policies since the 1980s that leads us to claim the need to re-politicise diversity (this is to re-'give political orientation or content' to diversity) and, with it, the democratic principles of equality and non-discrimination, to recover the focus on social justice from a rights-based approach.

Regarding the structure of the Spanish education system (EURYDICE, 2020), it shall help to understand how education competences are distributed territorially. It was established by the 1978 Spanish Constitution, that founded a decentralised state model, so regional comparison is of especial interest. The levels are:

- The General State Administration: currently the Ministry of Education and Professional Training (MEPT).
- The Autonomous Regions: 17 in total in Spain, plus 2 Autonomous Cities, Ceuta and Melilla. Regions have their Ministries ['Consejerías de Educación'] with education competences, except Ceuta and Melilla, which depend on the MEPT.
- The Local Administrations: education councils that depend on town councils.
- Schools: they have pedagogical autonomy regarding their education projects and their financial resources.

Although the MEPT is responsible for setting objectives, competencies, contents and assessment criteria on minimum learning, education competencies are distributed as follows:

- The MEPT manages 55% of the competencies in the regions with a co-official language.
- In the regions whose only official language is Spanish, the MEPT manages 65% of the competencies on minimum learning. This is the case of Andalusia and Murcia.
- In the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, the MEPT controls 100% of the education competencies.

The state of the art

It should be noted that three large ethnic groups conform cultural diversity in the Spanish context:

- Caucasian students, historically living in Spain.
- Roma students, living in the country since the 15th century.
- Students of foreign origin, who started arriving in the 1990s.

The Caucasian group, majoritarian in Spain, identifies cultural diversity in schools only with the arrival of the third group since the 1990s (Andrés & Giró, 2020; García-Cano et al., 2018; Garreta, 2006; Garreta et al., 2020). This fact gives rise to a 'problematic categorisation' (García-Cano et al., 2018) that evidences 'educational policy as an act of white supremacy' (Gillborn, 2005; see also Fylkesnes, 2019), since there is

on the part of Spanish academics, an appropriation of a discourse that is of Anglo-Saxon origin and links cultural diversity with migration. This result sets it apart from the construction of cultural diversity in other contexts, such as the US, where cultural diversity is often a euphemism for race and refers to how minority racial groups differ from the white population (García-Cano et al., 2018, p. 79).

From this problematic understanding of cultural diversity, Spain, like most countries, has gone through different models of attention to cultural diversity. First, Roma students, the ethnic group living in Spain for six centuries, have historically been excluded from the school. Later, there was a shift from exclusion to segregation, with the arrival of democracy, so integrationist models were introduced in Spain. These models sought to incorporate the culturally different⁴ into ordinary classrooms with the support of compensatory education programmes. This period continued until the mid-1990s, which was specially characterised by the arrival of students of foreign nationality, at which point the compensatory programmes began to be combined with certain intercultural theoretical references and practices (Garreta, 2011; Márquez y García, 2014). Today, in Spain, as in most European countries (Coulby, 2006) and many others, the intercultural model is regarded as the best strategy for integration, coexistence and social cohesion (Bouchard, 2011; Garreta et al., 2020).

Theoretical frame

These processes have made Spain a country aware of cultural diversity. Diversity has to do with cultural pluralism in society (Faist, 2009), this is multiculturalism (UNESCO, 2006), so that 'we are living in the age of diversity' (Vertovec, 2012, p. 287). This is why some authors call it 'super-diversity' (cf. Faist, 2009; Vertovec, 2007). Diversity is a

⁴ This means different to the majoritarian, white, Caucasian group.

socially constructed category (Venegas & Raya, 2013). It means that a socio-historical analysis is required to unravel the sociological processes that gives meaning to each particular society from the approach of multiculturalism.

Diversity seems to enjoy a positive social image. However, a more epistemological review of this sociological phenomenon allows us to shed light on the history of its light and shadows. First references to diversity appeared in the jurisprudence generated by the affirmative action which derived from the fight for Afro-American civil rights in the United States in the 1970's (Doytcheva, 2010; Duru-Bellat, 2011; Lipson, 2008). Affirmative action is 'policy that provides special consideration to women or racial minority applicants to further equality by including members of groups that have historically been subordinated' (Lipson, 2008, p. 693).

Lipson (2008) analyses the replacement of the rights-based affirmative action policies by utilitarian organizational diversity policies in the United States since the 1980's. It represents a shift from equality and social justice to the management of (diverse) human resources, so from the structural approach to a more individualistic (Duru-Bellat, 2011; Faist, 2009), neoliberal and meritocratic one (Doytcheva, 2010; Duru-Bellat, 2011; Fernández-Enguita, 2002; Junter y Sénac-Slawinski, 2010; Olmos y Contini, 2016).

The fight against racial discrimination is then called 'promotion of diversity' (García-Cano et al., 2018). The problem is that, lying behind this managerial rhetoric, the demand for –structural– equality may be diluted in –identity– diversity (Duru-Bellat, 2011; Laufer, 2009, cf. Junter y Sénac-Slawinski, 2010). This managerialisation of legislation is seen as part of a process of de-politicisation of equality (Junter y Sénac-Slawinski, 2010). It is in relation to it that some authors call for the re-politicisation of diversity (Belda-Miquel et al. 2016; Chichizola, 2021).

Therefore, to re-politicise the discourse on equality in relation to diversity involves the challenge to focus on structural inequality (Duru-Bellat, 2011; García-Cano et al., 2018; Junter y Sénac-Slawinski, 2010) and school segregation (Bonal, 2012; Essomba, 2012; García-Cano et al., 2018). Faist (2009, p. 171) puts it clearly when he says that 'in the absence of a rights-based foundation the question arises of how social inequality can be dealt with', so that 'diversity needs to be grounded in (...) citizenship rights in order to become a politically legitimate approach. Otherwise, diversity will remain a depoliticized management technique' (p. 172). Diversity has to do then with citizenship rights which, in turn, refer us to the rights-based approach, as defined above. Thus, the rights-based foundation (Faist, 2009) becomes the basis for multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 1996) as a step before the ideal goal of interculturality (UNESCO, 2005).

