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TERRITORIAL SPECIFICITIES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Edited by
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Sisyphus — Journal of Education aims to be a place for debate on political, social, economic, cultural, historical, curricular and organizational aspects of education. It pursues an extensive research agenda, embracing the opening of new conceptual positions and criteria according to present tendencies or challenges within the global educational arena.

The journal publishes papers displaying original researches — theoretical studies and empiric analysis — and expressing a wide variety of methods, in order to encourage the submission of both innovative and provocative work based on different orientations, including political ones. Consequently, it does not stand by any particular paradigm; on the contrary, it seeks to promote the possibility of multiple approaches. The editors will look for articles in a wide range of academic disciplines, searching for both clear and significant contributions to the understanding of educational processes. They will accept papers submitted by researchers, scholars, administrative employees, teachers, students, and well-informed observers of the educational field and correlative domains. Additionally, the journal will encourage and accept proposals embodying unconventional elements, such as photographic essays and artistic creations.

Territorial Specificities of Teaching and Learning

Introduction by Roser Boix, Pierre Champollion & António M. Duarte (Editors)

It's our pleasure to present this special issue of *Sisyphus* «Territorial Specificities of Teaching and Learning».

The links between education and territory are multiple and complex. No part of schooling can entirely free itself from the territorial context in which the school action plan is included: formal schooling, academic achievement, vocational orientation, didactics, pedagogy, etc. are all more or less according to the territories, more or less according to the educational systems concerned. Thus, the territory can have an external effect on school education as an impact factor, but can also be and/or intend to have a full educational role. It may also impact on education as a whole, even a systemic impact as it is the case in some rural and mountain areas.

In a previous special number of this same journal, titled «One Planet Residency: Perspectives on Globalisation and Education» (Laura Colucci-Gray & Donald Gray, 2014), we were alerted to the need for education to contribute to build a safe operating space for humanity, considering that humans evolved by developing a risky predatory relationship with their environment, tending to standardization. To re-establish respect for and an adapted relationship with the local territory without losing a global perspective, might be the key to a healthy humanity's development. In this view, the thematic of education and territory is therefore critical.

Particularly, the multigrade school in rural territories has been a target of multiple investigations and analysis on the part of pedagogy and related disciplines, like sociology, anthropology and psychology, which have contributed with scientific relevant knowledge which allowed the improvement of education's quality in those territories. Nevertheless, multigrade classroom's didactics has received little attention of scientific research, despite the fact that diffusion of curricular experiences and good pedagogic practices have allowed to rethink the process of education and learning in this type of classrooms, and therefore to improve their practices.

The eight articles contained in this special issue bring together perspectives from Portugal, Spain, France, Chile and Uruguay that question several dimensions of the relationship that education develops with the territory in which it occurs and to which it contributes as a constructer. Besides, the papers add relevant educational implications in the view of a conceptualization of teaching and learning as dynamics that both can adapt to territorial specificities and can contribute to territorial sustainability and change.

All the authors of these nine papers have been collaborating in this area for some years, in the context of different international and national projects[1].

Three of the articles that appear in this issue («Teaching Strategies and Space Organisation in Multigrade Classrooms»; «The Issue of Autonomy within Multigrade Classrooms»; «Teaching Practices for Passive and Active Learning in Rural and Urban Elementary Teachers») are the result of researches developed in the frame of the «Research and Development Action Plan's», «Fundamental Program of Oriented Research» of the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain. Namely, an international project involving three European countries (Spain, France and Portugal) and two Latin American (Chile and Uruguay), with a three-year duration (2009-2012). This project is titled «The Efficiency and the Quality in the Acquisition of Competencies which Characterize the Rural School: Is It a Transferable Model to Other School Typology?».

In order of appearance, this special issue opens with a paper by Pierre Champollion, «Education and Territory: Conceptual Framework», who speaks about territorial impact. Nevertheless, is it really the territory, all «sides»

1 Examples: I+D+I international project «The efficiency and the quality in the acquisition of competencies which characterize the rural school: is it a transferable model to other school typology?» (2009-2012); Gargallo Foundation project «Rural School's Achievement factor: Contextual Characteristics» (2013-2014); all the researches of the Observatory of Education and Territories (OET/2009—http://observatoire-education-territoires.com). See details and bibliography further.

considered, that has an impact on school, or is it rather its «symbolic» part—the territoriality—which «shapes» the education pathways? If the actions of the different contexts which have an influence on education—spatial, political, institutional contexts for instance—have been analysed for a long time, it is completely different from the action of the territory, which has only really been tackled for the last fifteen years. The study of the relationships between territory and territoriality on the one hand, and education on the other, has become important to understand schooling in a fine, detailed and comprehensive way.

Roser Boix, Pierre Champollion and António M. Duarte's «Teaching and Learning in Rural Contexts» present us a literature review on rural and mountain education, focusing on the importance of the rural territory to the specificity of learning and teaching in rural schools globally. Focusing on the rural education particularities, the authors illuminate its present conditions besides its limitations and potential advantages for the processes of teaching and learning in elementary education.

The article of Roser Boix and Laura Domingo, «Rural School in Spain: Between Compensatory Education and Inclusive Education», places the rural Spanish school between a perspective of compensatory education, fruit of the history of the education in that country, and a propaedeutics vision of inclusive education. It is argued that to advance towards a pedagogic option based on an active participative methodology implies, among other aspects, advancing in the perspective of an inclusive education and leaving that of a compensatory education, which does not correspond with the real needs of the multigrade classroom. Nevertheless, this is not seen as possible without the support of a suitable and especially stable legislation. The authors point out that, in present-day Spain, it is very difficult to be able to seat the bases in order that the rural school could be considered and rethought from an inclusive perspective, given that in thirty-five years of democracy seven educational organic laws have been legislated. The article argues then that legislative stability is necessary in order that the rural school could advance in the improvement of its educational quality.

Pilar Abós and Antonio Bustos show us, in «Teaching Strategies and Space Organisation in Multigrade Classrooms», the results of two of the dimensions studied in the multigrade classroom: the didactic strategies and the organization of space. Departing from a pedagogic exposition based on active participative methodology, the study centres on the analysis of multigrade

classroom's didactic strategies that allow a significant attention to diversity. The focal point is also on the given possibilities, concerning the management of classrooms' and educational centres' spaces, that give a response adapted to those strategies. The study focuses on multigrade classrooms and educational centres that present active-participative methodologies, having involved a qualitative analysis on the basis of interviews to teachers.

Catherine Rothenburger presents, in «Towards a Territorialised Professional Identity: The Case of Teaching Staff in Rural Schools in France, Spain, Chile and Uruguay», the posting of teachers to small rural schools consisting of one or two classes. How do today's French, Spanish, Chilean and Uruguayan primary-school teachers experience their encounter with rural schools? Whether this area of practice occurs at the beginning of their professional careers or later, it disrupts their representations of their own profession and their professional practices in several ways. What processes of identity-formation do these disruptions set off for teachers in rural areas of these four countries? What convergences, and what divergences, can be brought to light in the way in which teachers in French, Spanish, Chilean and Uruguayan rural areas construct their professional identity?

Roser Boix and Limber Santos, in «The Issue of Autonomy within Multigrade Classrooms», interrogate the degree of pupils' learning autonomy in Uruguayan's multigrade classrooms. Following from the notion that the rural pupil is more autonomous than the urban pupil, the study suggests a diverse typology of autonomy of learning (false autonomy; apparent autonomy; autonomous learning control), disputing a concept of learning autonomy considered as erroneous, that is presented as anchored in the concept of individual work. The article so concludes that being a pupil of a rural multigrade classroom does not necessarily imply the acquirement of a higher level of autonomy than the one of a pupil of a graduated classroom.

Cécile dos Santos, Thierry May-Carle and Pierre Champollion, in «Rural Vs. Urban Crossed Approaches: School and Territory Representations of Pupils at the End of Primary Education. Case Study of Drôme France», approach learning, school trajectories and social representations of rural and urban pupils at the end of primary school, which have often been analysed, but seldom comparatively. After characterising the rural schooling in 2000 and 2012, the researchers of the French Observatory of Education and Territories have tried, in 2014 and 2015, to probe the urban schooling in three primary schools of the department of Drôme. They present their first comparative

«exploratory«results—as beginning of full scientific analyses—in this article which stress to a pedagogic experimentation of a «didactic of territory».

Finally, António M. Duarte, Belmiro Cabrito, Ana Figueira and José Monge let us know, in «Teaching Practices for Passive and Active Learning in Rural and Urban Elementary Teachers», about the teaching practices of different samples of urban and rural teachers, related with passive and active learning. The authors reflect on the possible causes for the use of those practices and on the reasons for their differentiation between territories, arguing on how schools from different territorial contexts might learn with each other, in order to improve the success and the quality of students' learning.

The articles here assembled intend to contribute for the knowledge regarding on how teaching and learning articulate with the territory where education takes place. Considering this problem in different educational systems, the papers focus on elementary education and encourage us to consider how education entangles and might constructively relate with its territorial context.

Roser Boix
Pierre Champollion
António M. Duarte

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EDUCATION AND TERRITORY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The links between education and territory are complex. No part of schooling can free itself from the territorial context in which the school action plan develops: formal schooling, academic achievement, vocational orientation, didactics, pedagogy, etc. are all concerned, to a greater or lesser extent according to the territories and to the educational systems. Thus, territory can have an effect from the outside on school education as an impact factor, but it can also have a full educational role. It may also impact on education as a whole, as in some mountain areas. Nevertheless, all things considered, is it really the territory which has an impact on school; or is it rather its «symbolic» part—the territoriality—which «shapes» the education pathways? While the different contexts having influence on education—spatial, political, institutional contexts for instance—have been analysed for a long time, it is completely different regarding territoriality, which has only really been tackled for fifteen years.

KEY WORDS

Context; Rural school; Territorial effect; Territoriality; Territory.

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Education and Territory: A Conceptual Framework[1]

Pierre Champollion

INTRODUCTION

School, particularly, but not only, in rural and mountain areas, has always had a more or less close relationship with the territory in which the school action plan and training are set. This is clear in many well-known school features, such as, for instance, «formal schooling», specific «single-class» schools and «multigrade schools» which developed in rural and mountain areas of many countries, as well as specific schemes created in Catalonia—«rural education areas» (ZER, *Zones d'éducation rurale*), or in France—«mobile liaison and action teams» (EMALA, *Equipes mobiles de liaison et d'animation académiques*). In order to break rural and mountain isolation, similar institutional networks have been mobilized in many countries in all kinds of territories to facilitate the integration of school in its territory; the pedagogical use of the surrounding area—«territory didactics»—in Italy (Pesiri, 1998), in Spain, and in France, to give a sense to the learnings; the pedagogical use of «local» or «intermediate» resources as educational means to facilitate access to academic knowledge by teachers; the «territorial» part of the teachers' professional identity in Chile, Spain, France, and Uruguay, (Rothenburger, 2014); the building of a «pluriactive» training offer in France that is adapted to the seasonality of tourism related-jobs (Champollion, 1987), and so on.

1 Translation: Sarah Vernet.

SHORT HISTORY OF THE THEMATIC «EDUCATION AND TERRITORY»

On a more theoretical level, the issue of «school and territory», based on the links between school and territories that come from professional practices, was in fact only built within the Educational Sciences (*Sciences de l'éducation*, SDE) in the early eighties. Before that, it had developed[2] in a very progressive way, relying on studies on educational «contexts» slightly earlier (in the sixties), in the broader field of human and social sciences (SHS, *Sciences humaines et sociales*), more particularly in the sociology of education. At the level of schools in rural and mountain areas, several de facto convergent initiatives have clearly contributed to this territorial contextualization of school. As far as France, our example here, is concerned, there was a certain number of studies done by scientists of the «Assessment and Prospective Direction» (*Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective*, DEP[3]) «ordered» by the French Ministry of National Education (*Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale*, MEN) especially on the efficiency of rural schools, as well as the research that was conducted within the Institute for Educational Research (*Institut de Recherche en Éducation*, IREDU) of the University of Burgundy on rural schools and classes, and a specific work linked to the alpine mountain area which was carried out at the time of the publication of a special issue called *Journal of alpine research* (*Revue de Géographie Alpine*, RGA) that was dedicated to «kids living in a mountain area…their future?» (Gumuchian & Mériaudeau, 1981).

It is only during the second half of the 20th century that the fundamental notion of «context» will be specified within Educational Sciences (Champollion, 2013). No other notion is at the same time as essential to the reasoning of human and social sciences and paradoxically as neglected as the notion of context (Lahire, 2012). Its first dimension—the spatial one—was updated thanks to the work of geographers and was used from the fifties and sixties as a first «framework» for a certain number of contextualized educational analyses (Gumuchian & Mériaudeau, 1981). Then, the sociological dimension of educational contexts and their impact on academic achievement and vocational orientation were highlighted by Bourdieu and Passeron's internationally recognized work on «reproduction», in the sixties and seventies for

2 The university discipline called «Sciences de l'éducation» was officially created in France in 1967.

3 Which has now become «Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance» (DEPP).

instance (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1970). As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the sixties, after the publication of studies on school curricula, the magazine *Population* alerts people to the «big» differences according to the families' socio professional status. For instance, it shows that in France a senior manager's child is 80 times more likely to go to university than a farmer's child. Sociologists quickly turned their attention to primary school to find the origin of these differences. At this time, at the very beginning of schooling, nearly one third of worker's children (exactly 30.6%) repeated the first year of elementary school (year 2/ first grade), as opposed to only 6.5% of senior managers' children. Globally, social issues have quickly become the most important contextual factor with an impact on academic success as a whole (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1970). At last, in the eighties, the political aspect of educational contexts started being studied, namely territorialized education policy and spatial planning policy regarding education (Charlot, 1994; Derouet, 1992; Van Zanten, 2001, etc.). These first analyses concerning territorialized education policy were quickly connected to the study of the institutional educational dimension, which, as far as the context is concerned, relies mainly on the study of «teacher effects», «class effects», «school effects» and, possibly «education district effects» (Duru-Bellat & Mingat 1988, Bressoux, 1994, etc.), whose impacts on academic achievements were successively identified and measured. It is approximately at the same time that researchers of the assessment and prospective direction of the French Ministry of Education (Davaillon & Oeuvrard, 1998) highlighted, to everyone's surprise, the children's good level of academic success in schools located in rural and mountain areas and who were attending single-class schools and multigrade schools («education forms» that are developed, as we have seen, in such areas, in order to cope with the decline in population due to rural exodus).

Of course, in spite of the previous brief chronology, nothing is that simple or linear. The succession of the different emphases on school contextualisation, which often overlap, at least partially, was not that linear. And today, while the different (spatial, social, political, institutional, territorial) school contexts are still rightly explored since they are still poorly known, especially territorial contexts, territory is progressively being seen in a different way by the SDE, with the successive creation of Education related to environment (*Education relative à l'environnement*, ERE), then Education for sustainable development (*Education au développement durable*, EDD), in which, through «territory projects», territory has an impact on school and

graduate curricula, being again part of the educational process as it had been in the seventies concerning the training programme (especially agriculture) (Barthes & Champollion, 2012).

