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Judgements of Teacher Training students from three European countries on the efforts of social institutions for the integration of immigrants.

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Abstract

This paper presents the first results of an empirical study that aims to determine the judgments of Teacher Training students from Spain, Hungary and England with respect to the efforts that social institutions and organizations are making for the integration of immigrants. We explore both global assessment and the differences by country, age, gender and nationality. To obtain the data, a questionnaire on attitudes toward immigration issues was applied to 958 Teacher Training students from three countries in Europe: 300 questionnaires in Spain, 299 in Hungary and 359 in England. Inferential statistics were applied to check the existence of differences depending on the country, gender, age and nationality. Overall our results show that immigration associations, NGOs and universities are the institutions that have a better image in relation to their efforts for the integration of immigrants, and that the employers, the mass-media and the political parties are the organizations that have a weaker image. However, there are substantial differences between the countries. The variations found in each country could be explained by the confidence that these institutions seem to convey in each society.

Key words: *Immigrants, Cross-Cultural studies, Teacher Training, Perception of social institutions*

Introduction

The main objective of this research is to analyze the judgments of Teacher Training Students from three different European countries about the efforts that social and political institutions are making for the Integration of Immigrants.

It is a well known fact that educational systems are organized around a curriculum that must play a crucial role in the integration of students who come from immigrant families. In fact, different European educational systems offer very different responses. In some countries, there are procedures of immersion in special schools, while in other countries students are fed directly into class groups, without further assistance.

Despite these differences, in all cases the main actors in this process of integration, first by their job in school and later by their influence in the society, are the teachers of

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different educational levels. Moreover, even although there are important differences between education systems that are responsible for initial teacher education in each European country, it can be said that there is now a common and increasing attention to education and inclusive education for all as a process and a guiding idea of the whole educational process. For this reason, we believe it is important to know how future teachers tend to represent the efforts that various institutions are making in order to promote the integration. In this regard, some studies on this subject have shown that teachers, who are more aware of the need to know which are the family and cultural characteristics of minorities, tend to have greater competence and confidence in their teaching resources (Bartholomew 1997, Merino-Mata, 2005).

Results from studies on intercultural education in different European countries have shown that there are consistent differences and similarities between teachers from different European countries, in the sense that younger teachers of different countries had more positive attitudes towards diversity of cultures (Alkan and DeVredee, 1990). In a study on attitudes of Spanish and Portuguese teacher training students, León del Barco et al (2007) found that the contact and friendship, even more obviously, with immigrants, were created as factors associated with the perceived reduction of threat and prejudice. For this reason, we thought it has an additional interest to know which the attitudes of teachers training students are.

In this line, in our work we decided to analyze which are the perceptions that future teachers have on the efforts made by the various political and social institutions to promote the educational and social integration of immigrant people. Furthermore, we believe that it would be relevant to compare these perceptions in three countries with very different traditions and experience regarding the presence of immigrant students in order to know the similarities and differences between these countries.

The three countries of our study about Teacher Training Student's perceptions, England, Hungary and Spain, have different immigration patterns. In England, there is a long tradition of migration from different countries from decades ago, and would be considered as a reference of a multicultural background, at least in the formal educative context (Maguire, et al 2006, Chadderton, 2010)

By contrast, in the educational system in Hungary there is a small number of students from other countries, as also happens in the whole population, and in many cases a transit country rather than residence. Official figures put the percentage of immigrants at 1.5% -2% (Toth, 2007)

In Spain, there is a new and strong increase of immigrants in the last decade. In fact, the presence of immigrant students rose from 2% at late 90s to 13%, nowadays (Maiztegui-Oñate and Santibañez, 2010).

These three countries have a different history and tradition about immigration issues. For this reason, we think that it would be of interest to study the different perceptions of the future teachers of these three countries. We assume that these students must have a special sensibility on this main educative topic.

Our main hypothesis was that the different cultural background and immigration patterns would be associated to different perspectives about the efforts made by social institutions by Teacher Training Students in the three countries. Furthermore, we expected to find differences between future teachers who came from immigrant families and future teachers from native families.

Method

A questionnaire was designed in order to explore the social perception of teacher training students toward different immigrations topics. We asked about “General attitudes about immigration” (26 questions), “Contexts of interaction and friendship between immigrant and non immigrant students” (both sides) (3 questions),” Cultural factors that influence on relationships” (7 questions), “ Efforts of social institutions about integration. (12 questions), ”Rights of legal and non legal residents (18 questions)”, “ Social consequences of immigration (7 questions)”, and “ Integration, Trust and Liking/affection toward the main cultural groups in each countries (10 questions)”.

In this paper we are only going to comment the results on the perception of efforts of social institutions for the integration of immigrants.

Versions of the questionnaire were made in English, Hungarian and Spanish. In order to assure the quality of direct translation, an indirect translation was made from the Spanish version. The three versions were adapted in order to include information related to the different main cultural groups within each country.

