

## **IMMIGRATION AND GEOGRAPHY IN HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS: TRANSFERRING FROM RESEARCHS, WORKING THE EDUCATIONS COMPETENCES..., BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The arrival of an immigrant population of an economic character and especially its important increase in a short space of time has been one of the main demographic dynamics in Spanish society since the beginning of the 21st century. The presence of this new population has had an important impact on labor, social and demographic levels. In just twelve years this population has become a new demographic element that has changed the spanish urban society, also producing an important impact in the rural environment of the country, especially in the Mediterranean coast.

Given the obvious social reality in which immigration has become, it is clear that it must become a central aspect to be taken into account in Secondary Education classrooms both from work with educational competencies, cross-cutting themes or subjects such as Geography and History.

Before this new foreign population, the citizenship has reacted generally through feelings of insecurity, fear and rejection. Fear and distrust lead to the emergence of xenophobic attitudes that make coexistence difficult even affecting the decline in levels of social cohesion in neighborhoods (Putnam, 2007). In this sense, xenophobia has been one of the characteristic reactions that have occurred with the increase of the immigrant population in European societies. Because of this, the education system must play a fundamental role in eradicating this lack of knowledge and distrust regarding the newly arrived population.

From this social reality this paper develops a didactic proposal to work the immigration and its treatment in the classroom of third level of ESO (Secondary Education), considering the different investigations focused on the role of socio-spatial stereotypes in the construction of the social imaginary on immigration and the implementation in the secondary classrooms during the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 courses. The main objective is to establish strategies and didactic activities to work with the students of secondary education the role of immigration in their neighborhoods or nearby environments. Based on this didactic experience, it is proposed how, in addition to playing a large part of the educational competences established in RD 1105/2014, the stereotypes present in the students can be dismantled with respect to the immigrant population.

With this purpose in the first place a review will be made on the main epistemological elements that approach the study of the integration of the immigrant, especially regarding to the importance and social impact, later, it will be analyzed how the work has been based on activities that allow to approach the educational competences and finally reflects about the first results observed after the application of this didactic proposal in the classroom.

## **2. IMMIGRATION AND SOCIO-SPATIAL SUBJECTIVITY**

Traditionally the academic literature has analyzed the impact that the arrival of different ethnic groups presents in the host society and the process of residential segregation. More recently some research has shown the importance of analyzing the role of social perceptions and social imaginary to understand how the process of residential and social integration of the immigrant population or ethnic minorities in a society is developed (Crowder y Krysan, 2016; Iglesias Pascual, 2016; 2017b). Hence the importance of making a theoretical approach to the reactions generated by the arrival of immigrant population and the impact on the social subjectivity of the host society. Only understanding both elements can understand the objectives and purposes of the strategies and didactic activities that are going to arise.

### **2.1. Impact of immigration on the host society**

In the researches that analyzes the reactions of the host society to the arrival or presence of foreign population, two broad lines of interpretation can be established. On the one hand are those investigations that indicate the increase of the foreign population as the cause of the appearance of fear and rejection by the host society. Sin embargo desde otros enfoques teóricos se plantea que el incremento de la población extranjera proporciona una mayor posibilidad de contacto entre la población foránea y la sociedad receptora, improving this social interaction the appearance of more favorable attitudes

towards the foreign population. Thus, national and international studies consider that the greater density of foreigners in a specific territorial area promotes the appearance of xenophobic behaviors and attitudes in the population, both in small localities and in neighborhoods of large urban areas (Kain, 1965, 2004, Herranz de Rafael, 2008, 2012).

This is reaffirmed by studies carried out in different Spanish cities (González Enríquez, 2004, González Enríquez and Álvarez Miranda, 2006). In the Andalusian context, the different studies carried out by the OPAM<sup>1</sup>, Rinken and Pérez Yruela (2007), or Navas Luque, et al. (2004), show the same trend.

Similarly, Cea D'Ancona adds that the intensification of the presence of immigrants increases the feeling of alarm and perceptions of invasion between the host society, generating the appearance of xenophobic attitudes (Cea D'Ancona, 2004: 9). Obviously, the perception of immigration as a threat depends on the number of immigrants and the characteristics that differentiate them from the native population. Both aspects make the immigrant socially visible.

The media along with social networks have an important ascendancy over the adolescent, and influence the creation of a public opinion on the issue of immigration (Van Dijk, 2003) having a great importance in the formation of negative stereotypes about the immigration.

## **2.2. Socio-spatial intersubjectivity: combining perception and social imaginary**

Recently, theoretical approaches have been developed that propose the study of spatial subjectivity as a collective social construction (Iglesias Pascual, 2015, 2016). From the development of a methodological proposal, the discourse's territorialization, it is proposed the study of spatial subjectivity from an intersubjective social dimension. That is to say, a methodological approach is applied that allows to analyze the recreated subjectivity on the urban space, collecting its collective dimension beyond the aggregation of individual data, as is traditionally done from the Geography of Perception.