ABOUT CONCEPTS OF «TERRITORY» AND «TERRITORIALITY»

It was only after the nineties that the territorial aspect concerning school contexts, which has many interrelated dimensions, was only noticed concerning its one-off, then systemic impacts, on education (Pesiri, 1998; Feu & Soler, 2002; Boix, 1999; Arrighi, 2004; Grelet, 2004; Caro, 2006; Champollion, 2005, 2008, 2011a; Broccolichi, Ben Ayed, Mathey-Pierre, & Trancart, 2007; Mezeix & Grange, 2008). In this last case, the Rural School Observatory (Observatoire de l'école rurale, OER)[4] and its Andalusian, Aragonese, Catalan and Portuguese partners developed some analyses founded on the impact of territoriality on education, a notion which was highlighted by Le Berre (1992) and later refined by Gumuchian (2001), B. Debarbieux (2008) and Vanier (2009), for instance. Territoriality, which seems to have a more important effect than territory on school (in a broad sense) in rural and mountain areas, mainly refers to a «symbolic» territory dimension (Bozonnet, 1992; Caillouette, 2007; Debarbieux, 2008; Champollion, 2011a, 2013) which had been introduced at the end of the nineties by the sociologist Bernard Lahire[5] (in the framework of the «research group on socialization»—«*groupe de recherche sur la socialisation*», GRS) when referring to «ideal» territories and «prescribed» territories or territories that had been «experienced». Territory, from this perspective, amounts to an «activated territoriality» (Vanier, 2009). To «illustrate» this last concept concerning territoriality, we can relate it to painting and literature in the following two examples: mountain territoriality, for instance, could correspond to Holder's paintings (Jungfrau, Thun lake, etc.) or Segantini's (mountain life) and Ramuz's novels (The great fear in the mountain, *La grande peur dans la montagne*), whereas Provençal territoriality could be linked to Cezanne's paintings (Sainte-Victoire, etc.) and to Giono's work (Regain, etc.).

4 It became «Observatoire éducation et territoires (OET)» in 2009 because of the expansion of its field research to all kinds of territories: http://observatoire-education-territoires.com

5 Area of work number 4 «Territories, policies, identities» GRS (Lyon 2 University).

All this conceptual stimulus, which will be even clearer when questioning the two multi-referenced territories[6] and territoriality concepts developed at the beginning of the second article of this special edition of *Sisyphus*, feeds the very complex notion of territory used by the educational sciences and more generally by the human and social sciences, whose main constitutive dimensions are briefly remembered below:

- The «spatial» dimension, which for a long time constituted the only framework (a physical one first) of the emerging notion of territory.
- The «sociological» dimension, which obviously has an impact on schooling and career guidance, is part of the «social game» of the territorial actors of the territory it characterizes.
- The «political» and «institutional» dimension, linked above all to territorialized education policies and also to different teacher-effects, class-effects and school effects.
- The «economic» dimension, integrating the constitutive elements of the local area (Frémont, 1976), includes incentives and funding coming from national states and from the local authorities concerned, as well as from European structural funds aiming to reduce regional imbalances[7]. Thus, it also includes making training programs, building schools[8] and vocational training[9].
- The «symbolic» or «ideal» dimension relies mainly on the social representations of the territory, thus leaving the representation «area» to correspond to an «internalizing» process (Merton, 1949) which is part of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1988); that is to say, to a really territorial *habitus*, which refers to the notion of territoriality, as we have seen before.

6 More than 200 different definitions of the term «territory» were identified by the geographer Horatio Bozzano in 2008, in the context of the «Coordination action of the «Réseau européen d'intelligence territoriale» (CAENTI).

7 The European zoning of deprived areas called «5b», for instance.

8 Exclusive competence of local supervision authorities for middle and high schools.

9 Shared competence.

IMPACT OF TERRITORY AND TERRITORIALITY ON EDUCATION

The question of the potential impact of territory and, even more, of territoriality on school, generally remains an issue that is seldom handled in Educational sciences (SDE) (Rhein, 2003; Ben Ayed, 2009). As a matter of fact, as regards educational contextualization, educational scientists study more particularly the modalities and forms that the territorialisation of education processes takes, the different contextual determiners concerning education, and, more and more (though still under-studied), the impact of the systemic impact on territories and territorialities on school. In this last regard, we should mention that recently (2005, 2008), in «the French mountain area»[10], a specific systemic «territory effect» on school has been identified, thus completing the major contextualized impacts linked to the social and institutional fields (Champollion 2005, 2008, 2011a) that have already been mentioned. The latter plays a positive role[11] on pupils' schooling until the end of middle school but then it has a negative effect[12] on orientation. Territory can thus have an impact on the pupils' school and vocational future by «locking» them up in their «local setting» via a cultural «moulding», but also «freeing» them progressively from it, thanks to the growing «awareness» of how deeply «settled» they are in their territory.

A SPECIFIC FOCUS: RURAL SCHOOL

As far as the SDE (Educational sciences) are concerned, founding research teams, laboratories or organisms such as *Espaces et societés* (ESO, Space and Societies), the *Centre d'études et de recherches sur l'emploi et les qualifications* (CEREQ, Work and Qualification Research Centre), the OER and its Iberian partners (Barcelona, Grenada, Lisbon and Zaragoza Universities), the *Groupe interuniversitaire de l'école rurale catalan* (GIER, The Catalan research group on rural schools), are confronted with the following dilemma: in a rural or mountain area, if the territory, and school itself, does not only highlight inequalities (particularly social

10 Villages and towns with an average altitude of 700 (1985 French law).

11 The rate of academic delay (one year or more), for instance, is significantly less important in the mountain areas than all over France.

12 In the sense that pupils in mountain areas, with similar results, do not completely use all the vocational possibilities that are offered to them, compared to the majority of other pupils.

inequalities), but also has an impact as such on school, then it becomes essential to try to know and understand this impact, to try to reduce school difficulties that it can lead to, to increase the assets that it creates, and to give the essential elements of knowledge and comprehension in order to increase the teaching performance of schools in rural and mountain areas.

Studies concerning schooling in rural and mountain areas were initiated after a temporary statement, particularly from the DEP and IREDU research in the eighties and nineties, carried out by all the founding members of the OER, at the end of the nineties. To this day it remains, beyond all the whys and the re-emergent polemic concerning the question of the pedagogical efficiency of multigrade schools, without any fully documented scientific answers: why do pupils coming from schools in rural and mountain areas, who are among the «best» (Oeuvrard, 1995) in terms of academic achievement, become among the «worst» when they enter middle school (Davaillon & Oeuvrad, 1998) and when it comes to the social hierarchy of career guidance[13]? These initial questions could not find, at that time, real scientific answers for many a reason, some of which are briefly detailed below:

- First of all, the main causes of academic paths had not all been studied in depth: if, as we have seen, the effect of the pupils' social and cultural origin had already been fully highlighted after the first work of sociology of education, and the studies on the impact of public policies on territorialized education had already begun, the same cannot be said for the potential effects of territorial contexts.
- Also, the study of rurality was largely undifferentiated: the division into subareas (specifically of the entire French rural area) had not been carried out, which contributed to submerge the territorial differences in the entire rural area, whose meaning was decreasing at the same time as the rural area, previously mainly agricultural, was diversifying.
- Finally, in the context of a large generic metonymy, rural and mountain schools were still often only assimilated to single-class and multigrade schools, which «were born» in rural and mountain areas in response to challenges, particularly demographic ones, with which they were confronted (DEP and IREDU surveys in the eighties).

13 That is of course an exaggeration: we do not condone the implicit social hierarchy of the pathways that underlie the majority of today's practices concerning career guidance and their representations…

At first the OER analyses (begun over 10 years ago) on the school paths of pupils living in rural and mountain areas—«isolated rural settings», «rural centres», «rural areas under the insignificant influence of urban areas» (Champsaur, 1998), and of the French «mountain area», together with the research conducted by its Iberian partnership in the EDUC 13460 project of the Spanish research program I+D+I[14], confirmed previous results that had been obtained by the DEP and the IREDU regarding primary school. But the OER also completed these results on several points. It proved that, at least in the «isolated rural areas» and «mountain areas», good primary school results did not significantly erode in middle school. It also established that, globally, in any «mainly rural area», the regular use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, for instance, did not seem to have any impact on school results (Alpe & Fauguet, 2008). But most of all it showed that, in the context of a «territory impact» more particularly linked to mountain «territoriality», good primary school results and then good middle school results did not have (as far as career guidance is concerned) the same effects as anywhere else in France. Paradoxically, due to an over-determination of the territorial anchoring, generating a lower potential mobility, and a less important capacity to project into the future, pupils and above all parents in rural mountain areas[15] used the whole of the possible choices concerning career guidance that are available at the end of years 10 and 11 («general and technical high school») less than the other pupils and parents (Champollion, 2005, 2008, 2011a, 2011b)[16].

ABOUT SOME THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

The interest of a territorialized approach of school, as we have noted in this brief introduction, remains mainly in the possibility of making the «educative thing located», visible and comprehensible thanks to a systemic study of the inter-

14 See the research n° EDU 13460 of the Spanish programme: «investigation + development + innovation» (I+D+I) conducted by Barcelona University to which has been participating the OET for three years (2009-2012).

15 More or less according to the kind of mountain: more on the «Ardeche plateau» (highland), less in the High Ubaye Valley (Champollion & Legardez, 2010).

16 The integrality of the OER and OET research results, apart from individual scientific publications of researchers of the Observatory, is at the moment available in the six volumes entitled «Teaching in rural and mountain areas» (L'enseignement en milieu rural et montagnard), coordinated by Yves Alpe, Pierre Champollion & Jean-Louis Poirey, that were published by Les Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté from 2001 to 2004 (with Renée-Claude Fromajoux for the first one and Angela Barthes for the sixth).

actions between people, their territorial living environment, and their social representations. But such a comparative approach also enables us to imagine a potential transfer, such as the aforementioned Iberian project did, after a decontextualisation and recontextualisation, even a generalization, a modelisation of specific studies, in order to make school participate in «territorial intelligence» and in «sustainable territorial development». It is for that purpose that the OER built its first database (1999-2007) and that the OET that succeeded it in 2009 is at the moment building the second one (2012)[17], with the additional purpose of assessing if and which changes occurred concerning leisure activities (pupils), cultural openness (schools and middle schools), representations in rural and mountain areas (pupils and parents), school results (pupils), geographical mobility (pupils and parents), projects and career guidance (pupils and parents), particularly since 1999. It is still for the same purpose that studies were carried out on the links between territoriality and education for sustainable development, essentially conducted in the context of the ANR research «Education for sustainable development: assets and obstacles» developed between 2009 and 2012.

This research approach takes into account the territorial level, the territorial differences, spatial planning, education policy, educational institutional measures and more largely inter-ministerial ones—in brief, the entire school contextualization, the multiplicity of factors, teaching staff, local officials, parents' representatives, educational staff, pupils' parents, institutional networks, even «remote» ones such as trade unions or the edition market sector, for instance. We can thus say that this research program is based, at least partially, on a developmental approach (in a Vygotskian perspective).

Today, rural school is perceived not only as an actor of the territorial development that participates in the long term enhancement of the territory, but also as a «laboratory» where pedagogical and educational innovations take place, innovations that may interest, in a «count down» technology transfer of the previous habits, urban schools located in France[18] but also and above all in Spain, as we have seen.

17 The OET is currently questioning pupils and parents of the same schools (CM2-Year 6 level) and the same middle schools (3ème-Year 10) in Ardèche, «low-alpine» and in the Drôme area that the OER had previously questioned from 1999 to 2004 in order to detect, characterize and measure based on the variables mentioned above, in particular the potential evolutions in the complex relation education-territoriality which would develop during these last ten years.

18 In the Drôme department, in 2011, 75% of the classes are multigrade classes, whose model, coming from schools located in rural and mountain areas, has developed to try to respond to the triple challenge of school demography, the distance from urban centres, and geographic isolation.

Territory is thus built by each one of us, «territorial actors» indeed, in an interactive dynamic that involves mediation of signs, symbols and stories that it conveys. Territory stands for incorporated past (Lahire, 2012). Consequently, research on rural school participates in the comprehension of the interactive processes between a subject and a complex social and territorial environment. The multifactorial effect of territory and, above all, of territoriality on identities, inequalities, on successes, on career guidance and on occupational integration is, as we have seen, recognized. There is a «mark» of the areas and of their representations on everybody's life which we need to become aware of in order to better understand it and to try to limit its possible «negative» effect, if we want to.

But beyond this multifactorial and sometimes systemic impact of the territory on school, a change appears today, at least implicitly, in the education logic within the issues of education and territory. As in agricultural education, where the national curriculum has clearly attested it since 1985, territory in that perspective is going to be more and more of an entire educational «player», instead of being seen only as a context among others with an impact on school. Some Catalan villages are already playing a real educational role (Feu & Soler, 2002). It becomes likely to feed a curriculum based on the local, specific of the development needs of territories where the school is located, at least concerning sustainable development education in France.

This new epistemological position should enable the educational sciences to complete their interpretation grid of the links which developed between education and territory-territoriality usefully, insofar as the analysis of the territorial context in all its dimensions (particularly the symbolic dimension) has largely to be built. It will of course have to be refined in its processes and educational consequences, and, above all, to be broadened to subjects other than education for sustainable development (which is not a subject).

CONCLUSION

In the end, the acknowledgement of territorial dimensions by the educational sciences is enriching itself today more of the highlighted paradigmatic renewal (Feu & Soler, 2002; Piveteau, 2010; Barthes & Champollion, 2012) than it draws a

line under the past, very recent[19] sometimes, that it absolutely doesn't deny. In fact, the two territorial «roles» «played» by territories and territorialities at an educational level, and by the educational sciences, are not at all contradictory: territory as a «player» which was already participating since the seventies in the set-up of initial and continuing occupational training programs, and was progressively starting to play a «prescribing» role thanks to curricular activities, at least concerning education for sustainable development, does not toss out territory as a «context», which punctually—and sometimes globally—has an impact on educational «matter» as a whole.

The two research positions, beyond their inevitable overlaps, do not fundamentally correspond to the same territory dimension: territory seen as a «player» refers to the social and economic territory dimension, whereas territory seen as a «context» refers more to the symbolic territory dimension, and so to the notion of territoriality…

In the current state of research concerning the issue of education and territory, today many questions remain unanswered, while others are progressively emerging from current studies. The question concerning virtual territories has not really been answered yet. Nevertheless, the development of digital networks, and of the identity forms that they convey, really comes up. It is the same concerning the «local» question: what is its level? Finally, is there really, as many international institutions think (World Bank etc.), «territorial knowledge», «local knowledge» produced by territories? Does territory have an impact, as an actor, apart from education for sustainable development, on different school subjects (Barthes & Champollion, 2012)? In what forms? On which terms and conditions and through which actions? To what extent?

A certain number of ongoing studies and theses may not only highlight the questions that have been mentioned above, but also consider the perspective of a comparative approach between different rural schools (Chile, Spain, France, Portugal and Uruguay, in the framework of the international research conducted by Barcelona University, as mentioned above); France and Italy, in the framework of the OET, identify and characterize if necessary regularities between different rural schools, as common features were

19 Let's repeat that the studies conducted by the educational sciences concerning the impact of territories and territorialities on school date from the very end of the 20th century. These studies are still going on, but are also developing more and more at the moment.

identified between different mountain territories, thus creating the «mountain territoriality» (Bozonnet, 1992; Debarbieux, 2008). Beyond this comparative approach between types of rurality in different countries, and by studying the links between education and territories in urban areas, deprived urban areas linked to the implementation of town policy (particularly in France—*Observatoire des quartiers sud de Marseille* – Observatory of the southern district of Marseille), researchers who work on the issue of school and territory try to identify possible consequences of the territory in these last areas too.

The scientific issue of school and territory, which would only gain in clarity and precision if it were called «education, territory and territoriality», has historically analysed the complex relationships between education and territory with the example of school in rural and mountain areas. As we have seen in this article, at the moment it is both in the process of being consolidated and of being enlarged. Thus, it should soon no longer appear as one of the nearly «blind» points of educational sciences, as the second to last international congress in Geneva (*Actualités de la recherche en éducation et formation*, AREF, Research news concerning education and training) had inventoried in 2010 (Champollion, 2010b)…

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TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RURAL CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of a review of the literature on rural and mountain education, this article focuses on the importance of the rural territory to the specificity of learning and teaching in rural schools globally. The analysis revealed that rural education has specificities that differentiate it from urban education and that, besides its limitations, offer potential advantages for the processes of teaching and learning for primary education. Moreover, analysis of rural education revealed that it faces threats to its identity, despite its potential benefits for students and the rest of local communities — a fact that justifies the need to strengthen rural education in those contexts and the possibility that general education may learn from it.

KEY WORDS

Multigrade; Rural education; Rural student; Rural teacher; Territory.