Therefore some authors point to a rights-based approach (RBA) to re-politicise rights (Belda-Miquel et al., 2016) and interculturality (Chichizola, 2021), in what we consider is a highly neo-liberal moment for education policies in general. Hence the interest to apply the 'rights-based approach' to social policy analysis, which guides 'on how to integrate human rights principles into (...) practice with the goal of developing long- and short-term responses to current social issues that further human rights' (Gabel, 2016, p. 4), since it

aims to directly overcome marginalization by more equitable sharing of resources and power (...) the success of policy or program interventions is measured against the progressive realization of human rights (...) such as working toward quality education for all children (Gabel, 2016, p. 5).

In line with this, we agree with Kymlicka (2018) when he sets that 'multiculturalism as citizenisation (...) is itself a human rights-based movement, inspired and constrained by principles of universal human rights and liberal-democratic constitutionalism' (p. 102). New forms of multiculturalism should include 'the adoption of multiculturalism in school curriculum (...) the funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction;

affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups' (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 101). The application of the (citizenship) rights-based approach to multiculturalism would thus be the way to the construction of an intercultural society, in which education has a key role to play.

With this theoretical framework as a backdrop, this article starts from the thesis that, in an increasingly multicultural world, educational discourses and policies have evolved from assimilation, segregation and compensation towards the ideal of an intercultural society, although elements of previous models persist 'on both sides of the Strait'; the rights-based approach contains the principles for re-politicising diversity as a necessary strategy for educating for interculturality.

METHODOLOGY

This article seeks to answer the research question: what are the discourses and policies on cultural diversity in southern Mediterranean Spain, and how do they address interculturality? In order to answer this question, the aim of the research addressed in this article is to analyse the evolution, and current situation, of discourses and policies on cultural diversity in primary schools on both shores of Southern Mediterranean Spain around the Strait of Gibraltar, with a final focus on the phenomenon of interculturality.

The phase of the research to which this article refers has followed a qualitative methodology based on two 'data production techniques' (Berg, 2001; Mason, 1996). First, documentary analysis, which 'consists of a series of operations, the purpose of which is to represent the information of a document in a synthetic, structured and analytical way' (Hernández & Tobón, 2016, p. 401). The 'external analysis' (Clausó, 1993) that we have followed lies in the review of regulations related to each of the four regions analysed. The 'internal analysis' (Clausó, 1993) focuses on the study of cultural diversity in primary school. The consultation of statistical sources of the MEPT has been added to this work to outline the evolution of students of foreign origin in primary school from a comparative interest (see Figure 1, below).

The second data production technique was the semi-structured in-depth interview since 'in order to understand why persons act as they do we need to understand the meaning and significance they give to their actions' (Jones, 1985, p. 46). In this case this has been the telephone interview, given the physical distance between the research team (in Granada, Andalusia) and the subjects we interviewed (in Murcia, Ceuta and Melilla). They were administrative and political personnel from the education administrations of the four regions analysed. The interviews were based on a script which had been prepared by the research team at state level, and which focused on cultural diversity in each regional administration. All the interviews have been transcribed and analysed with the help of the qualitative analysis software Nudist NVivo Release. An acronym has been assigned to each interview to ensure anonymity, following the guidelines agreed on by the team. Table 1 shows the profile of the subjects we interviewed. The state team agreed to interview an administrative and a political representative for each region. However, the change of government in Andalusia, following three decades of the same ruling party, coincided with this phase of the project, making it impossible to carry out the two interviews which had been arranged with those responsible for the Andalusian education administration. As a result, we have only one interview.

Interviews were all (7) categorised by the same member of the team writing this article. Categories were defined a priori according to the objectives of the first phase of the research, consisting of a documentary analysis and two in-depth interviews in each Spanish region. The categories correspond to the interview protocol established by the state-level team and have been created as codes in NVivo Release with the same label. They are as follows:

- Student and family profile
- Concepts
- Objectives
- Interviewee profile
- Teachers
- Learning standards
- Activities
 - o Actions
 - o Singular successful experiences
 - o Evaluation of actions
 - o Programs
 - o Plans
- Normativity
 - o Evolution
 - o Current

Simultaneously, the team writing this article carried out a similar project with an ethnographic phase in Ceuta⁵. This has facilitated our understanding of the phenomenon of diversity in a border city.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN SPAIN 'ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STRAIT'

This section presents the main results of the project in relation to the objective of research we cover in this article, this is to analyse the evolution, and current situation, of discourses and policies on cultural diversity in primary schools on both sides of Southern Mediterranean Spain around the Strait of Gibraltar. Data found in secondary resources (statistics, laws, etc.) and verbatims coming from the interviews are used in this section to illustrate the analysis.

Cultural Diversity in Primary Education

In this subsection, we approach the first step to cover the objective of research in the article. As seen above, it was the presence of students of foreign origin in primary education in Spain the event that led to the implementation of educational policies on cultural diversity in Spain ([Andrés y Giró, 2020](#); [García-Cano et al., 2018](#); [Garreta, 2006](#); [Garreta et al., 2020](#)).

⁵ 'Religious communities in Ceuta primary schools: Discourses, policies and practices' Project, coordinated by Mar Venegas (University of Granada) and financed, in competitive concurrence, by the Instituto de Estudios Ceutíes (2018).

Table 1. Profile of the interviewed subjects.

Position	Age	Sex	Training	Years of experience with brief explanation	Other relevant information	Acronym	Region
Technical advisor to the educational administration	44	Man	Graduated in Pedagogy	Social educator, counselor, work with minors, compensatory education	Mestizo (gypsy father-caucasian mother)	AT1	Andalusia
Technical advisor to the educational administration	50	Woman	Graduated in Primary Teacher, Graduated in Anthropology, Secondary Teacher with exam of access to the public administration, with two subjects remaining to finish the Degree in Biochemistry	27 years of experience as a teacher in Primary, first, and in Secondary, later, 2018 is her first year as an educational advisor for the public administration	Not available	MUT1	Murcia
Head of the Attention to Diversity Service	54	Man	Secondary Professor Philosophy	Graduated in Philosophy, teaching since 1990, he has also been in continuous teacher training. 2018 is the fourth year in this position	Not available	MUT2	Murcia
Provincial Director of Education and Vocational Training	65	Man	Not available	Head of the educational inspection service (Ceuta) Inspector (Cádiz, Ceuta) Professor of Secondary Education 2003-2004 Provincial Director in Ceuta on immigration and social affairs	He lived the first assaults on the fence of Ceuta	CEP1	Ceuta
Technical advisor to the educational administration	38	Woman	Degree in early childhood education, Degree in primary school, Degree in Therapeutic Pedagogy and Pisco pedagogy	15 años en the regional ministry of education	All the people who occupy advisory positions are teachers	CET1	Ceuta
Provincial Director of the Ministry of Education	Not available	Man	Teacher of Secondary Education	Teacher recognized for his 16 years of educational career in the city and 11 of them linked to the management team of the Miguel Fernández Secondary School	Out of the 11 years in the management team, the last 6 years he has been the director	MP1	Melilla
Head of the inspection service	Not available	Woman	Teacher of Primary Education	3 years as an inspector in Melilla and 16 years of practice in Andalusia	Advisor to the teaching staff of Andalusia, has been full time at the university and finally goes to the inspection body	MT1	Melilla

Source: Own elaboration based on subjects' data.