Participants

The sample of voluntary participants has a similar size in the three countries: 300 in Spain, 299 in England and 359 in Hungary. All of them were studying in public, non-private universities teacher training grades. There were near 5% of teacher training students who came from immigrant families

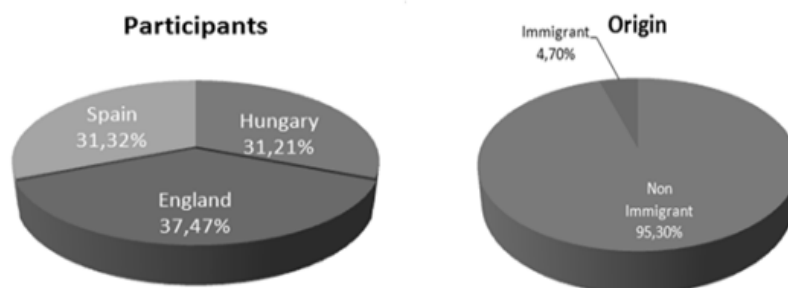


Figure 1. Sample of participants.

Results

In the three countries, teacher training students were asked about the efforts made by thirteen different institutions that covers a wide range of activities: National Parliament (or Assembly), National Government, Political Parties, City Councils, Immigrants (themselves), Immigrants' Associations, NGOs, Employers, Mass media, Church (s), Students (as a collective) and the Educative System (Schools/ Universities).

There were no relevant significant differences by gender and age in student's perceptions on Social Efforts made by Institutions toward immigration (in the three countries). Also there were no differences between immigrant and non immigrant teacher training student's perceptions, except on the efforts of NGOs. The NGOs are less valued by students who came from immigrant families when compared to students from non-immigrant families ($p < 0,05$). The teacher training students who came from immigrant families considered these institutions in a more realistic and less optimistic view than the native students. In all the other twelve institutions evaluated, there were no differences between them.

In Figure 2, it can be observed the three different profiles of student's perceptions with respect the efforts of the different institutions. In this figure a bigger area represents a higher confidence in the effort of the institutions.

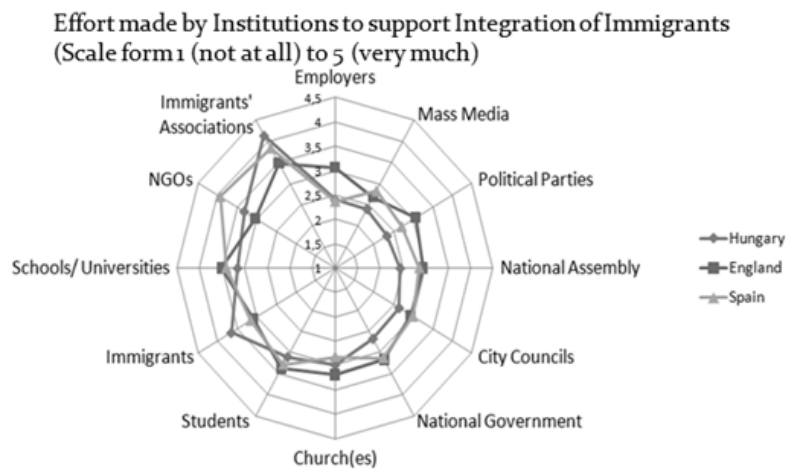


Figure 2. Teacher Training Student's Perceptions on efforts toward integration of immigrants.

In a general view it can be said that Hungarian future teachers are less confident on the efforts made by institutions than the English or the Spanish ones. On the other side, the

English teacher training students perceives, in a general sense, a higher social effort in their own country. The Spanish are in a medium position between them.

For example, in Hungary, students perceive that the greatest effort towards the integration of immigrants is done by the immigrants themselves. In England, this higher effort made by immigrants (and their own associations) is perceived as similar as the effort made by Schools, students and Universities. But in Spain, the students consider that the highest effort is done by the immigrant themselves and the NGOs, and that school institutions are making a lower effort towards integration.

As it can be observed, Figure 3 shows a histogram based on their perception of future teachers about the efforts made by social institutions, in order to show the perceptions that are more and less valued by teachers.

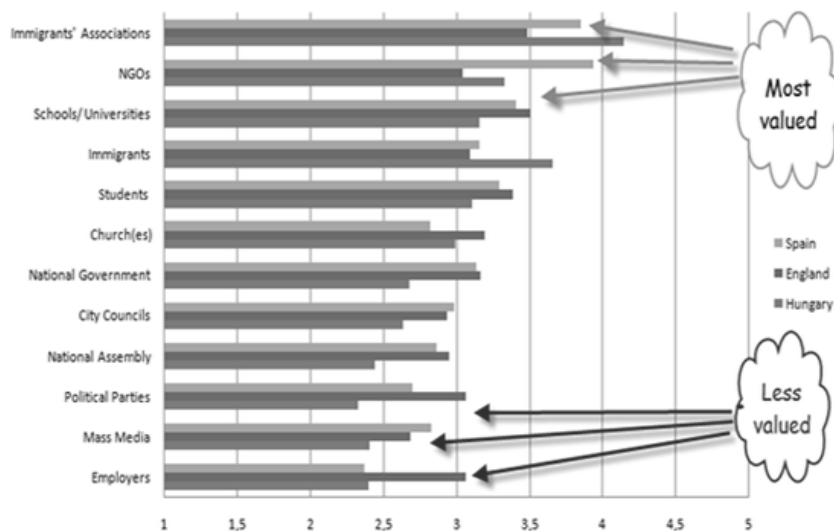


Figure 3 Effort made by Institutions to support Integration of Immigrants (Scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much))