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Teaching and Learning in Rural Contexts[1]

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the explanations for the contextual determinants of education and learning developed since the second half of the 20th century's focus on the impact of social contexts (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1970), of public educational policies (Van Zanten, 2001), of organizational institutions, schools, classrooms and teachers (Bressoux, 1994). Since 1990-2000 these explanations have been supplemented by new ones, which stress the importance of the specific territorial context in which education and learning take place, as can be seen in more detail in the first introductory article of the present issue.

What is 'territory'? In geographical terms 'territory' is a part of the Earth's surface. But the term 'territory' has many meanings and reveals a multifactor complexity, besides the one related to the right to 'earthify', early conceived by the emperor Justinian. Since its origin the concept has been differentiated from the notions of place, space and environment. From a sociological perspective, different types of territory have been postulated (Champollion, 2010, 2013): prescribed or institutional; lived or of action; dreamed or symbolic; and interiorized. The territory is then related to a human activity of more or less exclusive appropriation, physical and

1 Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Roser Boix, roser.boix@ub.edu. Acknowledgments: To the project «La eficacia y la calidad en la adquisición de competencias caracterizan a la escuela rural: ¿es un modelo transferible a otra tipología de escuela?» – of the University of Barcelona.

psychological control, organization and symbolic assimilation of a portion of the terrestrial surface by a given society to satisfy its needs (Brunet, 2005; Di Meo, 2006). The territory is therefore first and foremost a human construction (Moine, 2006) related not just to natural and social realities but also to socio-political representations (Gumuchian, 2001). Territory thus implies a process of *Earth's humanization-territorialisation* (Ferrier, 1998) and can be conceptualized as a system in tension through a social dynamics that connects a reticular space with some actors' game (Ormaux, 2008)[2]. The territory can therefore be defined as constitutive of all human spatiality (Levy & Lussault, 2003), and in any human place we can spot a spatial-affective investment, since it does not exist for a given person without being related to something essential in this person's life.

Territories have several significant functions. They demarcate viable spaces between groups according to their needs, allowing the sharing of domains by creating limits that institute protective laws and so allow the autonomous existence and development of those groups. Territories also relate characterized spaces to their actors' actions, projects, representations, knowledge and beliefs (Vanier, 2009). The notion of territoriality (Le Berre, 1992) therefore has a cognitive dimension, in the sense that territory refers to a *territorialisation of spirits* (Bozonnet, 1992) on the basis of the actors' construction and appropriation of a contextualized socio-spatial symbolic system. Besides, as political identities, territories exercise power of distribution and monitoring over individuals in their social functions. A power which can nevertheless not free itself from a public policy of inter-territoriality (Vanier, 2009) that aims to extend beyond a closed world of sovereign territories into an inter-territorial world which regulates and gives coherence to the whole. Moreover, territories allow people who cannot appropriate the cosmos to at least extend their terrestrial (and interior) space in its direction. Besides, territories involve a 'territorial intelligence' that associates their actors and communities in sharing information, cooperating in comprehending a territory's structure and dynamics, and collectively regulating (in real time) its development (Bozzano, 2008; Girardot, 2004; Ormaux, 2008). Furthermore, different 'territorial intelligences' can be included, as the *Réseau Européen d'Intelligence Territoriale* (ENTI) illustrates. Finally, territories have an important function in the construction of collec-

2 Concepts have also been considered as territory.

tive identity by triggering the interaction of different dimensions: spatial; institutional; lived; symbolical, and social game of actors (Bonnemaison, Cambely, and Quinty-Bourgeois, 1999). The territory can then be viewed as a socio-spatial system constructed, lived and appropriated by its actors; supported by a collective projection towards a common future; anchored on a patrimonial past; deriving as much from a dream as from a social-cultural life and prescriptions, and generator of identity and symbols.

Schools interact with the territories they belong to, resulting in specific spaces and dynamics (Charlot, 1994) that demand an interdisciplinary approach (Alpe & Fauguet, 2008). The interest in a 'rural education' (as well as the one in an 'urban education') might therefore be justified by an approach focused on the influence of the territorial context on teaching and learning. Rural education is defined as the kind of education that happens in a rural territorial context (rural context is defined below) although some studies (e.g. Lippman *et al.*, 1996, as cited in Khattri, Riley, and Kane, 1997) define 'rural' schools as those in a rural community, a small city or a town of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants that is not a suburb of a large city or (in the specific case of the U.S.A.) part of an Indian reservation. One way or the other, rural education constitutes a significant part of the education system and we find that to really understand rural education we must understand the specific nature of the rural context.

RURAL CONTEXT

'Rural context' is a context in a geographical area with certain characteristics—other contexts are urban and sub-urban (Khattri *et al.*, 1997). A rural area has been defined (e.g. USA Census Bureau) as a region with a population of less than 2500 (Khattri *et al.*, 1997). Nevertheless, other aspects of a geographical area also seem relevant to its consideration as rural, urban or sub-urban, including the type of employment available in the region and its degree of isolation from an urbanized area (Khattri *et al.*, 1997).

Compared with urban areas, apart from lower population density (a declining demography can be a feature in more remote places), rural areas have a less diversified economy and offer fewer job opportunities (Crockett, Shanahan, and Jackson-Newsom, 2000); or, even when there are more emplyoment opportunities, they tend to be mainly in the 'low-skill' primary sector—

e.g. farming, mining (Hodgkinson, 1994). Furthermore, there is less specialization, heterogeneity, bureaucratization and environment control through rational planning (Nachtigal, 1982). Many of today's rural locations suffered economic stagnation that has led to poverty and unemployment (Fitchen, 1995). In addition, in some geographical regions such as southern Europe, rural areas have witnessed a withdrawal of public systems and even face potential desertification. For all these reasons, as has been well characterized by Kelly (2009, p. 2), nowadays rural locations can be '(...) places of great loss—of people, natural resources and, often, as a result, any vision of long-term sustainability. In such places, loss as a persistent condition of life is vividly felt.

Besides this general characterization, we should consider that rural contexts are also distinguished by diversity, as rural communities are unique in terms of their values and opportunities (Hardré, Sullivan, and Crowson, 2009). Furthermore, nowadays rural areas reproduce many of the conditions typical of urban contexts—which might imply a change in their culture (e.g. MacTavish & Salomon, 2003). The notion that rural areas are more socially and culturally isolated now seems to derive more from an unfounded social stereotype than from a generalized reality (Alpe & Fauguet, 2008, op. cit). For instance, ICT equipment and its regular use might be better developed in urban peripheries. Some attractive rural areas might also see neo-rural populations settling in them and experience a concomitant urban influence (Champsaur, 1998). Contrary to some established ideas, the rural world can also be a place of innovation (Veillard-Baron, 2008) and we can find many positive aspects in it. Local rural occupational skills such as farming and fishing are typically valued in rural areas (Wondrum, 2004) and family, stability and local roots are rated more highly—in contrast to typical urban appreciation of mobility, acquisition and status (Howley, Harmon, and Leopold, 1996). Rural cultures seem also to offer denser and livelier associative networks and tend to nurture the connection of individuals to the community (Khattri *et al.*, 1997); they are characterized by more solidarity and closer personal relationships, while in urban areas relationships tend to be more impersonal/looser (Nachtigal, 1982). This is consistent with the fact that while in rural areas verbal communication and the recipient of messages are valued, in urban contexts the emphasis is on written memos and message content (Nachtigal, 1982). There is also a significant difference between the sense of time in rural *versus* urban environments—as Nachtigal (1982) states, in rural areas time is measured by the seasons of the year while in urban ones it is measured

by the clock. Rural cultures also tend to value a sense of place (Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and in some rural areas we are seeing the advance of a diffuse, more environmentally friendly, tourism (compared with the mass tourism of the 1960s decade). Moreover, in rural areas informal community decision-making mechanisms are more highly rated (Khattri *et al.*, 1997), along with enterprise and self-sufficiency, while in urban areas the tendency is for corporatization and reliance on experts (Nachtigal, 1982); hard work, stewardship, frugality and traditional values are favoured in rural areas, while urban areas have more liberal values (Nachtigal, 1982).

This 'rural culture', composed of patterns of ideas, feelings and values, is assimilated into the identity of individuals (Hardré *et al.*, 2009) and, as is know from general studies on culture, the latter acts as a kind of 'software' for the mind (Hofstede, 1991), affecting learning and the learning context (Hofstede, 1986).

In this context and culture, the rural school is an active member of the institutional territorial system—an actor who takes part in the symbiosis between different actors and provides with efficiency and with equity to the social group in the one that is integrated. The disappearance of the rural school presupposes the disappearance of the «feeling of inhabitable people» on the part of the population and also the break with the institutional system and therefore with the organizational dimension and identity of the territory and rural culture (Boix, 2014, p. 90).

The rural school «holds» the individuals and, in consequence, «retains» the collectivity. It is an actor who projects the collective, individual and familiar practices marking symbolic limits of social representation and developing, in turn, a social and educational own, typical and inclusive space that must never be a currency of change to mark a border between the territorial dimension and the social one.

The closing of the rural schools supposes a setback in the own territorial development and in the concept of territory. Nevertheless, in recent years, due to lack of economic and financial resources, many countries of the European Union developed policies of closing (small) rural schools, forgetting that, within the institutional territorial system, their disappearance also implies the eradication of an important part of the social life of the territory.

RURAL VERSUS URBAN SCHOOLS

The results from research that compares urban and rural schools are mixed (Hardré *et al.* 2009) and studies often lack adequate control variables (e.g. socioeconomic status; parents' education level) which makes it difficult to be sure if a result can be attributed to the rural context or to a concomitant factor such as poverty (Khattri *et al.*, 1997).

Compared with urban education, rural education is generally seen as more problematic. Schools in the rural context are more likely to be in remote locations, have smaller budgets, fewer technology resources and offer fewer courses, special programmes and extra-curricular activities (Khattri *et al.*, 1997; Schafft & Jackson, 2011; Sipple & Brent, 2008; Williams, 2010). Rural schools also tend to have fewer experienced school psychologists (Clopton & Knesting, 2006).

Nevertheless, research on the effects of the characteristics of rural schools on student outcomes suggests that, after excluding the factor of poverty (which is a risk factor equally for rural and urban students), specific aspects of rural schools seem to act to reduce educational failure (Khattri *et al.*, 1997; Davaillon & Oeuvrard, 1998; Alpe, Champollion, & Poirey, 2001-2010; Caro & Rouault, 2011).

For this reason in France, for example, 50% of schools in urban areas became multigrade, as it happens in most rural areas (a few departments such as Drôme already include 75% of these classes) (Champollion, 2013). This is the first reason which had guided the «Observatory of Education and Territories» (OET) to begin comparing rural and urban schools in the departments of Ardèche, Drôme et Rhône from 2014. Another territorial observatory—«Observatory of the South of Marseille» (OQSM)—also works on the same comparative problematic. It was founded by Jean-Luc Fauguet (University of Aix-Marseille) who is also an original member of the OET staff. Furthermore, one international research project led by the University of Barcelona (Roser Boix) has recently identified the main characteristics which could, under some specific conditions, be transferred from rural schools to urban schools (final report I+D+I 2009-2012).

In sum, an argument emerged that we can all learn something important from rural schools of relevance to school reform in other locations (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995) particularly urban ones, where schools based on the 'industrial model of education' (more prone to be overcrowded, to use no contextu-

alized learning and to present a detachment from local communities) might increase the risk of student failure (Emmett & McGee, 2013; Enriquez, 2013; Pelavin Research Institute, 1996).

LEARNING IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Research that characterizes learning variations between rural and urban students is scarce and mostly addresses learning achievement, therefore almost neglecting the learning process.

LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Studies that compare rural with non-rural students' achievement have produced mixed results.

Some studies report that students in rural areas tend to have poorer school success rates (Lichter, Roscigno, & Condron, 2003) and that dropout rates in remote rural schools can be much higher (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001, as cited in Hardré *et al.*, 2009) and occur earlier (Gándara, Gutiérrez, and O'Hara, 2001). As a matter of fact, there is evidence of the existence of various risk factors for learning achievement in the context of rural schools. Apart from those already mentioned (i.e. remote location; smaller budgets; fewer technology resources; fewer courses, special programmes and extracurricular activities offered; fewer experienced school psychologists) rural schools involve families with lower education levels, more socioeconomic problems (Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2003; Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and lower expectations of student achievement (Harmon & Weeks, 2002). Other achievement risk factors can be related to the students' learning process itself (see Emotions and Motivation in the subsection Learning process in rural schools).

However, a study by Campbell and collaborators (1996, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997) reported contrary findings: that the performance of rural students was as good as or better than that of urban students, with the performance of both groups being lower than that of sub-urban students. An analysis by Reeves and Bylund (2005) found that the performance of rural elementary students might be better. This could be due to there being a smaller proportion of rural students in high poverty schools since, at least in some countries (e.g. U.S.A.), poverty may be more concentrated in city centres (Khattri *et al.*,

1997) and poor rural families may be employed (Summers, 1995, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997). Other studies indicate that the dropout rate is lower for rural students but more definitive (Sherman, 1992, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and that rural high school completion is higher but college aspiration is lower (Snyder *et al.*, 1996, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997). It is also relevant to mention that rural students are less exposed to certain specific risk factors for school failure, such as belonging to ethnic minorities (Sherman, 1992), substance abuse (Tompkins & Deloney, 1994, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and truancy (Lippman *et al.*, 1996, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997).

Other studies on the effects of the characteristics of rural school on student outcomes suggests that, after excluding the factor of poverty (which is a risk factor for rural and urban students), specific aspects of rural schools seem to act to reduce educational failure (Khattri *et al.*, 1997). Some American studies imply that student achievement in poor rural contexts is better than that of students in poor urban areas (NAEP, 1992, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and a study by Gjelten (1982, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997) reports that students from economically stable rural areas perform better in achievement tests. Some aspects of the students' learning process also seem to stay in tune with the notion that rural students are at an advantage (see 'Learning process in rural schools' in the next subsection).

LEARNING PROCESS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Research on the specificities of the learning process in rural schools (i.e. the complex psychological path of learning, involving a myriad of interconnected variables like emotions, academic self-concept, motivation or learning style) is still scarce.

Concerning the emotions involved in learning, some authors believe that because rural students are more confronted with possible contrasting messages from the school and their local communities (e.g. valuing urban workplace skills *versus* local occupational skills; valuing mobility and acquisition and status *versus* family, stability and local roots) they might experience emotional and personal conflict (DeYoung *et al.*, 1995, Faircloth, 2009, as cited in Hardré *et al.*, 2009); this might act as a factor of resistance to school (Corbett, 2007). Compared with urban students, rural students seem to experience greater conflict between educational goals and their family connections, a condition associated with lower educational aspirations and delay of post-sec-

ondary education (Hektner, 1995). Exposure to externally-defined goals and expectations might stimulate promising rural students to out-migrate (Flora *et al.*, 2003) and to not return or to return if they fail because the goals they sought lacked authenticity (Crocket *et al.* 2000).

Regarding academic self-concept, a study with rural students from the third through the seventh grade found that they harboured above-average feelings of academic self-competence (Yang & Fetsch, 2007), leading the authors to conclude that rural lie still has a protective function for the academic self-concept of students.

Regarding motivation to learn, some studies report that in rural contexts students tend to have lower levels of motivation, which constitutes a risk factor for learning achievement (Lichter *et al.*, 2003). As Hardré and collaborators (2009) state, in the rural context, where job opportunities are fewer, students' perceptions of the instrumentality/value of what they are learning in school might be more fragile for subjects perceived as less relevant to rural professions (e.g. algebra). Several studies also suggest that rural students are notable for regarding the support from teachers and the context that they create as the strongest factor in their motivation (Hardré *et al.* 2009; Hardré & Reeve, 2003; Hardré & Sullivan, 2008), a fact probably related to the typical special bond between rural teachers and their students (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995—see section on 'Teaching and context of learning in rural schools').