The Caucasian and Roma people have lived together in Spain for six centuries, but it has not been identified as cultural diversity (Contini et al., 2016). Roma population have been persecuted since they arrived in the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century. Hence the lack of visibility of this group in Spanish history books (Martín, 2018) at school. Historical invisibility has meant school discrimination and poor results (Andrés y Giró, 2020; García-Cano et al., 2018). Roma students have historically suffered from assimilationist and segregationist education policies (Garreta et al., 2020; Peñalva, 2009) until 'mid-1990s, [when] compensatory programmes coincided with intercultural discourses, but little practice' (Garreta, 2006, p. 263). Roma students lead school failure in Spain, being 64% compared to an average of 13% in the country (Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2013). Recently, they have experienced important advances in these results (National Centre for Education Research and Innovation, 2013) although they continue to be 'forgotten in the rhetoric of interculturality that has been constructed, as well as in the day-to-day practice by teachers' (Garreta, 2006, p. 277).

There is no school census to identify Roma students, so there is no possibility to design specific education policies aimed at the Roma pupils. The interviews showed that asking a certain group about their ethnic-religious background can be perceived as offensive:

We cannot do this because the law would not permit it (...) no one, along the name on their school record, in their history or in their academic record, writes: 'Muslim', 'Christian', whatever (CEP1).

Data available in Spain only allow for the ethnic identification of students of foreign origin (see Figure 1, below) over the total population enrolled in primary education. So, what follows in this article refers only to this group.

The arrival of students of foreign origin became socially significant in the 1990s (Andrés y Giró, 2020; García-Cano et al., 2018; Garreta, 2006; Garreta et al., 2020; Sánchez, 2018), so we analyse the last two decades (1998/1999 and 2017/2018).

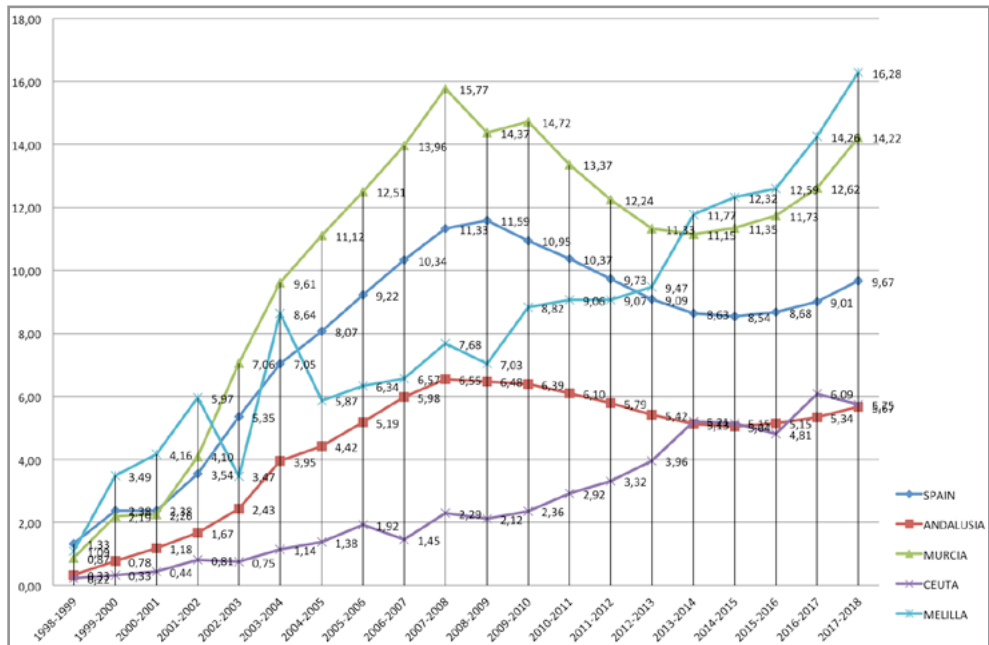
Data in Figure 1 show that, in the last two decades, there has been a general increase of students of foreign origin in Spanish primary schools. It has risen from percentages of around 1% to percentages which fluctuate between 6% and 16%, depending on the region. This is the period when Spain began to identify its cultural diversity and formulate discourses related to it (García-Cano et al., 2018; Sánchez, 2018), as one of the interviewed subjects puts it: 'The institutional normative responses, in general, that have been given to cultural diversity have been related to the migratory movements (...) which took place in the 1990s' (MUT2)⁶.

However, the trajectory has not always been upward –except in Ceuta– and it has not been the same in all regions. The Spanish average presented an ascending curve (1.33% of the school population of foreign origin in the 1998/1999 school year) until the 2008/2009 school year (11.59%), when it reached its maximum point. Following this it began to decline until the school year 2014/2015 (8.54%), when this trend reversed. Murcia presented the highest curve of the five regions. That was up until the 2013/2014 school year, when it was surpassed by Melilla, starting from 0.87% of the school population of foreign origin in Primary Education in 1998/1999, until it reached its peak in 2007/2008 (15.77%). This represents a trend which is like that of the national average, although with higher values in all school years. Something similar occurred in Andalusia, which started with a low percentage (0.33%) and then presented a clearly smoother curve than the national average and Murcia. However, it also rose to reach the same school year as Murcia (2007/2008, 6.57%). It decreased slightly in subsequent years, and increased very slightly in 2014/2015, similar to the national average and Murcia. In all three cases, the impact of the 2008 financial crisis, and the consequent return of the migrant population to their countries of origin, explains the downward trend of the curves (Cerrutti y Maguid, 2016; Valero et al.,

6 Quotations from the interviews are identified along the article according to the acronymous in Table 1 (see the section about methodology).