The greater complexity and extension of the metropolitan space present an increase in the role of the mass media in the formation and dissemination of urban imaginaries and their capacity to construct stereotypes (García Canclini, 1996; Aguilar, 2006). Starting from all these epistemological principles it is proposed to address the study of spatial subjectivity at the metropolitan level through the so-called Subjective Spatial Conceptions<sup>2</sup> (Iglesias Pascual, 2015). This term integrates the wide variety of dimensions that traditionally study spatial subjectivity.

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<sup>1</sup> Observatorio Permanente Andaluz de las Migraciones.

<sup>2</sup> From now (SSC).

The SSC analyze the construction of socio-spatial intersubjectivity from the point of view of the subject. That is to say, the construction of spatial subjectivity is a complex process, where the perceived, the imagined, the symbolic, etc ... intervenes, thus generating a vision composed of individual and intersubjective elements, both of its usual urban environment of the one in which it interacts occasionally. Especially important in the metropolitan area acquire those SSC built on those spaces unknown to the individual, which have been formed from the information transmitted by the media or through different types of social interrelations but without knowing directly the territory on which they are created. These social conceptions would develop what has been determined as induced space (Iglesias Pascual, 2016).

### **2.3. Transfer from research: immigration and subjective space**

All these investigations and reflections show the relationship between xenophobia and the elements forming the SSC in neighborhoods with high density of foreign population. It can be considered that a quantitative fact, as the percentage of foreigners, has important qualitative consequences, reflecting this in a model of coexistence that can be determined by xenophobia. The social imaginaries developed about immigration, normally materialised in social discourse and different types of stereotypes, are transmitted especially from interpersonal contacts, the occasional steps by areas where the immigrant population resides and the media (Iglesias Pascual, 2017a). In turn, these imaginary are very determined by the characteristics of the immigrant population (Iglesias Pascual, 2017b), so acting on these stereotypes turns out to be very important when it comes to reversing them in a general way in society and especially in the future citizens, students of Secondary Education.

All these aspects are fundamental to develop better diagnoses and interventions that help solve one of the main challenges of urban areas of the 21st century, The integration of their different communities by what has been selected as the basis of the didactic proposal that is detailed below. A proposal that seeks to obtain from the work with the educational competencies, to develop among students a critical thinking, interest and respect for ethnocultural diversity, as well as the ability to search, select and interpret the information they receive, fundamental aspects to obtain future active members of our society.

## **3. WORKING THE EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCES**

To analyze the impact that the social imaginary about immigration generates among the students of secondary education it has been considered the 3rd course of Secondary Education the most appropriate for this, both for the contents centered on Geography

established by the educational law (RD 1105/2014) and for the beginning of critical and reflective thinking among students of this age (fourteen years old).

To this end, work strategies and activities have been designed to allow the achievement of the students, the educational competences, development of the bases of the geographic analysis in its quantitative and qualitative dimension. The complexity of the migratory issue and the need to develop a global analysis, facilitates that the different activities allow the students to work the seventh educational competences established in the educational law:

- A) Linguistic communication
- B) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- C) Digital competence
- D) Learning to learn
- E) Social and civic competences
- F) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- G) Consciousness and cultural expressions

The activities have been divided according to the type of quantitative or qualitative research instruments characteristic of the geographic analysis. In turn, the proposed activities have been divided into two main types, activities to prepare the research and to know the demographic characteristics of the students' environment and on the other hand the activities aimed at establishing a direct contact of the students with the immigrant reality of the study area.

Type of activities:

*A.1) Glossary of terms:* Progressive activity during all sessions. The objective is that the students master the main aspects of the specific vocabulary of the technical elements of the census and the terminology used from Geography and Sociology on the immigrant population and its integration.

*A.2) Search of demographic information on the website of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS):* Activity to be carried out at the beginning of the proposal through an initial introductory teacher's advice. The objective is to familiarize the students with the statistical data and especially with the NIS web interface. You will be guided in how to search, select and download the necessary demographic information of the municipality and neighborhood, disaggregating between national and foreign population and major nationalities.

*A.3) Preparation of statistical tables and processing of data:* Activity to be carried out after the activity A.2. The objective is to familiarize the students with the use of the Excel program, the making of tables, basic operations and even the elaboration of indices as percentages of foreigners, perceived alterity's index (Iglesias Pascual, 2017b) and elaboration of population pyramids graph.

*A.4) Graphic design:* After the initial processing of the data, the students will be introduced in the representation of the same through the different types of graphs and diagrams through the Excel program.

*A.5) Analysis of the main administrative divisions at the municipal level:* Progressive activity with A.3 and A.4. The objective is to familiarize the students with the inframunicipal administrative divisions (district, neighborhood, census track) and to work with aggregated and disaggregated data. Of the same type will be made clusters of census sections to study the authentic living spaces of the students.