Finally, we should mention differences in learning style (i.e. individual preferred mode of learning) since at least one study suggests that rural and urban students differ in terms of this variable. Cox and collaborators (1988) administered the *Secondary Learning Styles Inventory* to a large sample of rural and urban high school 9^{th}-12^{th} grade students. They found that rural students tended to score significantly higher in *serious, analytical learner* characteristics (i.e. rational-careful-logical-reflective-associative thinking in new-difficult topics) and in some *active, practical learner* characteristics (i.e. learning through practice-experience). The authors interpret these findings as suggesting that rural students tend to show more interest in and engagement with the educational process than their urban counterparts. We should point out that as rural students are frequently organized in multigrade groups (i.e. students in different grade levels, thus preventing teachers from attending to the whole class at the same time) they are likely to be encouraged to use their initiative and use reciprocal teaching and so become agents in their education and

learning. These findings are partly consistent with the results of another study (Dolly & Katz, 1987) that investigated the impact of different types of instructional activities on rural elementary students' achievement in nutrition learning. These authors found that the less teachers approached teaching in a *traditional way* (i.e. routine lectures; display of information; classroom discussion) the higher the *learning achievement* (i.e. knowledge, attitude and behaviours about nutrition). Nevertheless, this study did not find a significant impact on learning achievement from the use of *non-traditional teaching* (i.e. practical activities; study visits). When compared with urban students, rural students questioned by Cox and collaborators (1988) also scored higher, although not by as much, in some *observation-centred learner* characteristics (i.e. learning by observation), some *concrete, detail, fact-oriented learner* characteristics (i.e. detail analysis) and some *passive learner* characteristics (i.e. listening in class; and orientation to the present).

TEACHING AND CONTEXT OF LEARNING IN RURAL SCHOOLS

The context where rural students' learning occurs exhibits a number of specific characteristics that create both potential negative and potential positive conditions for learning.

Starting with the potential negative conditions, in rural areas with a scattered population, students might have to travel long distances to attend school, a fact that constrains their lives and increases dropout probability (Fox, 1996, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997). As a matter of fact, schools in rural areas are seldom grouped (even when geography allows it) in inter-communitarian structures: in some cases each community has a school for only one cycle; more rarely there is only one multi-cycle school for several communities. One way or the other this imposes student mobility between communities. Rural schools often have small budgets, which affects the resources schools can provide to students (Hedges, Laine, & Greenwald, 1994), they offer students a smaller number of courses, college preparatory courses, special programmes (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995) and extracurricular activities (Lippman *et al.*, 1996, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and have lower technological implementation since they often lack the relevant infrastructure and resources (Howley & Howley, 1995).

As mentioned by Harmon and Weeks (2002), referring specifically to the rural learning context in the third world, lack of school supplies might mechanize teaching and make teachers rely more on rote learning.

Moreover, despite the challenges of teaching in rural settings rural schools tend to benefit from fewer experienced and highly trained teachers (Khattri *et al.*, 1997). This might be considered especially problematic since the small number of students typically attending most rural schools means that teaching in this context tends to require a teacher to give classes in multiple subject areas and to multigrade groups (Colangelo, Assouline, & New, 1999).

These teachers are also more likely to find themselves in cultural conflict with the local community's values and therefore see a rise in truancy (Harmon & Weeks, 2002). Regardless of the specificity of the rural context, many rural schools seem to use a non contextualized/bureaucratized mode of education, not sensitive to the local culture. As Corbett (2007) showed in *Learning to leave: the irony of schooling in a coastal community*, this might contribute to the depopulation of rural areas by instilling values in rural students that are opposed to local ones.

But despite the existence of potentially negative conditions for learning, rural education also offers potentially positive conditions that have been seen as 'shielding students against educational failure' (Khattri *et al.*, 1997).

First of all, rural schools tend to be smaller due to isolation and the lower population density of rural communities (Henke *et al.* 1996, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997) a condition that some studies found beneficial (Howley, 1994) by facilitating teachers' knowledge of their pupils and a closer relationship with them (Harmon & Weeks, 2002). Indeed, teaching in the rural context has been characterized as involving a special teacher-student connection, based on interpersonal relatedness, less typical in large schools (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995; Hardré, 2007). This is a powerful tool in motivating students to learn (Hardré *et al.*, 2009).

It has also been suggested (Harmon & Weeks, 2002) that several education 'best practices' have their origin, due to necessity, in the context of rural schools: cooperative learning; peer tutoring; interdisciplinary studies; multigrade teaching (i.e. teaching groups with students from different grade levels, thereby preventing teachers from attending simultaneously to all students, demands more autonomy from them)[3]. In addition, rural schools have

3 The multigrade classroom is shaped by children of different ages, interests and needs; it is a clear example of diversity inside diversity.

a higher tendency to promote learning beyond the context of the classroom (Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and to use the surrounding community as a curricular resource, due to a greater intimacy with it (Avery, 2013; Stern, 1994, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009). Relevant to this is a study on high performing rural schools (Barley & Beesley, 2007) that found the following ensemble of perceived factors for success (by principals, teachers parents and community members): strong connection between the school and its community; clear goals; high academic expectations; aligned curriculum, instruction and assessment; and use of student data.

As a matter of fact, rural schools tend to have a close link to their communities in the form of a more active interaction with local governance, business and social organizations, families and other rural schools (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995). For example, it is known that rural schools tend to involve the parents more in students' education (Sun *et al.*, 1994, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997). This link with the community is also probably the main reason why rural schools can significantly help to consolidate local cultures (Avery, 2013; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010).

The rural school, in general, receives the support of the community. Kearns, Lewis, McCreanor and Witten (2009), describe the existence of a reciprocal agreement on which the community rests to the school and the activities organized by the school are supported by the community. The inhabitants of the rural territory are in the habit of contributing with time, money and effort in the construction of their community and school; this way, the force that contributes the share capital of the school remains emphasized by the confidence and reciprocity of interests of the community to which it belongs.

CONCLUSION

The process of teaching and learning in a rural environment has a specificity that results from the very nature of the rural territory, which influences schools, teachers, students and families in very particular ways.

Despite the possible and inevitable problems of rural education (largely due to isolation and lack of resources), the overall conclusions of the research indicate that rural schools have features that offer potential advantages in terms of teaching practices. These include cooperative learning, peer coaching, interdisciplinary studies, multigrade teaching, and contextualised teaching.

Advantages for student learning include more independence because of the multigrade classes, and successful outcomes for them in the rural environment.

The main problems faced by rural schools are threats to their survival and identity thanks to the depopulation of rural areas, policy measures to cut spending on schools with few students, and the urbanisation of rural areas. Furthermore, despite geographical specificities, rural students might be particularly exposed to certain risks like failure and dropout, illiteracy and unfinished studies. Nonetheless, rural education does have potential benefits. In fact, rural schools might tend to feature practices in keeping with a more open view of education. For instance, to invest more in the local contextualisation of education (by using locally sourced materials and content related to the local environment), in multi-level classes, in interdisciplinary education and in the development of meaningful relations with the local community. Such practices seem to be linked with some positive results, with particular emphasis on the fact that the success level of rural students may be the same as, or even higher than, that of their urban counterparts, while certain rural areas improve in terms of sustainability and become less isolated and better developed.

Generally speaking, the analysis of rural education suggests that rural schools should be strengthened, paying heed to their importance to the sustainability of the rural world; they should be allowed to consolidate their identity and exploit their beneficial potential in the rural context and the learning process. Furthermore, certain features of rural schools can help with the critical analysis and improvement of education practices in other contexts, particularly the urban one.

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RURAL SCHOOL IN SPAIN: BETWEEN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Education legislation in Spain has been a constant shift between the ruling political parties. Seven school laws have been legislated throughout 35 years of democracy, and that is one of the main issues Spanish education has faced in order to achieve adequate quality levels. And rural schools have not remained unaffected to this continuous swinging; basically, rural schools have been legislated from the perspective of compensatory education, whereas the vision of inclusive education within a framework of a diverse context aimed to effectively reduce barriers to learning and participation has been scarcely approached. In order to achieve that goal, political stability is needed, a major State Pact which is not foreseen at the present time.

KEY WORDS

Compensatory education; Rural school; Inclusive education; Education policy.

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Rural School in Spain: Between Compensatory Education and Inclusive Education

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a complex process that plays a vital role in our society. Education is a basic human right, a right of equality without any exceptions which is essential for the exercise of all other human rights. And school has become the institution that serves the educational role with the aim of fostering freedom and personal autonomy. Regardless of the child's context, personal situation, background or personal story, the school is a space where one goes to learn, a meeting space for individual and collective learning.

To ensure the success of this complex process, and along with that guaranteeing equality of opportunities, successive Spanish Governments have been legislating from the 1970s onwards, having designed and enforced different varied policies and programmes based on the concepts of compensatory education and compensatory pedagogy. And it is under that political framework that the Spanish rural school has been planned, although it is true that the educational purpose of compensatory education has not always taken primacy over the concept of a socio-cultural concern aimed to meet alleged shortcomings in relation to education of inhabitants of rural areas. In spite of all that, the foundations of compensatory education in rural areas did not cease to pursue equality of opportunities in relation to education.

This paper consist of two parts; the first one sets the Spanish rural school within the framework of compensatory education as it is referred to in the

different education laws passed in Spain in recent years, while in the second one the current situation of the rural school—between compensatory education and inclusive education—is addressed.

COMPENSATORY EDUCATION AND THE RURAL SCHOOL IN SPAIN AT THE END OF THE 20th CENTURY

The term 'compensatory education' first appeared in Spain in the late seventies as a result of the guidelines disseminated by the Council of Europe in 1977. However, it was not until the appearance of the Decree 1174/83 of April 27th that compensatory education became officially relevant. It was understood as a kind of preferential attention to some groups of individuals who were in conditions of inequality regarding the priorities the school system offered them. In fact, a system of checks and balances was proposed in order to redress baseline education inequalities by offsetting them through the so-called 'positive discrimination'.

The Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE), 8/195 of July 3rd, was the first law from the democratic era to recognise all Spanish people's right to education and the fact that in no case the exercise of that right might be limited by social, moral, racial, financial, or residencial reasons. The rural school achieved, therefore, recognition within the legal framework.

The Organic Law of General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE) of October 3rd, *1990*, allowed progress in the fight against inequality and discrimination; thus, the whole Title V is devoted to setting up the basic compensatory principles for those inequalities. Other positive discrimination measures that make the principle of equality of opportunities effective were also provided, taking control of the preferences that have to be attended in Infant Education pupils, such as financial, geographical or any other type of disadvantages. The provision of the additional human and material resources necessary to catering the school centres where the student body in the aforementioned situation concurs is also covered.

The Royal Decree 299/1996, of February 28th, on the Reorganisation of the Actions aimed at the Compensation of Inequalities in Education, developing Title V of the LOGSE, establishes the scope, target groups, objectives, principles, and the action and evaluation methods of the Compensatory Education programme; in Chapter III, Section 2, Articles 18, 19 and 20, compensatory

education actions devoted to the hospitalised population are covered. The appropriateness of maintaining compensatory education measures for the student population of rural schools is also included. But, according to Santamaría (2014, p. 7-8), actually the LOGSE «holds a negative image of education in rural areas, which is generally seen as education of a lower quality; and, in order to ensure quality education and equality of opportunities in rural areas, scholarization of basic education pupils in other municipalities was free-of-charge». That resulted in unfavourable consequences regarding the quality of education in rural areas, such as the rapid spread of Group Rural Schools (in Spanish it is called Colegio Rural Agrupado – CRA) in order to ensure, according to Santamaría, that all schools had the qualified specialist teachers the LOGSE refers to (Physical Education, Music, and English Language), which contributed also to a more blurred teacher accountability and to the closing of small schools, since school enrolment decreases due to a lower age-span 9 years, from 3 to 11 less than expected.

As for the Organic Law of Participation, Assessment and Management of Schools (LOPEGCE) 9/1995 of November 20th, it also refers to rural schools in terms of compensatory education—lacking its own identity—since the organisational paradigm supported on it was that of the graded school.

The Regulation of July 22nd, 1999, which regulates compensatory education proceedings in school centres supported with public funds (BOE, July 28th, 1999), aims to govern in accordance with the first final provision of Royal Decree 299/1996, following a report from the State School Board. Rural schools continue to be contemplated under the framework of compensatory education.

SPANISH RURAL SCHOOLS UNDER THE PRISM OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION IN THE EARLY 21st CENTURY

Once fully entered in the 21st century, different laws keep on referring to the concept of compensatory education, and the perspective of inclusion is never planned.

The Organic Law on the Quality in Education (LOCE), 10/2002, of December 23rd deals in its first section with equality of opportunities in order to achieve quality education. In Article 40 we read that, «with the aim of securing the individual right to quality education, public authorities will

develop the necessary measures and provide adequate resources and support so as to balance the effects of situations of social disadvantage that may interfere in the achievement of education and learning objectives planned for each grade of the education system». In this regard, according to Escudero (2003, p. 2), «Compensatory Education has also tried to give an answer to the reality of those students who, either for baseline risk conditions that remained unattended, or perhaps due to other circumstances that may arise afterwards, they end up showing behaviours and achieving results that do not adjust to the common pupil pattern or model demanded, nurtured and valued at school».

However, in Article 41 we find, once again, rural education is referred to as a question of compensatory education: «special procedures shall be established by Education Authorities in those school centres or geographical areas where, due to the pertinent population's socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics, a differentiated educational intervention—which should pay special attention to equality of opportunities in rural areas—is needed. In such cases, the necessary materials and teaching staff resources will be provided, as well as the technical and human support needed to achieve compensation in education.»

As for the Organic Law of Education (LOE), 2/2006 of May 23rd, within its Title II, 'Equity in Education', the whole of its second chapter is dedicated to compensatory measures for inequalities in education. In that chapter, more specifically in Article 80, it is stated that «[...] in order to put into practice the principle of equality in the exercise of education rights, the public Authorities will carry out compensatory measures with disadvantaged people, groups and regions, and provide the necessary economic resources and support». Articles 82 and 83 refer to equality of opportunities of students of the rural world, and the right to subsidies and study grants to ensure the equality of all people in the exercise of their right to education, especially students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, at the end of the first fifteen years of the 21st century, the Spanish education legislation, through Article 6a of the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE) 8/2013 of December 9th presents a series of programmes of territorial cooperation among state and autonomous Administrations in which geographical distribution of economic resources follows criteria based on the singularity of these programmes, which is aimed at fostering equality of opportunities. Depopulation is especially valued, as

are «geographic dispersion of population, insularity, and those special needs inherent to schooling in rural areas».

According to Santamaría (2014), educational planning in rural areas (infant education, primary education, high school, adult school centres...) should particularly address the guidelines stated in the Law on the Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment 45/2007 from December 13rd (BOE 14-12--07), and those of the Royal Decree 752/2010 from June 4th, in which the first Rural Sustainable Development Programme (PDR), for period 2010-2014. (BOE 11-6-10) was passed. Santamaría (2014, p. 16) highlights that:

> In relation to LOE, in the LOMCE, specifically in Article 28, most references to Education (school success, attention to diversity, improvement of population's education...) and Vocational Training are no longer included, which proves to be incoherent with Article 28 itself, and it can have horrible consequences in rural development. Since the framework of PDR of each Autonomous Community is this Royal Decree, in which education provided by education centres is practically left out, Autonomous Administrations may retract—or not reinforce—rural education network.

RURAL SCHOOLS: STILL HALFWAY BETWEEN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

If we pick up on the idea of *schools for all* described in the Salamanca Statement (1994) and developed afterwards by several authors such as Stainback and Stainback (1999) or Booth and Ainscow (2002), inclusive education encompasses different concepts, such as school integration, response to special education needs, compensatory education and attention to diversity. According to Araque and Barrio (2010, p. 7), the perspective of inclusion transcends compensatory education because «that one frequently adopts exclusionary practice, for example, taking some students out of the classroom on the basis of their inherent characteristics, and using basic or elementary focused curricula, thus running the risk of reproducing those inequalities it seeks to balance». Contrary to that, in the case of inclusive education the existing differences among pupils—that is, diversity—are the fundamental resource. The core idea is to propose inclusive educational practices within a diverse context in order to reduce barriers to learning and participation.