2014). Its subsequent recovery is due to the economic recovery which started in the middle of the 2010 decade (González, 2019).

Figure 1. Percentage of Students of foreign origin matriculated in Primary Education.



Source: Own elaboration based on MEPT data (2020).

If fluctuations related to economic cycles were observed on the peninsula, the trend was seen to increase steadily 'on the other side of the Strait': in Ceuta (0.22% in 1998/1999 – 5.75% in 2017/2018) and in Melilla (1.09% in 1998/1999 – 16.28% in 2017/2018). This may be because these are two regions of transit between Africa and Europe. However, the values of Melilla, more to the southeast of the North African coast than Ceuta, are clearly higher than those of the latter for the entire period we analysed, as one of the subjects interviewed explains: 'our foreign population which is enrolled in the schools of Ceuta is, curiously, lower than in other regions. This is contrary to what everyone thinks... but no, here the majority of Muslims are originally from Ceuta (...) and therefore we cannot speak of foreigners' (CEP1).

Data in Figure 1 outlines an evolution that leads us to the second step to cover our objective of research in this article, in the next section.

Discourses and Policies on Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity, as a social phenomenon, originated in Spain with the arrival of migrant population (Andrés y Giró, 2020; García-Cano et al., 2018; Garreta, 2006; Garreta et al., 2020; Sánchez, 2018), so we started to 'hear about diversity with the advent of immigration (...) between fifteen and twenty years ago' (MUT1). Their children opened the need for education policies focused on this growing cultural diversity. The concept of difference and the multicultural approach emerged then (Dalouh et al., 2016).

At this point, and based on the data presented so far in the article, we can confirm that educational policies for cultural diversity, and the regulations that support them, have been created in response to the arrival of students of foreign origin in the four regions studied (see [Figure 2](#), below), as also confirmed by the discourses found in the interviews. The following sub-sections in this section illustrate this analysis.

'Diversicracy': the social construction of cultural diversity

The data analysed show that cultural diversity is, above all, a socially constructed phenomenon ([Venegas & Raya, 2013](#)), as it is analysed in this section. It means that diversity is socially configured, depending on historical, cultural and geopolitical parameters. Thus, the data show that the meaning of cultural diversity in our research is constructed differently 'on both sides of the Strait'. This is a relevant finding of our research in comparison with the rest of Spain due to the geopolitical conditions described above.

On the African side of Mediterranean Spain (Ceuta and Melilla), cultural diversity appears in discourses as perceived as a feature which is historically inherent in the region's identity, so most people interviewed think there is no need to develop 'a frame' to attend cultural diversity in their education systems:

Cultural and religious diversity is structural in our city (...) there is not (a frame) that is specifically related to adopting a series of measures aimed at responding to that diversity. However, it is practically implicit, not only in the education system, but in teacher training itself, and this is evident in the city (CET1).

The reason is the border location, which is characterised by the transit of people and the historical coexistence between cultures and religions, resulting a 'multicultural diversity (...): the Western-Christian community, (...) the Arab-Muslim community (...), the Hindu community and the Sephardic community' (CEP1), being Spain Christian/Catholic historically:

We live in a border city where there have, almost always, been large migratory movements. But we are also talking about a particular type of diversity (...) The particularities of the city and its own diversity identity (...) Four cultures coexist here which, in turn, have a direct impact on four religions (CET1).

The border location also involves the presence of floating students in Ceuta and Melilla coming from the neighbouring Morocco, which is Muslim historically. Religious belonging becomes key to understand cultural diversity in some Spanish regions ([Andrés y Giró, 2020](#); [Garreta et al., 2019](#)) like these two, located in North Africa, in the frontier with Morocco, where a considerable number of Muslim students are Moroccan descent whose mother tongue is not Spanish: 'in Ceuta, as in Melilla, we find a high percentage of the population whose vehicular language to knowledge is not Spanish. In the case of Ceuta, it is Dariya and in Melilla it is Tamazig' (MP1). Language is the second key cultural diversity element here. The population of Ceuta and Melilla from Morocco were nationalised Spanish in the 1980s, just after the transition from Franco's dictatorship to democracy, so they are not foreigners anymore. Diversity resulting from these factors can be defined as 'endogenous'.

Another border consequence is a substantial presence of unaccompanied foreign minors housed in special reception centres. Here educators work in 'language immersion classrooms (...) to give them the language tools necessary for inclusion in the education system' (ibid.). Linguistic diversity impacts on the education system ([Diallo y Maizonniaux, 2016](#); [Olmos, 2016](#)) since it determines the chances of school success/failure ([Essomba, 2012](#)):

We have the questionable ‘merit’ of having an unemployment rate of around 55-56% in the young population (...) From a very early age they have experienced a curriculum plagued by academic failure (...) We are at the bottom of the academic achievement ladder in Spain in many aspects, (...) one aspect could be related to how we address diversity, especially when it comes to those students who, for cultural reasons, do not have the same possibilities of successfully accessing the system (MP1).

The four regions studied here have, ‘from primary schools’ (MP1), intense ‘measures of education and attention to diversity’ (ibid.), such as ‘language immersion classrooms (...) which allow for ironing out potential problems when a foreign student enters the Spanish education system’ (ibid.) as an education policy to promote school success.

On the other hand, diversity resulting from the arrival of foreign students can be understood as ‘exogenous’, in line with the main theoretical and policy developments on cultural diversity shown in the specialist literature (Andrés y Giró, 2020; García-Cano et al., 2018; Garreta, 2006; Garreta et al., 2020). The arrival of foreign students in the four regions since the 1990s made education policies on cultural diversity necessary. Then, compensatory policies were designed (Garreta, 2006; Olmos, 2016).