One main difference between these three profiles can be found in the efforts made by Employers and Entrepreneurs. These efforts are seen as very low in the case of Hungary and Spain and as much higher in the case of England. Furthermore, in England, students consider that employers are making a higher effort than City Councils. It is relevant to note the low effort perceived by Political parties, National Assembly and Mass media in Hungary.

In order to analyze the similarities within countries, the thirteen institutions were classified in three categories in relation to the effort perceived by the students: High, Medium or low effort (in each country)

	Hungary	England	Spain
Immigrants' Associations	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Schools/ Universities	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Students	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
NGOs	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Immigrants	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
National Government	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Church(es)	MEDIUM	HIGH	LOW
City Councils	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
National Assembly	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
Employers	LOW	MEDIUM	LOW
Mass Media	LOW	LOW	LOW
Political Parties	LOW	LOW	LOW

Table 1 Ranking of Students Perceptions on Efforts made by Institutions for the Integration of Immigrants (In the three Countries)

As it can be observed, the Immigrants Associations are considered as the social institutions that are making the biggest effort towards integration. The Universities are in a similar level. The same patterns are found in the three countries. Also we found that Political Parties and Mass Media are in the lowest ranking of perceived effort toward integration in the three countries.

Table2 shows the Global ranking of perceived effort in the three countries. This global ranking was based estimating the average rank obtained in the three countries studied.

	Global Ranking
Immigrants' Associations & Schools/ Universities	1st
Students & NGOs	2nd
Immigrants & National Government	3rd
City Councils & National Assembly	4th
Employers	5th
Mass Media & Political Parties	6th
Church(es)	High differences in the countries

Table 2 Ranking of students perception on efforts made by institutions toward integration of immigrants.

As it can be seen, the Immigrants Associations and School and Universities are in the first position of the global ranking. In second position are located the Students and the NGOs. The least valued perceived effort is those from Employers and Mass Media and Political Parties in the three countries. It is relevant to note that the Church (or Churches) is the institution in which we found the higher differences in the three countries.

Conclusions

In our study, there are some relevant issues that is worth to mention. First at all, the ideas and social representations of the future teachers about immigration are, at least, as crucial to the national educative systems as the ones from teachers in service (Davies, 1999). In their views it can be found certain tendencies that must be known and reflected upon not only for promoting educative changes but also for social changes in their countries. The perceptions on the efforts of social institutions toward the integration of immigrants are one of these issues, but many others – i.e., rights of legal and non legal residents, or trust and liking/affection toward the main cultural groups within each country- would be analyzed by our group in next papers. We encourage this line of research from a European dimension.

Some of our results tend to show this relevance. In fact, we did not found relevant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students. The cultural family backgrounds of the students are independent of their perception. The teacher training students are, in this dimension, more linked to their professional role than to their family backgrounds.

In addition, in this study we found that the perceptions of effort made by the social institutions, as seen by Teacher training students, are different in each country. These results are congruent with the different immigration backgrounds of the three countries. But also, there is some convergent views. In the three countries, the Teacher Training Students, see that School/Universities, Students, Immigrant Association and NGOs, are the institutions that are making the highest effort for integration and, in the other side, the Political parties and Mass Media are see as the institutions that are making the lowest effort for immigrant integration in their society.

The main differences between the three countries –from the point of view of student's perceptions about attitudes for immigration- are in the institutions that are making the "medium" effort towards the integration. They are different in the three countries. The efforts of Employers, Church (es), National Governments and City Councils are perceived in a different way in each country by TTS.

For instance, The Religious institutions (or churches) are considered as having a bigger commitment toward the integration in England, a lower commitment in Spain, and a medium commitment in Hungary. The effort made by Employers is seen as medium in England, and as a low effort in Hungary and Spain.

We think that the concordance of results in the future teachers with respect the low effort toward integration of immigrants that is done by political and government institutions

(and national, regional and local/city levels) reflects a similar European dimension that should be studied in other countries. It is possible that this data could be explained by a general tendency of lack of confidence in the traditional and conventional politics –and in the policy of words- and, in the opposite, a big professional and personal commitment of the teacher training students in the social role of all educative institutions. If it were the case, we would have reasons to maintain an optimistic view about the crucial role of schools –and teachers- toward the integration of immigrants.

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