In the same vein, Bonal, Rambla, Calderón, and Pros (2005) developed a scale of the educational inclusion strategies deployed by the different autonomous Administrations of Spain including four different grades:

> The first grade of educational inclusion would consist of tools derived from the compensatory education programme, or from the strategies about attention to diversity, which have already been put into practice in the whole State. The second grade would consist of co-ordinating those tools through more general regional frameworks. The third one is devoted to intensification through participation of both the families and other agents of the education community, (for example: connecting intercultural education with parents' schools, experimenting learning communities, or creating education projects in the cities). It is only in the fourth grade that some quantitative differences appear, due to the fact that in the Vask Country intensive compensation concur with its own programme of additional aid for schooling and also with project of co-ordinating the systems of Vocational, Occupational and Continuous training (p. 16).

Spanish school entails a very diverse reality, and according to the work of Bonal et al. (2005) we are now halfway into the deployment of inclusion, since a biggest financial investment and a more effective co-ordination of resources was required. The rural school has been no exception to this problem, despite being historically linked to a discourse that considers that rural schools are inclusive schools *per se*.

It is true that rural schools are education centres where all the pupils in the town are hosted; there is heterogeneity of age in their classroom, a more close relationship with the community, and due to its handy size more effective decision-making may be ensured. However, all of these characteristics are not a guarantee of inclusion by themselves. The current law on Spanish education (Organic Law 8/2013) does not include practices which are indeed inclusive, in spite of what is stated in Article 1:

> b) Equity, which should ensure the equality of opportunities for the full development of human personality through education; educational inclusion; equality of rights and opportunities that help to overcome any type of discrimination, and the universal access to education, and which should act as a key element in levelling personal, cultural, financial and social inequalities, especially those derived from any type of disability.

Spanish rural schools are still between compensatory education and inclusive education; a wider implementation needs to be applied to the latter so that the rural school can be referred to as an inclusive school.

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TEACHING STRATEGIES AND SPACE ORGANISATION IN MULTIGRADE CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the outcomes of one of the phases of an international research project which studied several dimensions of teaching in rural schools —Project EDU2009-13460, Sub-programme EDUC (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation); participant countries: Spain, France, Portugal, Chile and Uruguay. The outcomes of two dimensions researched in the Spanish territory, namely teaching strategies and space organisation, are presented. For that, attention was focused in education centres and classrooms where, according to the results of a previous research, there seemed to be present active and participatory methods. Qualitative research method was used in this phase of the research; teachers from multigrade classrooms were interviewed so as to obtain the information presented in this paper. The outcomes achieved offer information related to the understanding and application of the methodology on the part of the interviewed teachers. Several pedagogic options within the framework of differences in age and grade, as well as the possibilities they took into account about space organisation in the classroom and in the education centres, are presented.

KEY WORDS

Multigrade; Rural school; Teaching strategies; Space organisation.

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Teaching Strategies and Space Organisation in Multigrade Classrooms

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INTRODUCTION

When approaching the issue of education in multigrade rural schools two questions should be answered: «What do we understand by rural schools or by schools located in rural areas?» And: «What do we understand by multigrade classrooms and/or schools?» The answer to the first one, although it is a necessary and basic one in order to provide a framework to the teaching work, is not the subject of this work; but the second one is. In that sense, the most important idea is that multigrading conditions entail certain teaching proposals that should take into account the peculiarities of the students' learning processes. For that, teachers have to overcome those teaching proposals built in terms of grading teaching only, and lay out others in line with teaching various grades simultaneously.

It is necessary to take into account that most Spanish multigrade schools are normally located in rural areas; this does not mean that multigrading is a pedagogic teaching model *chosen*, but an organisational proposal for the student body which occurs in a standardised manner. In that sense, contributions such as those made by Little (2001) about multigrading include that multigrade classrooms may be present in the life of education centres, regardless of being based—or not—in rural areas. In that sense, her contributions

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offer it as a pedagogic option that could be chosen—or not—in other grade settings, or in areas not specifically rural.

Through this last idea, in this work we explore the potential relationship that may exist between the methodologies used in multigrade settings and grade settings. Thus, the content presented in this paper is obtained from the results of applying and developing a research whose aim was to investigate thoroughly how teaching in multigrade classrooms works, and to explore also what occurs in these settings; in case that, pedagogically speaking, it was positive for the students' interests, we aimed to explore if it could be extrapolated to other settings, not specifically multigrade or rural.

This part of the research we are presenting is based on nine interviews conducted with head teachers from multigrade classrooms in Spain. It is based on the analysis and interpretations of two dimensions addressed in order to know how teaching processes are developed and how teaching methods are applied in these student groups, specifically focusing attention on teaching strategies and space organisation. This phase of the work was preceded by two quantitative studies with the aim of defining the sample to teachers who could carry out active teaching methodologies in their classrooms.

EDUCATION POSSIBILITIES IN MULTIGRADE CLASSROOMS

Over the past few years we have witnessed a revalorization of the multigrade grouping model (Arteaga, 2011), in the sense of having underlined that, under certain circumstances, significant learning must be achieved, since the great ally of multigrade classrooms (diversity of interests, needs, abilities, potentialities, issues) becomes a source for curricular development and for designing teaching situations which enable real significant and functional learning (Martínez & Carballo, 2013).

Diversity is, on the one hand, one of the core elements of education in the 21st century, and it's aimed at the student understanding himself/herself in order to understand others and the world he/she lives in; and diversity is, on the other hand, the basis of an inclusive school where all students belong to a group and all learn from each other (Stainback & Stainback, 2007); and, in multigrade classrooms, it is materialised within the framework of social organisation forms similar to those that occur outside the school (Abós, Boix, & Bustos, 2014).

However, as it has already been mentioned, certain conditions are needed; among them, we highlight the following: the use of active teaching-learning strategies in which, through a global and integral approach of the curriculum, the learner becomes the main player, as well as an alternate mix of shared spaces and graded spaces that allow learning by mutual impregnation («contagious learning»), cooperative learning, reciprocal teaching (Hamon & Weeks, 2002), together with the development of autonomy.

Multigrade teaching is a response to that particular organisation of these types of classrooms. Enjoying a great reputation in the Americas, multigrade teaching lays the foundations of the more appropriate teaching models to manage differences of age around a globalised action framework. In the education centres and classrooms where it is carried out, a great deal of the proposals include shared work themes with teaching sequences adapted to the generality of the group, but also to the difficulty levels that the differences in age and course of reference demand. Contributions by authors such as Santos (2006 and 2007) or Little (2001 and 2006), Pridmore (2007), and Mulryan-Kyne (2005 and 2007) along the last decade help to build knowledge about the essence, needs and potentialities of multigrading. In that sense, the use of class diversity for educational purposes, from the multigrade teaching perspective, enables a higher fostering of inter-age collaboration and collaborative work, as well as the educational amortization of environmental wealth from the surroundings, or the enhancement of the main features typical of rural towns (Boix, 2011).

Teaching strategies, methodologies or proposals used in order to adjust the teaching context to the requirements of the current policy frameworks lead to the use of spaces with a clear educational intention. In addition to the spaces found in the school buildings, rural areas also have the towns and landscapes. The richness which on many occasions is found in the variety and in the resources (architectural, historical, cultural, sportive…) represents the opportunity to link such places to the school life, while these are not strictly located within the education centre facilities. (Bustos, 2013). If, in addition to that, active methodologies are set up to explore and exploit these spaces, the richness of skills acquired through learning may be higher than that obtained through traditional methodologies based on reproductive models.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Within the general framework of this project a series of objectives related to the study of teaching practices that make use of active-participative methodologies were specified; for that, teaching strategies, space organisation, time organisation, teaching resources and the students' learning assessment were analysed. In order to contribute to the achievement of these objectives, an ethnographic methodology characterised not only by the use of certain tools and research techniques (observation and interviews), but also by the development of «certain kind of intellectual endeavour, a kind of speculation...» (Geertz, 1987, p. 35) was used. In this way, «ethnographic experience happens to be more significant if accompanied by reflexive work that enables transforming and specifying the idea from which reality is observed and described» (Rockwell, 1987, p. 25). In this case, reality consist of the teaching practices, these being understood as practices spread out in the classroom context and characterised by the teacher-student knowledge relationship (Achilli, 2001).

The fundamental objective of this phase of the research project was to analyse more deeply those teaching practices in which, according to the answered previously provided by the teachers, the presence of active and participative teaching methodologies—aimed to achieve significant learning aided by environmental resources—was observed. Five categories were taken into account in this analysis: teaching strategies, space organisation, time organisation, teaching resources, and learning assessment. In that sense, the questions formulated in the interviews were directly linked to the answers given by teachers in their respective questionnaires. Regarding teaching strategies, questions as the ones presented below were formulated:

- Could you explain how you work on research on the environment? And how do you work in problem-solving?
- We have noticed that you work on research on the environment as well as on centres of interest. Could you explain how you proceed?
- Could you explain how you work on the project's approach? What about centres of interest? And strategies based on simulation and role-playing?
- We observed that you develop innovative teaching strategies in the classroom—project approach, centres of interest, research on the environment... Could you explain how you put them into practice?

Interview	Grades/Courses	Type of school centre	
		Clustered	Non-clustered
1	1st and 3rd Infant Education; 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th Primary Education	×	
2	1st , 2nd and 3rd Primary Education	×	
3	3rd,4th, 5th and 6th Primary Education	×	
4	1st and 2nd Primary Education	×	
5	3rd and 4th Primary Education		×
6	Unitary	×	
7	3rd, 4th and 6th Primary Education	×	
8	1st, 2nd and 3rd Infant Education		×
9	5th and 6th Primary Education	×	

TABLE 1 — MULTIGRADE CLASSROOMS OF INTERVIEWED TEACHERS

Regarding space organisation:

- Do differences in age and curricular competence play a role in the use of space? In what way?
- What criteria do you use to organise space into learning corners and/or thematic areas?
- What criteria do you use to organise space in terms of points of interest?
- We see you use different types of environments in the classroom. We would like to know how you manage learning corners, workshops, and the thematic areas.

The analysis of the content from the interviews was to be used also to select the classrooms where the third phase of participant observation[2] would be carried out. Table 1 shows data from the classrooms of the teachers who were interviewed. Regarding information processing, the analysis of the content from the interviews was made using NVivo software. Information entries were taken from the five initial categories, as well as the one related to subcategories and indicators.

2 This paper includes contributions obtained from the study of nine interviews carried out in Andalusia and Aragon.

OUTCOMES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

The teachers' accounts indicate, in general, a significant variety of teaching strategies, both active and participative, which seem ideal for working in multigrade classrooms. For instance, the possibilities that the project approach offers are acknowledged:

> Whenever possible we try to work in a project from a bit bigger perspective. Now we are working on the theme of cohabitation; all pupils are working on it, from the little to the elder ones. All work on the same topic, but at different levels. This cannot be done every day but at least we try to do one project each term… some little thing… so we can all work in the same stuff.

However, the teachers found some difficulties applying the project approach in the multigrade classroom. To some extent, it is recognised that this method offers some advantages for the students' learning, even though putting it into practice requires a great deal of dedication on the part of the teachers. Additionally, while teachers recognise the feasible pedagogical advantages of this model, they consider they have a difficult time when putting it into practice, sometimes due to multigrading itself.

> Of course it motivates them more. It meets their motivations. So, I think that the project approach is quite good because you can work on it and approaching it from any point, from any theme. Then you can put the focus in Maths, Language, Science… It requires a lot of work.

The appropriateness of putting this model into practice is acknowledged, and textbooks are considered a rather additional or secondary material. Some excerpts regarding projects developed in the classroom points in that direction.

> I think this has been useful… To say: «More projects should be done», because I think that nowadays is about that; ultimately, Education will be working through the project approach, textbooks will be left as supporting material. And I think it is very satisfactory.

On the other hand, we found that the teachers who were interviewed gave different interpretations about some of the basic concepts used in the research project. For instance, regarding the notion of centres of interest, while sometimes it is started from the globalised approach in the application of teaching strategies, it was materialised as follows:

> Well, for example, imagine we are working on... For example, the other day it was sunny, then it rained, then suddenly it was very hot, next you needed to put your jacket on... We were studying English. Well, we brought up the weather theme, even it was programmed for May: «The weather». I brought up this topic. So then we started talking about it: «Look, what is the weather today?» «Well, now it's sunny», and suddenly it was raining. Let's say the centre of interest in this case was the weather. We used the Internet and the digital whiteboard and we watch the weather man, the weather report.

In that sense we can speak of a «theoretical» presence of centres of interest, in what is evidence observed.

> Also, sometimes what happens is that, if you see that the children show interest in a specific topic, you work on it even if it is not planned.
>
> ...we work using centres of interest, perhaps. I am going to work about skating, or I am going to work about...

Something similar happens with the project approach, due to its implications for the pedagogical practice when it is referred more to the education centre than to the classroom. But there exist significant malfunctions, such as the mix-up of project approach and centres of interest:

> ...Project approach or rather centres of interest, because you guide yourself by the project that the publisher has chosen, that is what I called centre of interest, I mean: «What's in the project we are working today?»
>
> And then I have written projects because this book I talked to you about before... this does not appear anywhere—the alphabet book. I also want to work on... or, for instance, the book of the protagonist is not listed in any book. I also want to do, for example, a project, when the mums come to the classroom. They came to make carnival costumes; they made them and the

children decorated them. What I mean is that it is something different, something that is not, as it were, planned by a publisher».

In other occasions, work projects—it was not a proper project approach—were related to the purpose of promoting local culture and traditions. Some of them are developed in connection with other territorial areas, in what one of the teachers considers an interesting fact for the students to connect and learn about what happens inside and outside the town.

> And this year we have been working in a collaborative project with other schools (...) the project consisted in making the towns known—each one their respective towns. (...) So everything in the project was class work, such as drawings, lists about the town or other activities. Another task we did was taking photos of our town, our town food, traditional games...
>
> Now we are... Every year there is a day for cohabitation, it consist in spend a day together—it rotates each year—in one of the towns. This year will be in (...), and so we have started a project called «Know...» and it is developed in the whole CRA.

As regards to specific aspects that «take» the student—virtually—out of the town, we find some references to school work:

> ... we made a project (...) It is quite good, because it has been developed through all the subjects and all the grades. All related to Europe: authors, poets, painters... everything. Every single thing. Maps... all related... Researching everything about Europe. (...) ...we made flags, presentations (each child made one for a particular country).

The approaches related to teaching strategies which were implemented taking into account the setting characteristics are in line with some of the approaches that the teachers described in the interviews. In line with the line of global learning for studying the territory, we can frame what is related to research on the environment in the middle of certain excerpts of the interviews. In the example shown it can be observed how the load of work is distributed among the students in order to obtain information about the town, with the help of their families, of issues included in the curriculum.

> We created a little sheet in which we explained to the parents we wanted the children to collect data, each one about a particular theme; we specified some points we were interested in, and we indicated we needed a draft. So then pupils asked about their themes at home and brought back their work. We said they could ask their neighbours too, or search in the Internet. Well, the thing was to collect data. Then they brought it back to school, we completed the work and then each child did his/her section.

In other excerpts we find some approaches that could fit in the research on the environment making use of global approaches of studying the territory.

> And well, as for research on the environment... since we are only a few people and we live in a rural town, we always have the chance of... the theme of plants, we go outside and look for plants; the theme of the river, we made a project about the river...

> For instance, in third grade we are going to make a promotional brochure, «how would you advertise your own town?» well, searching for monuments, for...

> And they are also researching on the environment, besides this centre of interest they are going to research on the environment because if they are going to make... to take measures, then they are going to... one of them will create a game... based on role-playing, perhaps the type of games we used to play when we were little.

They show a special sensibility towards their surrounding environment, since they see these towns as an opportunity to use different resources and experiences. In that sense, experiential situations are core.

> So, sometimes we work on the project approach, sometimes through problem-solving, sometimes... with the aim of creating situations, and that is what was clear from the beginning. I mean the experiential situations... Let's make use of them. We do many experiential activities...

Regarding some concepts or indicators that were to be analysed in the research project, it is also observed that problem-solving is interpreted more

as a method circumscribed to Maths area than as an active method of cross-curricular work.