This first typology of activities, with a particularly quantitative character, aims to know objectively the demographic data. To this end, the ethnocultural origin of the resident population in the study district is analyzed.

Once the first analysis of the objective demographic data was carried out, the following activities (B.1 to B.4) has been made a direct approach that allows the students to know the social reality behind the statistical data.

*B.1) Design of questionnaires:* Initial activity after the first block of activities. The objective is to learn to carry out a questionnaire that allows to capture the motivations and main concerns of the interviewee. Guided on how to write closed, semi-open questions.

*B.2) Field work:* Activity to be carried out in conjunction with B.3. It can be considered the central part of the work. Students individually or in groups, will seek and contact the immigrant population in their immediate context. They will ask for permission to take pictures and to record the interview. It is the moment of maximum social interaction, fundamental basis for the destruction of stereotypes.

*B.3) Elaboration of photographic dossier:* this is the central part of the proposal. The fact of making a photographic dossier seeks to generate in students a capacity for analysis that goes beyond mere passive observation. The dossier will consist of at least three interviews with their corresponding images, which should be discussed with the experience and the impressions of the student.

*B.4) Oral presentation of results and conclusions:* Final activity that should culminate not only with the reflections of the student, but also expand the knowledge of the immigration reality in the near realm through the experiences of the rest of the students.

With these last activities a field work is developed that allows the students, guided by the teacher in their design but autonomously in their execution, to know firsthand the stories of life of the immigrant population residing in their closest environment.

Finally, all the work should be translated into a brief oral presentation, in which the students individually or in groups, show their initial demographic analysis, the characteristics of the field work done and the conclusions reached after developing all the research instruments used.

#### **4. BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES**

Without forgetting the importance of educational content, the didactic proposal is aimed at the deactivation of the stereotypes that are usually built by the host society regarding immigration. The importance of ending the stereotype, as a means to improve the integration of the foreigner and coexistence in the neighborhoods is reflected in the strategy developed by the Barcelona City Council to form the so-called anti-corruption agents (Cea D'Ancona and Valles, 2011: 239) and that has extended to other municipalities or regional administrations like the Junta de Andalucía<sup>3</sup>. To this end, certain neighborhood neighbors are formed so that in their daily social interactions, they reject the xenophobic or openly racist comments that are sometimes given in their neighborhoods.

For this reason, the didactic proposal, both in its data collection part and the central part of the field work, is oriented to question the stereotypes that are socially generalized and are therefore shown in the students: over-perception of the presence of immigrants, come to take away work, excessive use of public services, lack of interest in adapting to the social conventions of the host society, etc.

In this sense, the first block of activities, from A.1 to A.5, aims to bring students closer to the reality of demographic data, disarming the stereotype of the over-perception of the number of immigrants in their neighborhood the municipality. This first block of activities allows students to contrast the sociodemographic reality of their municipality or neighborhood, with the social distortion that is built through the stereotype. Hence the importance of both the information search activities on the NIS website and how to carry out activities with that data, and visualize them using graphs and diagrams.

From another point of view, activities B.1 to B.4 are aimed at overcoming the stereotypes that are built on the immigrant in terms of his attitude in the host society regarding the alleged lack of interest in integration, high usage which make public services or how they stay with the jobs of nationals.

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<sup>3</sup> See nationally <http://antirumores.com/> , and in Andalucía <http://redantirumores.org/> , <http://stoprumores.com/>

All these stereotypes are reflected daily in subtle expressions of social rejection, such as the reluctance of the members of the host society in the occasional contacts with the foreigner (Huijts, Kraaykamp and Scheepers, 2014, Sørholt And Lynnebakke, 2015).

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The proposal developed here synthesizes the main theoretical contributions to which the author has acceded through the review of the academic literature and the development of the own investigation, regarding the process of social integration and residential segregation that the immigrant experiences when arriving at host societies. At the same time, it has been deepened in the dimension of the socio-spatial subjectivity that some authors begin to consider important to explain the permanence of the processes of residential and social segregation of the immigrant, not only first generation, but also in the members of the second generation (Van der Bracht, Coenen and Van de Putte, 2015).

However, the limitations of the proposal presented here should be highlighted, since it is evident that there is a need to carry out a more complete verification of the validity of the present didactic proposal, analyzing different social contexts, statistically collecting the results of the implementation of the proposal. That is, to check the previous attitudes and to contrast with the existing attitudes after the development of the activities in the classroom. Aspects all of them that are considered to address in the future in different neighborhoods of Andalusia.

Finally, from the point of view of Didactics of Geography, It should be noted that the possibility of working all the key competences in the same block of contents, makes the proposal an important aspect when working in the classroom. Likewise, it is especially enriching for students to develop and apply varied tools of geographic analysis and put into practice their geographical learning, fundamental aspect if it is tried to be successful in the teaching of a subject that traditionally the student perceives as especially so abstract and memoristic.