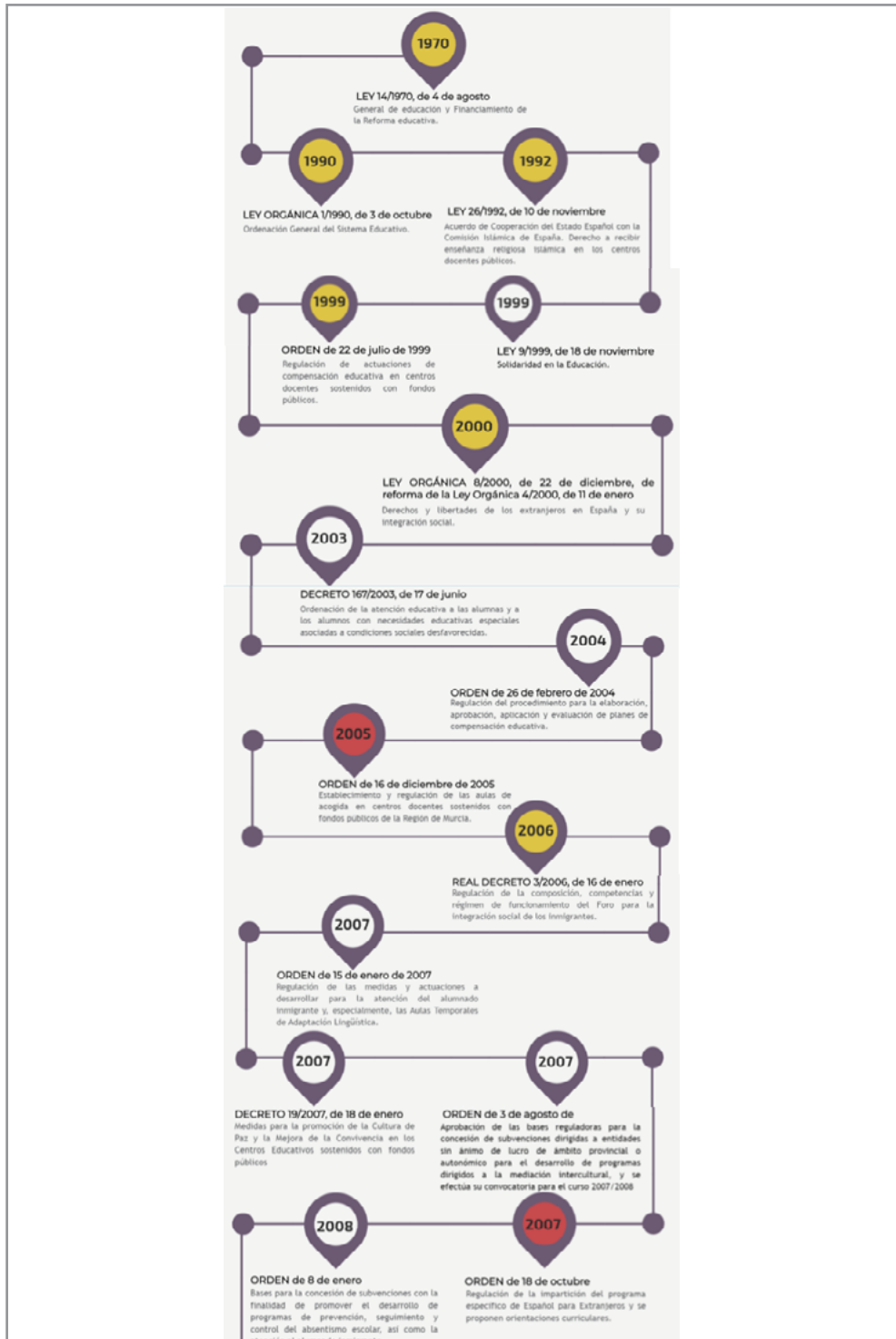
‘Diversicracy’ (CET1), as used by one of the interviewees, comes thus to define education policy of Mediterranean Spain on the African side, since it means an organisation of society based on inherent (‘endogenous’) diversity. According to these data, the sociological and phenomenological definition of cultural diversity derives from the geopolitical position that each society has ‘on both sides of the Strait’, together with its ethnic composition historically: ‘perhaps, from the peninsula, (...) it is understood differently. Here we understand cultural diversity as what it really is (...) And the concept of interculturality, which is where we must tend and reach and where we must be’ (CEP1). Then, interculturality is understood as the final aim.

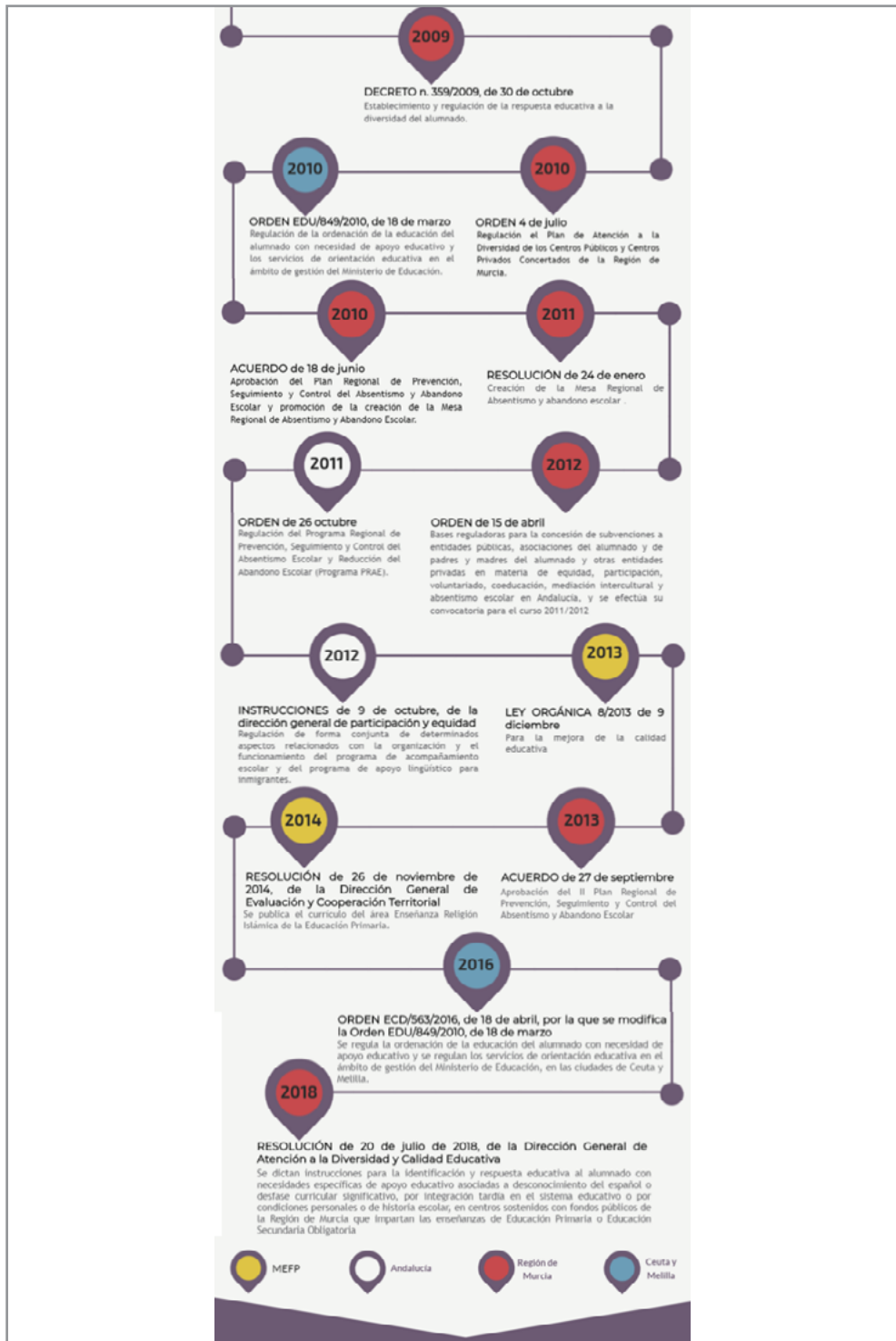
Another evidence coming from data in this research is that the perception of cultural diversity is clearly different in these four regions: cultural diversity as ‘diversicracy’ is endogenous in Ceuta and Melilla, inherent to both region’s identity historically, but taken for granted, despite cultural, religious and linguistic differences at school. Exogenous cultural diversity resulting from migrations is perceived as such all over the country and collapse the whole idea of cultural diversity, as previous research shows too. This phenomenon is perceived as such in the country only since the 1990s, when immigrant people arrived. Thereby, the development of education policy differs in each region depending on these two definitions of cultural diversity: ‘there is no law that addresses the cultural diversity of the city properly (in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla), nor are there any local regulations relating to reception arrangements for immigrant students’ (CET1), along the lines of those which exist in the two peninsular regions, where ‘institutional normative responses (...) to cultural diversity (...) (are) a first response to those migratory movements that took place in the 1990s’ (MUT2).