> Problem-solving is good also because, «Teacher, what should I do now?» And I say to myself, «See, and think about what is he/she asking for. He/she is speaking about difference». «Ok, what calculation do you have to do?»

> In Maths perhaps I follow more closely the textbook, because the thing is, as I say... Unless there is something I see that I can explain... Then if I am explaining a problem-solving strategy I can do that because it can be applied to all.

On the other hand, when the interviewed teachers refer to the global learning method, it is frequent that none of them identifies this expression with «globalised textbook». The difference lies in the fact that, in the case global learning, the teacher sets up a proposal or a planned didactical approach following elements from the curriculum, while in the case of the globalised textbook—which is more frequent in Infant Education and First Grade of Primary Education—activities from the different learning areas are alternated, regardless of there being a globalised editorial programme or not.

- «When you speak about global learning, I suppose you are referring to the one led by the publishing house, right?»
- «The publishing house».

The teacher interviewed below recognises the need of using a global approach in the teaching proposal of multigrade classrooms. In some way, he/she interprets that the activities included in textbooks do not address a global subject which could be addressed from more highly global approaches. He/she comments on the appropriateness of performing schoolwork with thematically interrelated activities. Regardless of this, in his/her answers the implementation of an alternative to reality is not observed:

> ...in the textbook I'm missing... Let's say it goes off at a tangent... We are working on the human body. Well, make that Maths be connected to. If you are calculating, it should be with things related to the topic, and from time to time they go... they go in other direction. I guess it shouldn't be that dif-

ficult, when they are making the book, to «hyper-connect» everything, since they are basic themes. So I don't like it because it takes work to relate it to the work we are doing».

As regards to the concept used in the research about psycho-pedagogical approach, we find interesting information with respect to the student's autonomy, information processing, individualisation of learning paces, and teaching strategies that foster learning by mutual impregnation («contagious learning»).

The difficulties teachers have to attend students of different grades simultaneously is on the basis of them proposing grade activities when there exists the possibility of having support teachers in the classroom. That is, interviews reveal that it is relatively frequent that the support teachers and the teacher who is present in the classroom—who usually is the tutor—propose that the students do their activities and are attended according to their grades, to their courses. The students are split up so that the teachers attend the students as per *grade*.

...as I am with them all together lesser time, it is easier for me, to say the truth. It is because the support, the fact of splitting them up for a while, it's a great help, isn't it? But, when they are all together... Can you imagine if I would be with them all the time?

The act of playing as an inherent element to active methodologies appears, although when referring to it the teachers focus in some specific curricular areas, such as Physical Education.

Well, playing is very important in those ages. I think it is really important, and while they play, even though we cannot appreciate it, I think they really learn. I think it's really good for them. They relate to each other, they play roles that exist in adult life, besides interacting with kids of the same age... I don't know, I think it's really important.

...because I... my Physical Education work, it is based on games. I mean we work on the body schema, space-time organisation, the body itself... everything based on games.

However, the curricular design per areas is the main element when it comes to using a specific method, so content is the main reference and, additionally,

this connection of the use of certain strategies is made, on the one hand, in relation to specific areas and, on the other hand, due to the «need» of competence work—as if it were a legal requirement.

> …and then, well, as for the problem-solving method I like mostly doing stuff on the computer, search activities when we are working with this thing of competences and assignments and so on.
>
> Well, there are hay centres of interest, of course they are—we do competence work».

SPACE ORGANISATION

Regarding the use of space in the classroom, the organisation is quite variable. In relation to grouping students, we find how several space areas are managed according to school tasks, learning pace, and the different parts of the school day. On many occasions, classroom organisation is regulated according to the existing grades within the student body: spaces assigned per grades or grades assigned per spaces, rather than a mix of grades within different spaces. In other occasions, the type of activities and the meteorological conditions or limitations are behind students' placement in the classroom or in the education centre.

> Also, we are lucky to have a large space. We can carry on activities with pupils from Infant Education here; we have an assembly zone where we meet and talk. We have a hand meeting over the heat radiator. In winter we all go there, next to the radiator, and speak about our weekend or about the previous evening… first time in the morning… because we have a large space.

With regard to the criteria normally used to manage school space in the classroom, we find that space areas are related to learning areas.

> …many times it depends also on the subject we are working on. For example, if we are learning English, when I teach English, for example, since I have pupils from 3rd and 4th courses together, that is, the same grade, I teach the same, you know? I make no differentiation.

On certain occasions they try to use other criteria, such as students' abilities, behaviour, or the type of activities that are being done.

> I group the children... I don't do it following the criterion I would like to, but I follow criteria of age and grades they belong to.
>
> Well, it depends... most of anything it depends on the level of understanding in relation to the students who have more issues, maybe I try to...
>
> It depends a little bit on what we are working on. I have some desks at the back, for example, and when we are using our tablets, doing search activities, we split up in different groups...

The number of students in the classroom is one of the handicaps for space organisation, as is of the type of grouping used—in general terms, however, age and course are the basic criteria. The multigrade classroom thus turns into several minigrade classrooms. However, teachers also point that, while not doing it systematically, they place the older students with the little ones or with those who need more help.

The level of competence is not used as a criterion very often; it is more frequently used with younger students, and usually leads to a relaxation of the grouping criteria.

> Well, usually, the three-year-olds, I place them together because their level is more or less the same.
>
> The ones I tend to vary more are the four-year-olds, because I have only one girl who is five. So, as not leaving her on her own, she sits down with the four-year-olds.

On the other hand, there are some occasions and proposals based on the reality outside the education centre. Among some of the variables that can influence this criterion of space management for grouping students, we find issues such as neighbourhood, friendship...

> ...after school they go home, they hardly see each other. Some of them, for example... These two kids I have in 4th course, they do see each other because they are neighbours, one lives opposite the other, and it's the only people they... The only friends they have are school mates, you know? They see each

other all the time and all that... And I always try that they are grouped. In the classroom they are almost always together.

Regarding the type of groupings, the thoughts of one of the teachers about U-shaped grouping illustrate how this is a non-permanent structure, and she tries to place in contact students of different ages because of the mutual benefit she considers it entails. In some ways, inter-grade contact appears again as one of the benefits that the teacher regulates in the classroom.

Then I keep making changes with the children, I mix them, for example, 5th and 6th courses. Sometimes the three 6th pupils, I place them together. Other times I mix them so that they can help each other. Sometimes they have to do their tasks together (5th and 6th), so I place them on one area and the others in other area. But usually, for most activities, I try they help each other, I tried they mix up. And always organised in U-shape, so I am there too... Sometimes you can even sit down with them, but if not, just placed as one desk more.

When the teachers speak of the types of spaces they used it must be pointed out that there are learning corners, mainly in Infant Education, but we cannot say that these types of spaces are integrated in the classroom work. Rather than a corners methodology, what exist are specific zones, either for carrying out certain activities or because they are related to specific subject areas.

And we created those zones since the beginning, and the kids know that when we are working on Plastic Arts, they know they have their things there... I have quite defined Plastic Art corner and the Reading zone.

The Plastic Arts, because I have some desks there and I like that we can work together and see each other's faces.

Yes, there is the zone for new technologies, it is clearly defined, and then, according to each subject area there are also other delimited spaces.

Sometimes the teachers refer to learning corners as places where one goes when a task is finished.

And then, as they were finishing their tasks, I would send them to the corners. So, these corners have always been permanent. The one for the kitchen, the one for playing with animals, another for our costumes, to read stories...

On some occasions spatial conditions either foster or hinder the use of this type of spaces.

> What I mean is that within a space as reduced as this, there are some small spaces, you see? However, to actually differentiate the reading corner, the numbers' corner, games' corner... No. You can see how much space we have.

On some occasions corners and workshops are considered resources rather than elements to organise space that entails the use of some methodological criteria in particular.

> We try to work on workshops, thus multigrade groups are created.

As for the use of corners, in the interviews it appears mainly the one used for Computer Science or ICTs. The use of computers in some areas and for specific school work in some grades is present in the excerpts we quote below:

> ...the ICTs corner, it is where we work with computers. Now they have also their laptops. So I say: «Come on, everybody go to the ICTs corner».
>
> And then the ICTs corner. I usually try they are grouped together. There is also another space we have with the computers, if they are working in another activity in another corner, so that all rotate.

The use of community spaces or town spaces, mostly when there are limitations in the facilities, is habitual in rural education centres—they take advantage of their surroundings. Especially when it comes to subject areas such as Physical Education, where specific facilities are needed, they can be carried out in other facilities or spaces present in rural towns.

> As for Physical Education, we have as small schoolyard inside the school. The students even go outside, because the street where the school is located is an alley and there's no exit. I mean... There's no traffic. So that street, that is actually the public road, but we use it also for Physical Education, when a specialist teacher comes over, of just for playing, whatever...

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions presented hereafter are based on the contributions, analyses and interpretations of the responses given by the teachers in the aforementioned interviews. Therefore, it must be taken into account that it is not possible to generalise these outcomes since this research project has been carried out using qualitative methodology; but by addressing teaching strategies and school space areas, they obviously help to understand how teachers of multigrade classrooms perceive, experience and interpret schoolwork.

On the one hand, teachers seem to acknowledge the importance of an active methodology as well as the use of different teaching strategies taking into account differences in age. This way of working is recognised as having special value to contribute with richness to the diversity offered by the class, and alludes to questions such as project approach, centres of interests or research on the environment, in the belief of the potentialities they entail. There are some interview excerpts in which different interpretations are presented, for example, interpretations about the aforementioned concepts: for instance, the fact of recognising that what usually is searched for as an alternative to the textbook is set within the framework of active methodologies. There are present also some interpretations which are different from the traditional idea and from the one internationally acknowledged: concepts such as project approach, alluding textbooks as projects or projects from the centre on an institutional level.

On the other hand, in the teachers' interventions it can be noted how the space area where the education centre is located is acknowledged as a resource itself to work with students, especially when addressing methodologies based in doing inquiries and carrying out research—which is plausible when the surrounding environment provides education potentialities by means of its richness.

In the classroom teachers refer to organisation per learning corners, per multigrade groups, and several types of classroom organisation—sometimes per grade. The different proceeding for grouping students (individual, pairs, levels…) reveals a way of arranging the class in which teaching aspects are prioritised, and thus content is on many occasions the backbone of the teaching activity. The activities performed simultaneously in the multigrade classroom reveal variety and a purpose in the students' grouping. The use of spaces circumscribed to grades when it comes to differentiating curricular

aspects linked to age or grade of references seems to be frequent. Since these education centres are located in rural areas, groupings depend mostly on the students registered at school. The criteria generally used are age and the course they belong to. Once this is defined, each of the classrooms will use different forms of organisation, while it is common to place students with higher abilities or from higher courses with students who could have some difficulty, in a way that they may help each other.

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TOWARDS A TERRITORIALISED PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF TEACHING STAFF IN RURAL SCHOOLS IN FRANCE, SPAIN, CHILE AND URUGUAY

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ABSTRACT

Rural schools have constituted a renewed subject of research since the 1980s, at both national and international levels. Small rural schools in France, Spain, Chile and Uruguay have points in common in terms of their organization (multi-year) and the implication of local participants. The immersion of teachers in the rural territory and their confrontation with a multi-year structure tend to upset their professional identity and often damage their «capacity system» (Costalat-Founeau, 1997). This study shows that teachers engage in numerous professional and personal activities both directed at the territory on a quest of social validation by the latter. By re-balancing their capacity system, they modify their representation of their own profession and thus their whole professional development. They gradually construct a territorialized professional identity and educational offer.

KEY WORDS

Professional identity; Primary level; Rural school; Territoriality; Territory.

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Towards a Territorialised Professional Identity: The Case of Teaching Staff in Rural Schools in France, Spain, Chile and Uruguay

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INTRODUCTION

Amongst the various changes that occur in the careers of primary-school teachers, it is relocations in particular—be they chosen or imposed—that set in motion identity-forming processes. The posting of teachers to small rural schools consisting of one or two classes represents an event in their professional trajectory for several reasons: because they are immersed in a specific rural territory; because they teach several year-groups at once; and because of the lack of a teaching team within the school. One aspect rural schools have in common is that they are frequently run with a high level of involvement by local actors (especially parents), and the teachers very often have the duties of school head as well. Whilst the «rural» character of rural territories is defined fairly homogenously by population density, they do differ in their histories, actors, territorialities (Aldhuy, 2008), social composition and intercultural make-up. Teachers thus work in both a unique territory and a unique school structure.

The international research programme on rural schools (2009-2012)[2] involving Spain, Portugal, Chile, Uruguay and France, and coordinated by

1 Translation: Tom Genrich (texts and quotations).

2 I+D+I Programme, 2010-2012, La eficacia y la calidad en la adquisición de competencias caracterisan la escuela rural: ¿es un modelo transferible a otra tipología de escuela?», coordinated by the University of Barcelona.

the University of Barcelona, was interested in the teaching practices of teachers in rural schools. But what about their identity? How do today's French, Spanish, Chilean and Uruguayan primary-school teachers experience their encounter with rural schools? Whether this area of practice occurs at the beginning of their professional careers or later, it disrupts their representations of their own profession and their professional practices in several ways. What processes of identity-formation do these disruptions set off for teachers in rural areas of these four countries? What convergences, and what divergences, can be brought to light in the way in which teachers in French, Spanish, Chilean and Uruguayan rural areas construct their professional identity?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Contemporary geographers agree on the definition of the concept of territory as summarised by Guy Di Méo: «A construct produced by history, which each social actor reconstitutes and deforms through his practices and representations. It is often abstract, ideational, lived and felt, rather than identified visually» (2009, p. 23). The term 'territoriality' is used to describe «the whole set of existential and social relationships that individuals within a group have with the space that they produce and reproduce on a daily basis through figures, images, categories and geographical objects, which they mobilise for their project to produce a society that is more or less intentional and made explicit.» (Aldhuy, 2008, p. 4). Thus territorialities «produce» the territory, a fact which shifts our initial understanding of territory as space to that of territory as social construct. «Territoriality enables us to go beyond the sole issue of how societies' space is organised and move towards understanding the spatial condition of individuals living in society» (Aldhuy, 2008). Taking into account territoriality also allows us to view territory from the angle of the social or cultural balance of power, and the latent territorial conflicts which undeniably enter into schools. If territoriality is shared between the territory's actors, then the connection that individuals maintain with the place where they live or work depend on those individuals' history. People who have always lived in the same place are less likely to feel that they are emotionally attached to those places, «ordinary places, places of everyday life, which one no longer sees by dint of frequenting them too much» (de la Soudière, 2007, quoted by Guérin-Pace & Filippova, 2008, p. 16). People who

are attached to their territory (Sencébé, 2004) develop in their rootedness a feeling of loneliness and of fear of newcomers settling in the territory. Their children, even young ones (i.e. of primary-school age), thus carry a double burden of family pressure: the fear of the stranger and the filial duty of staying on to work their father's land. The attachment that inhabitants of Chiloé Island in Chile feel to their territory, and the island's powerful territoriality, leave them with the impression that they could not be happy off the island.

For those who have been more geographically mobile, feeling anchored (Sencébé, 2004, p. 25) is the positive outcome of a residential and/or professional strategy. They feel that they have a stake in the territory without being entirely dependent on it. Many inhabitants of the Ardèche in France or Cerdagne in Catalonia have left behind urban areas to build themselves a new life, in a place of which they feel stakeholders, especially through their professional activity. The territory enables them both to construct themselves and to flourish in relationship to others; and it also commits them to getting personally and professionally involved, so as to express their creativity and competences. This type of connection to territory is much more pronounced in Europe than in Latin America, even though a new mobility towards the countryside also exists in Chile or Uruguay. However, in these countries such mobility is not accompanied by involvement in the territory. Here, it is more a question of a relationship of externality. This relationship has been described by Y. Sencébé, for whom it is characterised by «being strongly anchored in a circumscribed place» (Sencébé, 2004, p. 25). People settle in a place that shelters them from the constraints of the urban world, a place set in a decorative landscape to which they feel no attachment or commitment. In Chile, the children of these families do not frequent state schools but urban private schools. Finally, in rural territories in Chile and Uruguay, a number of people, despite being strongly attached to their territory, think that it has «no future», especially for their children or pupils. They want a different and less difficult life for them, and strive to make them able to adapt to other territories, especially urban territories, whilst also remaining emotionally attached to their territory of origin. Sencébé considers this type of connection «dissociated», referring to the dissociation between their attachment to their place of origin, their territoriality and their place of daily life (Sencébé, 2004). Individuals' relationships with territory are therefore complex: at once collective and unique; endured on the one hand, chosen on the other. «Everyone has at his disposal a palette of practices, be it large or small, which

depend on his socio-spatial origins, social position, family status and age, and which profoundly shape his relationships with places, roots, and any new layout of the space he frequents.» (Tison, as cited in Di Méo, 2009, p. 25).

Psycho-sociologists see social identity as being inextricably linked to the social world. «Identity is constructed, defined, and studied within the relationship to the other» (Baugnet, 2005, p.10). It is therefore unstable, and continually being redefined and reaffirmed. The process of identity-formation is characterised by a trajectory that is at once personal and social. This process is constructed in tension with the past, present and future: «with *inherited identity*, which comes to us with birth and our social origins, *acquired identity*, strongly linked to our socio-professional situation, and *hoped-for identity*, to which we aspire so as to gain recognition» (Gauléjac, 2002, as cited in Marc, 2005, p. 4). Personal history, being socially constructed and interpreted by the individual, is the trajectory during which identity-formation unfolds. Studying identity-construction processes using the capacity model proposed by Anne-Marie Costalat-Founeau (1997) underlines the importance of capacity effects in the construction of social identity. «I call these effects capacity effects: on the one hand, subjective capacity (I can), which confers on the subject a capacity to act in that he understands the stakes and means, and defines the objectives; on the other hand, normative capacity, linked to social validation, which brings about forms of social approval or disapproval. These capacities are closely interdependent and make up the capacity system, which has a fundamental role in the intention, realisation and ultimate aim of the action» (Costalat-Founeau, 2008, p. 70). Normative capacity is constructed through social validation—it is the image reflected in the «social mirror»—and is in synergy with subjective capacity, that is to say, with the fact of feeling oneself capable, which is linked to self-esteem and self-efficacy. Capacity effects have both emotional and cognitive foundations: the person's history (where he comes from, his perspective on the rural environment, previous experience, and emotional attachment to a place) will be very important in balancing his capacity system, but so will the entirety of small signs, small gestures and words that the territory might use to communicate with him. Some personal scars and some extremely negative feelings may be effaced by positive experiences. Alternatively, they may solidify and remain a permanent obstacle to personal and professional fulfilment. The capacity system finds its equilibrium in the coherence between normative and subjective capacity. This coherence may be put in tension when, for example, the envi-

ronment (in our case, the territory) does not send out the signs of recognition that the teacher expects. Such tensions within the capacity system will lead the individual to instigate actions aiming to rebalance the system. Through such actions, the individual puts his competence into practice, which enables him to construct his own experience within the context. Such public action-taking bolsters the individual's sense of self-efficacy and of competence, but also makes it possible for him to receive positive emotional signals, which in turn strengthen his motivation to act. This motivation is equally linked to the pleasure that the individual may feel in discovering his environment and local events, and in locating himself within that environment. These actions aimed at capacity-strengthening differ depending on the individual, since they are realised by people having different histories and different representations (or stereotypes). Teachers in rural environments, however, have in common that they bring into play the territory: it is through actions that are visible to the territory that the teachers balance their capacity systems and reinforce their feeling of self-efficacy. Such actions may be directly linked to the teacher's profession, but can also be much more personal and social. The social legitimisation of an individual as «this territory's teacher» helps to anchor him in the territory and to territorialise him.

METHODOLOGY

Pursuing comparative research on an international scale creates a number of methodological problems. Indeed, the construction of a teacher's identity is the result of the culture and the national tradition of the educational system within which that teacher works. This educational system has developed within a specific history and context that must be taken into account. The issue of «conceptual equivalence» (Osborn, 2001) is also fundamental. «One of the major challenges in comparative research is to supply conceptual definitions that have an equivalent, though not necessarily an identical, meaning in different cultures» (Osborn, 2001, p. 6). I have therefore considered it appropriate to have sociologists and psycho-sociologists of each of the countries concerned validate the theoretical framework of this research.

My research is clearly qualitative in methodology. I worked on the verbal communications of teachers who were, at the time, employed in rural schools of one or two classes. These communications were collected during

comprehensive interviews (Kaufmann, 1996). Interviews were conducted with 43 teachers, spread over five territories: the area of Les Boutières in Ardèche; Cerdagne in Catalonia; the Dalcahue coast of Chiloé Island in Chile; the Villarica-Pucon area in Araucanía in Chile; and a part of the Flores Department in Uruguay. The two European territories are mountain territories which have experienced strong social change since the 1970s, with a growing number of inhabitants of urban origins. These new rural populations, as described by Hervieu and Viard (2001), are motivated by a certain type of place to live and commit to a personal life project there. Chiloé Island is in the south of Chile. Its traditional activity was subsistence agriculture complemented by fishing. In the past decade or so, big foreign companies have opened salmon-farming operations here. Locals have abandoned their traditional activities and opted for salaried work within these companies. Araucanía is the Mapuche area of Chile, which is characterised by conflicts over land ownership and by intercultural troubles. Its Mapuche indigenous inhabitants are strongly attached to their traditions, which clash with the «Chilean» vision of development. Finally, the Flores Department in Uruguay is an area whose traditional agricultural activity is extensive sheep and cattle farming, but which has in the past twenty or so years shifted towards large-scale crop farming run by big farming companies (wheat, genetically-modified soya, forestry), as well as towards intensified production in those zones where livestock continues to be raised. Land ownership is increasingly concentrated, and land purchases by foreign companies continue to rise. The portion of salaried agricultural workers has risen sharply, at the expense of family farming, which rural youth no longer consider to have a future. In the three South-American territories, the rate of rural flight remains high.

Samples within each territory were taken according to territorial criteria: teachers of the same territory, in a small rural school (one or two classes). Criteria such as age or gender were not taken into account. In the interviews, teachers were asked to describe their personal trajectory linked to their professional activities and the rural territory. It was suggested to them that they evoke their past and present representations of rural environments and rural schools, their professional and territorial choices, and their perception of their own professional evolution. An analysis of these samples brought to light particularities for each territory. The French and Catalan subsamples are comparatively young, very largely drawn from urban origins, and have chosen to live in a rural area in the mountains. The Chiloé Island subsample

is characterised by the great number of people of Chiloé origins. In Araucanía, the great majority of the subsample were relatively old men (over 55 years of age) of urban origin, who were not Mapuche, and who had settled down in a rural school where they had in many cases taught for at least 20 years. The respondents in Flores Department in Uruguay were all female, and all stemmed from within the Department, often from the small town (and state capital) of Trinidad. Teaching was not initially the profession of choice for any of these women; it was a geographical constraint. No other training was offered in Flores Department, and higher education in Montevideo, the country's capital, was largely reserved for boys rather than girls. The characteristics of each subsample were thus strongly linked to the historical, social and cultural specifics of its territory.

THE RESULTS

THE TEACHERS' REPRESENTATIONS OF THE RURAL WORLD

The representations of the rural world and rural schools that the teachers had before starting work there were linked to their prior knowledge (hence the importance of each person's cognitive and emotional memory); to their beliefs; and to a form of idealisation of rural territories and schools, which were seen as protected spaces. The teachers in the European subsample favoured a view of the rural world as a «natural space».

> At the time, we were looking for an isolated territory, with all the fantasies that go with that. In other words, a world with more flexibility, more freedom. (E., Ardèche)

The teachers of the South-American subsample tended to view the rural world in terms of a strongly idealised «social space» instead.

> People who live in the countryside, I thought their values were rooted in solidarity… I also expected people to value equality… (L., Flores)

Some teachers also had a devalued representation of the rural world. They talked of its «cultural poverty», and foresaw that this would be an obstacle—but an obstacle for which they believed a solution must be found.

THE EMOTIONAL ASPECT OF THE TEACHERS' ENCOUNTER WITH THEIR RURAL SCHOOL

When the teachers talked of their encounter with the school territory, they expressed feelings first of all, and strong feelings. They often mixed impressions linked to their personal life in the territory with impressions associated with their professional activity. These first impressions gained during their beginnings in rural schools and in their encounter with the rural territory determined the teachers' identity-forming processes.

After a phase of idealisation, which had vindicated their decision to settle in the rural territory, daily life brought its share of disappointments.

> I encountered local culture by living here, and it was a shock. In other words, in the villages, that way of being very closed-off… (I., Cerdagne)

These disappointments were expressed not only by those people who had moved from urban areas, and cannot be explained solely by ignorance of the territory. Some Chiloé Islanders returning to their island were also disillusioned.

For many teachers—whether they started out living in their school or not—the initial feeling of isolation remained painful. In the Ardèche, for instance, teachers explained this feeling of isolation not as a personal difficulty, but as a professional one, especially when they were faced with children or families that put them in an awkward position. They felt abandoned by the school system and said so.

In Flores Department or Araucanía, teachers over 40 years of age had necessarily started out in rural schools, often in very cut-off schools. Their reminiscences showed how acute those feelings were.

> I passed my exam, and started in a rural school. That was my first experience. At the rural school where I started out, there was nobody around, I found myself completely alone. I liked the rural world as such, my work at school as well, my work with the community was good, the children too. But the loneliness! […] I really suffered with loneliness, I was very sad, I remember going back on Sunday evenings crying! (O., Flores)

The welcome given by the neighbours and parents also contributed much to the teacher's impressions.

> I went there and far from feeling bad, it all went off great, I liked it a lot, I was enchanted. People were very kind, they brought me bags of chestnuts, pinecones, fruit all the time… People were very affectionate. (J., Araucanía)

The small gestures and small attentions shown by local actors towards the teachers—the «existential welcome»—contributed to making teachers want to stay in their school, to communicate with parents, children and neighbours. These gestures might be made intentionally by local actors because they needed a teacher to commit to the territory, and so aimed to charm him. In all cases, they generated positive emotions in the teachers.

PROFESSIONAL DIFFICULTIES

Despite the varied school locations, and the diversity of educational and training systems, all the teachers mentioned a number of professional difficulties:

> I tried for a whole year, and I have to admit that I didn't really get the class to gel, I didn't! I don't know if the pupils learned anything, I don't think so, I didn't want to be there, and on top of that, I didn't feel well at all. I just wanted to get away from that school. I was in total despair. (F., Araucanía).

These difficulties were brought about by the format of multiple year-groups; parents' presence at the school; the school's history; the weight of the previous teacher; local culture; and local conflicts, and jeopardised the teachers' feeling of self-efficacy, while leading them to «mark out their own territory». Even for those originating from the school territory or from another rural territory it was no easier to shape their places as teachers. For some, these difficulties led to a form of withdrawal into themselves: a «closing the door» on the territory while strongly deprecating it and expressing a keen desire to change (a desire that may have been strengthened by the potential instability of the post they occupy).

«LEARNING» THE TERRITORY AND SOCIAL VALIDATION BY THE TERRITORY

For a number of other people, whose posts were more stable, especially school heads, having their capacity tested had a very different impact as long as it

occurred alongside a positive general impression of the territory. At times it led them to undertake actions aimed both at a better understanding of the territory and also, unconsciously, at socially validation by it. The teacher portrayed himself as a learner vis-à-vis the territory and in exchange «expected» a form of recognition.

> In those schools, I learned to fish, go to the beach and find shellfish. I'd put on my rubber boots, and people were often very surprised by my attitude. The teacher was their equal, that's what allowed me to get so close to them, and made them respect me… It was important for me that I too should learn something from them, and with them, that we did things together. That made them accept me much more. It helped me a lot with my work. (M., Chiloé)

Such learning came from different «sources» and took on different shapes, and depended on the relationship with knowledge that the teachers had constructed during their initial training or through past experiences. Thus the teachers of the European subsample were more likely to seek out scientific knowledge of the natural world, either in books or from local experts.

> I quickly went and bought a book. I told myself: I can't be totally ridiculous either, totally silly, and know nothing! There was a bit of pride involved, too! After all, I'm the teacher! (D., Ardèche)

Other teachers, especially from the South-American subsample, got involved in social, athletic or cultural activities that had no direct link to their classroom activities and learned about local practices, community knowledge, and the territory's problems from local actors.

> There are two neighbours next to the school and we often talk. They explain to me what is happening in this area, that it is Argentines who are buying all the land in this countryside. That they buy the land to plant it, but that they have no interest in the families that live on it, and if those families have to leave, they don't care. So there are fewer and fewer families, and the families are more and more isolated from one another. (A., Flores)

In the whole sample, this learning frequently occurred within educational activities aimed at pupils and families: teachers realised that a large number

of «teaching projects» also had a learning function for them. In all cases, these activities became visible to the territory and modified the teachers' view and position vis-à-vis local actors. They became aware of the territory's cultural assets, and of the pupils' knowledge and capacities.

> The children lack knowledge compared to the syllabus, yes. But they have a wealth of knowledge in other areas, about their environment, farming, everything to do with daily life. Oh yes, here they had a huge amount of knowledge! And what they knew, they knew because they did it. Of course, if you only talk about maths… But *they* taught *me* about agronomy and nature, not the other way round! They taught me all that. The other part, the school part, that was me, it was a sort of mutual teaching, everyone did his bit! I arrived here as a teacher, but in reality they taught me! (S., Flores)

Such teachers shared a common language with local actors. Their original preoccupation with «marking out their own territory» lost its importance. Because they had «learnt» the territory, they were able to construct their position as teacher in the territory, with an open-mindedness towards the territory and a form of shared territoriality.

> I made my life in the countryside with the people from there, playing football! When you work in a rural school, bit by bit you construct a sort of belonging to the territory. It happens day by day, year by year. (J., Araucanía)

However, whilst the interviews brought to light some homogeneity in this area, one can also distinguish more subtle differences in the positions of teachers within the territory. Some teachers positioned themselves in the territory with a view to continuity. They talked about habits, traditions, etc., with which they could not imagine breaking.

> They do things together, like the village fête, which had been going on for decades. Everyone helps out, and your involvement is compulsory! You don't have a choice, you jump on the moving train, so of course I was among the organisers! (D., Ardèche)

Through their territorialisation, some teachers implicitly shared in the social balance of power at the heart of the territory, and found themselves reproducing social or cultural conflicts without meaning to.

About a pupil:

> He doesn't trust the knowledge that I can bring him in the sense that he has his own culture, which is based on beliefs… He'll get annoyed, get angry, his thing is to grumble in his corner. And I can't bear that. It always ends badly. (D., Ardèche)

A NEW VIEW OF THE PROFESSION

As they became increasingly territorialised, teachers distanced themselves from institutional dictates and from their syllabi, but continued to respect the legitimacy that their affiliation to the institution conferred on them. They were thus in a situation of double affiliation, to the territory and to the institution. Some institutional demands lost all meaning in rural schools.

> They [the inspectors] want a timetable like this: break, then Catalan, maths… And what's more, they want one per year group. They want one, so I make one, and I can show it to them. It can't be applied in a rural school where all year groups are taught together, but they ask us to do it! They want to see one, so I show it to them, and afterwards I explain that it's impossible to work like that. (M., Cerdagne)

To compensate for the absence of a team of teachers within the school, there were teacher networks, which could be formal or informal, and allowed teachers to overcome their feelings of isolation; talk about teaching practices; and construct common projects; but also to assist new teachers in the territory through a form of tutelage. This organisation by network also allowed teachers to keep a certain distance, to stay «each in his own school», a distance that mattered to them.

Their view of the profession changed: teachers expressed both the sense of being able to be more creative, but also a sense of having to be more responsible vis-à-vis the territory.