Education policies on cultural diversity

To analyse education policies relating to cultural diversity in these four regions, we have created a timeline to identify the most relevant regulatory milestones (see Figure 2, below). It allows to relate these key moments to the curves illustrated in Figure 1. Here we discuss the relationship between key regulations and the presence of foreign students (for a discussion on attention to cultural diversity from a political view in Spanish Organic Laws of Education see Verdeja, 2017).

Figure 2. Timeline of the revised legislation.





Source: Own elaboration based on revised legislation.

At the end of the 1990s, a government order was introduced ([Orden 22 de 1999](#)) which 'standardises the education compensation actions in schools which are supported by public funds' (MT1) and provides schooling to students with socio-education disadvantages due to: (1) a significant education gap in schooling, (2) difficulties in education insertion, (3) late inclusion into the education system, (4) irregular schooling, (5) immigrant or refugee status, and (6) lack of knowledge of the vehicular language. The subjects we interviewed cite the most relevant organic (state) laws in the construction of the Spanish education system⁷, as the timeline shows:

The General Education Law (1970) ... here, for the first time, the need to focus on students with special needs arises (...) The LOGSE has a more inclusive development in classrooms than the LOE itself can contemplate 16 years later (...) And then there is the third directive on diversity in the LOMCE (...) here it is recognised that heterogeneity is a fundamental trait (...). The problem with the LOMCE is that it is ambitious (...), although it does not involve elements of comprehensive and shared education, which is the model that, since the 1960s and up to the present, has been implemented by the majority of European Union countries (MP1).

The Royal Decree 299 (1996) standardises the compensatory procedures of education inequalities relating to 'concepts of inclusion, of integration, normalisation, exceptional sectors ... Its constant aim is to respond to this diversity within the student population' (MP1). The Royal Decree 126 (2014) establishes the basic curriculum for primary education in Spain. This includes objectives aimed at promoting the active exercise of citizenship, respecting human rights and the pluralism characteristic of a democratic society. It also focuses on perceiving, understanding and respecting cultural differences. So, Spain moves from the compensatory model of education policies on cultural diversity to a more inclusive one, oriented towards interculturality (see also [Garreta et al., 2020](#)).

In Ceuta and Melilla there is one law only, that 'has existed since 2010 which standardises issues relating to attention to diversity in its broadest sense' (MT1) ([Orden EDU/849 de 2010](#)), and then there is 'another regulation which standardises and complement that of 2010' (ibid.) ([Orden ECD/563 de 2016](#)). In the two autonomous cities, 'the school education project (...) which has to reflect this diverse reality' (ibid.) has more autonomy than in the two peninsular regions. It is almost impossible to establish a direct connection between the curves of Ceuta, Melilla and the Spanish State and their organic laws, because they have changed every time there has been a change of government in the country ([De Puelles, 2016](#)). They give an account of the general trends relating to cultural diversity in Spain.

The Andalusian curve, which peaks in 2007/2008, is considerably smoother than that of Murcia. The first Law ([Ley 9 de 1999](#)), which is a key law to date, seeks to compensate for the difficulties experienced by students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, with special attention given to school absenteeism. A subsequent Decree aims to assist those students with special education needs associated with disadvantaged social conditions ([Decreto 167 de 2003](#)), followed by the Education Compensation Plans, which pays particular attention to students of foreign origin. All this is regulated by a subsequent Order ([Orden 26 de 2004](#)). Education compensation defines the regulations of these initial periods. The year 2007, which marks the peak of the curve, is fundamental to Andalusian regulations, with:

- the Decree of measures for the promotion of the Culture of Peace and the Improvement of Coexistence in Schools ([Decreto 19 de 2007](#));

⁷ At the time of the fieldwork, the last organic education law approved was LOMCE (2013), which was in force at the time. Currently, however, Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education, has entered into force. This law takes up the principles of the inclusive school of LOE (2006), to which the interviewees do refer.

- the Order for the attention to the needs of immigrant students, which introduces the Temporary Language Adaptation Classrooms [ATAL in Spanish] ([Orden 15 de 2007](#));
- and an Order regulating grants to develop intercultural mediation ([Orden 3 de 2007](#)).

The following year, an Order which regulates absenteeism and attention to the needs of immigrant students was introduced. This seeks to maintain the students' culture of origin ([Orden 8 de 2008](#)). Another Order was introduced which standardises issues relating to student diversity ([Orden 25 de 2008](#)) from the perspective of cultural diversity. This new orientation replaced that of compensation. Later, a further Order was established which standardises subsidies for intercultural mediation and addresses school absenteeism whilst attending to the needs of immigrant students ([Orden 15 de 2011](#)). Guidelines on the school support programmes and linguistic support programmes for immigrants were also approved ([Instrucciones 9 de 2012](#); see [Olmos, 2016](#) for a review on linguistic policies in Andalusia). They include requirements for support teachers in public schools with compensatory education programmes ([Instrucciones 30 de 2011](#)). Finally, the School Accompaniment Programme and the Language Support Programme for immigrants was approved ([Instrucciones 9 de 2012](#)). The most recent regulations focus on a further approach to interculturality. In Andalusia, where regulations show a move from compensation towards interculturality, legislation we have not found anything relevant on the subject under discussion since 2012:

(The Department) could have implemented four more regulations, no more, because it is not necessary. For example, the renewed Attention to the Diversity Plan, which has been repeatedly heralded since 2013 ... (...). But is not there. There is no plan relating to diversity, there is no new orientation plan ... (AT1).

In Murcia the presence of foreign-origin students in primary education is clearly higher than Andalusia (see [Figure 1](#)). This coincides with the peak of the curve, even though the measures to address cultural diversity were introduced later than in Andalusia. Murcia makes a distinction between basic regulations ([Decreto 359 of 2009](#); [Orden 4 of 2010](#)) and regulatory development. The latter comprises seven axes, three of which are related to cultural diversity. These three are: (1) absenteeism and levels of school drop-out, (2) compensation for inequalities in education and (3) late incorporation into the education system. The first measure was introduced in 2005, with an Order which focuses on reception classrooms for linguistic support for students of foreign origin ([Orden 16 of 2005](#)). This was reinforced by a subsequent Order ([Orden 18 of 2007](#)), followed by the authorisation for schools to teach a specific Spanish language programme aimed at foreigners ([Resolución 8 of 2009](#)): 'there were more than 30 reception classrooms throughout the region of Murcia, which were clusters of students (...) with teachers who dedicated themselves to teaching Spanish' (MUT2).

The key regulation is the [decree 359 \(2009\)](#), which addresses the diversity of students in Murcia for the first time. Its regulatory development is specified in the [Order 4 \(2010\)](#), which regulates the Attention to Diversity Plan in schools. In the First Regional Directive relating to absenteeism and school drop-out was also approved ([Consejería de Educación, Juventud y Deportes de Murcia, 2018](#)), consolidating a lengthy regulatory trajectory aimed at counteracting this serious education problem, to which this region dedicates its normative regulation widely ([Resolución 24 of 2011](#); [Orden 26 of 2012](#); [Resolución 8 of 2013](#)). This is so since, in Spain, 'The region of Murcia has the third highest drop-out rate, 24%, only behind the autonomous city of Melilla and the Balearic Islands' ([Bravo, 2019](#), no page available).

Finally, a [Resolution 20 \(2018\)](#) was approved to 'standardise the need for support, compensatory education for late incorporation of foreign students, lack of knowledge of the Spanish language and the curricular gap. (...) This simply updates the language of the LOMCE in the Murcia regulations' (MUT2). The move from compensation to interculturality is not so evident in the regulation of this region, though.

Cultural diversity, a sociological phenomenon oriented towards interculturality

This section analyses the conceptualisation of the category 'cultural diversity' as it appears in the discourses of the representatives of the four education administrations we interviewed, as the scope of our study, with the final focus on interculturality. As other studies show (Andrés y Giró, 2020; Contini et al., 2016; García-Cano et al., 2018; Garreta, 2001, 2006; Garreta et al., 2020), when foreign students arrived in Spain, 'The concept of diversity (... and other related topics) had already been addressed within the framework of the European Union' (MP1). For the education system this means identifying

Specific needs for education support, either due to late incorporation into the education system, especially of immigrant students, or (although they are not incompatible) (...) due to lack of knowledge of the language; and then (...) students who are disadvantaged from a socio-education perspective. This is not so much because they belong to a certain (...) ethnic minority, but because this is associated with unfavourable (...) socio-economic conditions (...) And then it would be in the most generic sense (...) in the sense of attention to diversity as intercultural education (MUT2).

This verbatim accounts for a conceptual relationship that runs through all the discourses of the four education administrations analysed in this research. It is the identification of cultural diversity, as a sociological phenomenon inherent to the current globalised world, with the goal of interculturality as the ideal model of society in the more plural, increasingly multicultural Spanish society (Andrés y Giró, 2020; Diallo y Maizonniaux, 2016; Garreta, 2001; Olmos y Contini 2016). It also implies the materialisation of the democratic principle of equal opportunities: 'there will come a day when we do not have to speak about addressing diversity, and inclusion (...) addressing diversity is an instrumental value to ensure that everybody has the same opportunities' (AT1).

Education administrations' conceptual approach to diversity has passed through different stages. Firstly, at the end of the 1990s, focusing on compensatory education to address social inequalities. Since the promulgation of the first democratic education organic law in Spain (LOGSE, 1990), 'intense work has been carried out to reduce the differences that may exist in terms of integration, inclusion, diversity and normalisation' (MP1). The integrational approach (see also Rijkschroeff et al., 2005) came to replace that of compensation. Then (LOE, 2006), 'at the normative level we began to talk about inclusion, but (...), at the level of pedagogical culture we continue to talk about integration' (MUT2). This is an approach which maintains traces of the assimilationist model of management of cultural diversity (Garreta, 2001). So, interculturality is the final aim of the increasingly multicultural Spain.

The sociological issue of cultural diversity has led the Spanish education authorities to promote values such as 'tolerance, respect, coexistence, respect for the other, for those who are different' (CEP1), although 'some ideas of a xenophobic nature, of a racist nature, always arise within multicultural communities' (ibid.). Thus, families want their children 'to be with their peers and their peers are those who share the same religion' (ibid.) (see also Denessen et al., 2005). We observe a commitment of the education discourses and policies we have analysed for a model to overcome assimilationism and segregation regarding cultural diversity, since 'Not a cultural primacy, but we all must, and can, enrich each other. Perhaps the situation in which one feels more segregated is when one has the feeling of having no place, and his/her distinctive traits do not seem to have any value' (MT1).

Data show an agreement to promote interculturality as an ideal model of society regarding attention to diversity: 'the concept of interculturality, which is what we should strive for, and where we should be' (CEP1). The aim is to promote both 'attention to diversity and interculturality simultaneously' (AT1). Ultimately this is 'a commitment to inclusion. However, inclusion requires active inclusion, work within the classroom, the involvement of all classmates, everyone. (...) inclusion in all schools, in the open classroom' (ibid).

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We finish the article by discussing our findings to set the main conclusions that outline the evolution and current image of education discourses and policies on cultural diversity in primary education in Spain, within an international scenario, as it has been the objective of research addressed in this article.

First, the arrival of students of foreign origin to primary school in Spain in the 1990s triggered the development of several education policies aimed at addressing the sociocultural diversity of students at school (García-Cano et al., 2018; see also Garreta, 2001; Sánchez, 2018), despite the coexistence in Spain between the Caucasian and Roma populations since the 15th century (Martín, 2018). Although regional regulations have progressed in line with the evolution of these students (see Figure 2), temporal variability has been observed between the regions (see also Garreta, 2014).

Second, data show two models of cultural diversity, that emerges as a socially, culturally, historically and geopolitically constructed phenomenon depending on the location 'on both sides of the Strait'. Both models refer to increasingly multicultural societies. However, in one model, cultural diversity is 'endogenous', i.e. inherent to the (ethnic) identity of the region, and thus based on key cultural issues such as religion and language, as well as the border position of the city, which also implies a floating population, as is the case in Ceuta and Melilla. This model has been referred to as the social construction of 'diversicracy' (CET1): 'Here we understand cultural diversity as what it really is (...) And the concept of interculturality, which is where we must tend and reach and where we must be' (CEP1). Data analysed here related 'diversicracy' to interculturality. So interculturality is identified as an ideal socio-political regime based on the cultural diversity intrinsic to a multicultural society. In the other model, cultural diversity is 'exogenous', resulting from immigration, as found in the four regions since the 1990s.

The development of education policy in each region varies according to these two models of cultural diversity. There is no education policy for endogenous cultural diversity since in the two autonomous cities involved the phenomenon is not identified as such, but taken for granted, while exogenous diversity is identified as 'real' cultural diversity, coming from immigration, so it has raised consciousness about this 'problematic categorisation' (García-Cano et al., 2018) and, in turn, the need to promote policies on cultural diversity since the 1990s, when they were assimilationist and compensatory, as this article has shown. Previous research criticises the identification between immigration and cultural diversity, and the education policies resulting from it (Andrés y Giró, 2020; García-Cano et al., 2018; see also Garreta, 2006; Garreta et al., 2020).

The identification of these two models of cultural diversity has been an unexpected result of this state project, the result of the comparative analysis between the four regions located in Spain 'on both sides of the Strait', connecting countries, continents, cultures, a sea and an ocean. However, previous studies on cultural diversity at the international level have not analysed this phenomenon from the point of view of differentiating between endogenous and exogenous. Cultural diversity have been considered an endogenous variable only to measure how immigration affects the economic activity of the Spanish provinces (Alguacil y Alamá-Sabater, 2021). Endogenous diversity has also been analysed as a part of the Comprehensive Plans for Immigration in Andalusia, with no discussed of the term (Castaño et al., 2017). Some other analyses refer to it in the frame of development and sustainability. No references have been found referring to exogenous diversity. In any case, an in-depth analysis of both models is beyond the scope of the research objective addressed in this article. Third, educational policies on cultural diversity in the regions studied show a model of attention to diversity that focuses especially on pupils of foreign origin who are at a socio-educational disadvantage, so that they are at greater risk of school failure. So, measures tend to be compensatory, especially in the school's vehicular language.

Finally, the discourses analysed here illustrate a generalised identification between cultural diversity and interculturality (see also [Andrés y Giró, 2020](#); [Contini et al., 2016](#); [García-Cano et al., 2018](#); [Garreta et al., 2020](#)), as an ideal model of democratic and plural (multicultural) society, based on citizenship rights ([Faist, 2009](#)), especially in regions where cultural diversity is endogenous, as Ceuta and Melilla.

Currently, education policy on cultural diversity continues to be more assimilationist and compensatory than intercultural (see also [Andrés y Giró, 2020](#) in Spain; [Contini et al., 2016](#); [Garreta, 2001, 2006](#); [Fylkesnes, 2019](#)). Compensatory policies blur the recognition of diversity in classrooms ([Diallo y Maizonnaux, 2016](#)) and reinforce school segregation ([Andrés y Giró, 2020](#); [Arroyo y Berzosa, 2018](#); [Bonal, 2012](#); [Essomba, 2012](#); [García-Cano et al., 2018](#)), as religious school choice for parents does (see [Denessen et al., 2005](#)).

So, 'there is [...] inefficient application of intercultural discourse to education policy and, thus, to primary and secondary schools' ([Garreta et al., 2020](#), p. 211), especially in societies where diversity is exogenous, while multicultural societies where diversity is endogenous promote interculturality from the school by education policies in practice, not always identified by their protagonists, as data have proved.

In any case, data analysed in our research have shown that education policies of interculturality need to be re-politicised. This re-politicisation requires to be grounded on a rights-based approach to reinforce democracy in our growing multicultural societies. This approach builds on [Faist's \(2009\)](#) vision of citizens' rights to overcome 'depoliticized management technique' ([Faist, 2009](#), p.172) belonging to neoliberal, individualistic, managerial policies. In contrast, the rights-based model focuses on 'how social inequality can be dealt with' ([Faist, 2009](#), p.171), to promote equality structurally. This is the key core of the approach we claim here, as data show.

Drawing on the implications [Gabel \(2016\)](#) sets out for social policy analysis, we see the rights-based approach in education to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for all children in school, regardless of their ethnic or racial background, to recognise them as full human rights holders. 'Multiculturalism as citizenisation' ([Kymlicka, 2018](#), p.102) sets the frame to move towards interculturality. From a rights-based approach, interculturality should proceed as 'a political "process of interchange and dialogue among actors coming from different cultures"' ([Correa, 2011](#), p. 19). It involves the inclusion of diverse cultures and the redistribution of power' ([Chichizola, 2021](#), p. 2). Multicultural societies where cultural diversity is endogenous offer a starting point for learning to build intercultural education policies, as argued here.

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