> Personally, I don't work to be noticed, I don't work for a mark, I work because I like it. I try to do what I'm officially asked to do, but frankly it doesn't interest me much! I don't work for the inspector. I feel good here, working with the community. This community is my family. (C., Flores)

In particular, their creativity expressed itself in a sort of curricular liberty, where they adapted the contents and timetabling of the official syllabus to their pupils' culture, with the aim of highlighting the pupils' knowledge and facilitating their learning.

Some teachers also mentioned activities that showed a high degree of local involvement. They had their place within the territory and the territory's issues, and thus had a part to play. While this representation of the rural teacher as committed social actor is widespread in Latin America (without there being any specific training for it), it is much more implicit but nonetheless present in Europe too.

> The relationship with the pupils' parents, where you're a bit of a social worker after all… In a rural village, with people who sometimes find paperwork difficult, you lend a hand, you suggest course choices for their kids when they're older, things like that. (M., Ardèche)

Others were more likely to problematize the territory, and took an active part as teachers in the territory's political issues.

> I realised while I listened to people talk about their boss that the boss is like an all-powerful god to them! And these people, who are the bosses' workers, their cleaning ladies, they don't see themselves as an equal person, as a person who has the right to have a rest… You see, the sheepshearers, for instance, they are people who were born in a rural environment and have learned to shear sheep. They go in teams to farms to do the shearing, and they live in granges without any comforts, without a place to wash. Why should a labourer not have a right to the same conditions as a labourer in town, or a boss, just because he's rural? Why should an agricultural labourer have to live in a grange? Any employee has to have the same level of comfort as anybody else. He's not an animal, he's human. They're not asking for favours, they do their work, they are people who have the same rights, but they themselves don't demand those rights. I've told you that respect for the individual is very

> important to me. Being an employee doesn't mean sacrificing your life and accepting everything in someone else's service. And all those injustices you see in a rural environment, yes, I do try to get the parents and the children to realise those. If they study, they'll have more power to make demands. (S., Flores)

CHANGES IN TEACHING PRACTICES

Territorialised teachers, especially those whose capacity systems were in equilibrium, also felt empowered to implement teaching practices that were adapted to rural schools, where those schools were seen as a system located between the school structure, the school format and the territory (Champollion, 2013). For instance, getting pupils to help each other in class, an aspect typically mentioned for classes with multiple year-groups, was a practice mostly used by territorialised teachers. While this practice had, on the face of it, nothing to do with the teachers' relationship to the territory, it did require confidence on their part to let their pupils take on a role other than that of learners. This change in attitude was linked to teachers implementing what they had learned about the territory, especially from pupils. The trust expressed by the territory's inhabitants towards some teachers also gave those teachers the latitude to establish situations in the classroom that broke with traditional practices. Incidentally, pupils' parents were used to teachers taking this sort of approach, and did not criticise them for it. Helping each other then became a part of the practices of those teachers who had constructed a territorialised, rural-school form of «teaching knowledge». This translated into a teacher/taught relationship based on mutual trust.

> It's truly a different way of working, it's no longer the same relationship with the pupils, you feel the teacher/taught thing much less. I'm not sure how to express it, you discover… There are things you discover together. For instance: the computer. Used as we used it, I was learning at the same time as the kids, we're all learning and doing together. And that is pure joy. (M.-P., Ardèche)

This kind of relationship calls to mind the writings of Freire on the teacher/taught relationship. «There no longer exists the educator of the educatee nor the educatee of the educator, but the educator-educatee and the educatee-edu-

cator. This means that no one educates no one, inasmuch as no one is educated alone; people educate one another.» (Freire, 1969)

Because of territorialised practices, the territory, whether as natural space or as social space, became both a learning support and an object of learning.

> We make do as much as possible with what we have around us. I let them handle everyday objects a lot to teach them counting: bits of wood… To create texts, we talk about cows and sheep. I use familiar vocabulary to teach them to read as well. You see, if I use a word like «elevator», it has no meaning for the kids. Once a teacher came from Santiago, and we worked on making learning cards for the sounds that are specific to here, based on what the children know. We did that together with the parents, to make cards for school and for their homes. And everyone, here at school and the mothers at home, worked on the sounds, syllables, words… and in three months, all the children had learned to read. They worked on the same thing at home and here at school, in ways that were different but consistent. We had meetings with the mothers, how is it going, what isn't working, how could we improve things, what should we change on the cards—and that's how we progressed through the alphabet. (R., Araucanía)

These territorialised practices did not prevent the teachers from being concerned as well with opening the pupils' minds to environments that they were not familiar with, and helping them approach a more learned culture that they were not necessarily able to access within their families (though without setting out a hierarchy of cultures).

> I also take them to the cinema, and we went to Valdivia so that they could see the ocean. You should have seen them, when they arrived on the beach at Valdivia, they couldn't get over it! They tasted the water, which was salty! We went to see the escalator in the shopping centre, and they didn't know how to get on it! I have more freedom to go on outings with the children, and they really need it. They only know the same things: of course, they can get exercise by climbing trees and jumping into the grass, but it's also good to see other things. (F., Araucanía)

In other words, whilst there was no homogeneity in the teaching practices of teachers in rural schools, there were strong links between, on the one hand,

the teacher's knowledge of the territory and the children's territoriality, his personal and professional involvement in the territory and the social recognition he received, and, on the other hand, his relationship to institutional dictates, the curriculum he derived from them, and the tradition of practices that was either transmitted or imposed within the territory's group of rural teachers. The teachers thus had to confront, often on their own, the multifaceted problems of providing education in the complex, systemic and unique territory of which they were a part. What became evident here was the potential space for creativity available to the teacher, but also the importance of the cluster of influences—or of constraints or pressures—that could limit or even put a stop to his activity.

CONCLUSION

This article has highlighted that for teachers in small rural schools, there were convergent stages in the process of identity-construction, even across different territories and different educational systems:

- The encounter both personal and professional with the territory, and the encounter with rural schools that challenged the teachers' capacity system.
- The pursuit of a congruent capacity system through activity (educational or not), achieved by social validation by the territory's actors. The quest for social validation by the territory went hand in hand with «learning» the territory. The diversity of the territories expressed itself in the different modes of learning the territory, as well as in the purposes underpinning that learning and the knowledge at stake.
- The territorialisation of the teacher's professional identity and the congruence of his capacity system gave meaning to and provided a potential space for creativity in his educational activities, which were integrated into the territory's own dynamic. The teacher's relationship to pupils, to authority, and to knowledge changed. Rural schools thus became an educational space integrated into the territory, and shared in its dynamics, through training, through the validation of local cultures, and by mobilising actors to join in the construction of the territory's future.

- A dual affiliation: with a national educational system and with the territory in which they taught. Teachers did not renounce their affiliation with the national educational system, but adapted it to their affiliation with the territory.
- Professional practices which were territorialised, in that they contributed to local social organisation and the territorial dynamic, and in that they fitted into the territory's own territoriality and knowledge, thus creating unique learning conditions.

This piece of qualitative research has made it possible to locate precisely the part that territory and territoriality play in the educational activities of the small-rural school teachers of the sample, a part which they play through the identity-forming processes both in their consistency and their diversity. The focus now needs to shift onto teacher training: what methodological tools could be offered, what assistance could be envisaged, to make the relationship between teachers and territory both more explicit and more operational? Might it be possible to highlight professional territorial forms of knowledge that could be theorised?

Might it be helpful to use this research for other territories and other territorialities? Would we discover that teachers' professional developments are territorialised in other territories as well? What sort of actions might teachers engage in as part of this process, and to confront what kinds of needs? What influence might a territorialisation of this sort have on professional practices?

One subject that compellingly merits further study is the impact of identity-formation on the pupils' learning and trajectories: might there be a «territorialised-teacher effect»?

Finally, if rural schools partake of the tensions between the local and the global, is it their role to be a form of resistance to the homogeneous education being offered? To what extent, and with what objectives, might it be the role of the rural teacher to participate in preparing the territory's future?

All these areas would reward further research.

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THE ISSUE OF AUTONOMY WITHIN MULTIGRADE CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

When we speak of autonomy we think about how we navigate in a specific setting, since a relative level of autonomy is determined by that setting. When dealing with rural schools with multigrade classrooms, we refer to a setting comprising a complex diversity of people in terms of age, sex, grades, contexts, conceptual levels, interests, motivations... All of them sharing the same space and the same teacher, and organised within the same time span in which they share a set of activities, both spontaneous and/or planned by a teacher who must ensure learning achievement. This paper presents different types of autonomous learning in multigrade classrooms, as a result of an international competitive research carried out in several Latin American and European countries.

KEY WORDS

Autonomy; Learning; Multigrade classroom; Rural school.

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The Issue of Autonomy Within Multigrade Classrooms

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INTRODUCTION

Multigrade classrooms are settings where varied relationships between teacher and student, and between the students themselves, can be enabled. Different roles may be agreed based on tasks' distribution, thus fostering a real development of autonomy. However, the mere existence of a multigrade group—and its inherent features—is not enough to achieve autonomy, and so the teacher hast to take some decisions to allow establishing certain type of dynamics—both interactive and communicational.

For the interpretation of the category «autonomy», referenced throughout this work will be Boix' approaches (2011): «Beyond typical complexity of multigrade classroom regarding the specific pedagogic practice performed, an important component to look at is the students' learning autonomy. Such competence is especially significant when we deal with student bodies of different ages who share the same time and space, and are instructed by one teacher only, who needs to respond to multiple and varied curricular demands.» (p. 18) «Moreover, learning autonomy allows the teacher to 'set out a daily dynamics for open knowledge circulation' (Santos, 2006) in multigrade classrooms, where students make progress in content acquisition according to their interests and motivations—with different curricular depth levels in the and beyond the goals set for each grade.» (p. 19) The author also refers to interactions: «The social practices operating in multigrade classrooms take place also in society as a whole. A huge variety of interactions and inter-subjectivities

are presented in multigrade classrooms and these need to be addressed in order to understand the complex set of variables influencing multigrade education practice (...) thus, this space becomes the most significant: one where models are replicated, social relationships beyond the class relationship itself are established and, therefore, where conflicts emerge...» (p. 20)

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study is part of a competitive research developed within the framework of the programme for I+D+I Fundamental Research Projects funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation. This international project spanned during three years (2009-2012) and was carried out in three European countries (Spain, France and Portugal) and two Latin American ones (Chile and Uruguay). The project is titled «Rural schools are characterised by efficiency and quality in competence acquisition; is this model transferable to other types of schools?», and has been coordinated by the University of Barcelona. Two main objectives arise from this project and these are summarised below:

- To study and compare teaching-learning methodologies in rural schools in Chile, Spain, France, Portugal and Uruguay.
- To design a proposal of teaching components that can be transferred to other types of school.

As for the methods used in the project, they are set within the framework of the interpretative paradigm. Quantitative methodology tools (questionnaires) and qualitative methodology tools (interviews and participant observation) were used. Each country chose a sample of rural schools with a tendency to active-participatory approaches and gathered information after applying the aforementioned tools. This paper presents those results of participant observation in the Uruguayan rural schools pertinent to learning autonomy in multigrade classrooms.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

The research team based in Uruguay applied the participant observation method in four rural schools (two two-teacher schools and two one-teacher schools) located in socially, financially and geographically diverse contexts. Researchers worked in pairs until data saturation was reached after successive visits to the schools. With the aim of exchanging data records, carrying out a first level of analysis, and planning the following sessions, each pair worked also in instances subsequent to each observation session. Around seven or eight classroom-based observations per school were carried out. Data saturation corresponding to the selected guidelines of participant observation was reached. Data saturation occurs when, after successive observations based on data collection from a relevant body of evidence—large enough as to ensure the credibility of the observation—no new information emerge, however, the information previously observed is validated.

As a methodological element *sui generis*, four work groups[1] relative the four different cases were formed. In the meetings they held team partners who had not been involved in the observation sessions—therefore enjoying a certain «external» aspect—were also invited. These analytic work groups enabled expanding and enriching observers' view, as well as redirecting the observation and focusing in what seemed the more interesting aspects and details. They worked in four different geographical locations related to the schools that were subject of observation and to the researchers' places of origin. Each group produced a primary product derived from the analysis of the observations based on two fundamental inputs: the field notes contributed by the observers and the theoretical corpus previously defined—a collection of selected texts for interpretative work.

On the basis of that dynamics several plenary sessions were held and approximately thirty descriptive observation categories were created. In the search for new knowledge, those findings were named, appointed, described according to theoretical elements and then exemplified using the field notes. A first document—later known as «handcrafted report»—was created including categories grouped according to the schools where they had been generated; these were named as follows: South School, West School, Centre School and North School.

1 These first work groups worked in Montevideo, Lavalleja, Flores and Paysandú.

A second document was produced, with categories organised into four groups. First group is called «Autonomy and control: teacher-student interactions in multigrade classrooms», including categories such as «individualised instruction *a priori*», «apparently autonomous controlling model», «the teacher works all the time with the entire multigrade group», «guideline and initial support», «dependency and control» and «autonomy and participation.». From that it can be inferred that some categories reveal some familiar phenomena formerly outlined in the theoretical framework. However, others refer to teaching situations either unexpected or denoting an unsuspected distance between multigrade theoretical elements and their effective materialisation.

During 2012 four more work groups worked, whose aim was producing a series of texts based on comparing the aforementioned categories against several theoretical sources.[2] This process of intellectual production resulted—being thus partially finished—in an interpretative text including the findings presented by the application of participant observation methods.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOLS SELECTED FOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

In order to select the four rural schools where participant observation was going to be carried out, a mixed criterion was applied by taking into account aspects related both to the teachers' education and to the educational outcomes achieved by the school institutions according to certain objective indicators and to corresponding Department Inspections' point of view. Some other criteria were also taken into account: geographical distribution (four different departments of the country were selected); socioeconomic context (farming; milk and livestock sectors), and type of school (one-teacher and two-teacher types). In that way, four different settings arose, detailed below.

The school hereafter called *South School* is a one-teacher school from a Department located in the southern part of the country, approximately 70 km from Montevideo. The teacher lives in the school area. She has been working there for 12 years and has greatly appreciation by the community. The socioeconomic context is that of a predominantly agrarian rural area—small

2 These second work groups worked in Montevideo, Paysandú, Florida and Lavalleja.

producers and family economy. Population is very dispersed, although demographic density is highly above national average.

The *West School* is a multi-teacher school; there are two teachers working at it, one of them acting also as head teacher. The school is located in a Department of the western part of the country, approximately 150 km from Montevideo. From the point of view of educational outcomes and opinion by education supervisors, both the school and the teachers are regarded to be of an excellent level. As for the socio-economic context, it is a rural based area focused mainly in the milk sector; most people are settled in population centres and enjoy a good economic situation.

The *Centre School is a* multi-teacher school; there are two teachers, one of them is also the head teacher and teaches to higher grades. This school is located in a Department of the central area of the country, approximately 220 km from Montevideo, and is a highly ranked school, both for its outcomes and for the head teacher's experience, who has a long career in education. The context embraces the milk production sector and extensive livestock farming; however, the school is located in a small rural town—one of the few existing ones in the area.

The *North School* is a one-teacher school; it has a scarce number of students and is located in a Department of the northern part of the country, 525 km from Montevideo. It is a rural area characterised by intensive livestock farming, where milking yards, small farms and green houses are found. Population is much dispersed and close to the Department capital city; demographic density is low. Most business owners do not live in the area. The head teacher is ranked as excellent and has some experience in rural environments. Some of the students are the children of the aforementioned retail premises, and the rest come from nearby farms.

SOME OBSERVATIONS AND THEIR CORRESPONDING INTERPRETATIONS

In the Uruguayan case, the observations related to autonomy in the multigrade classroom produced a set descriptive categories characterised by a tension between autonomy and control. Four of these observations are discussed below.

FIRST OBSERVATION: APPARENTLY AUTONOMOUS CONTROLLING MODEL

During the first sessions in the multigrade classroom of the South School, observers are left with the impression that children have a great deal of autonomy, since they do some tasks on their own—without asking any questions to the teacher. For instance, when it is time to go to the dining room each child, without asking anything at all, gets his/her wash bag and goes to the toilet—without receiving any instruction about it. Then they go into the dining room and handle their lunch—water and dessert are served by them. Other classroom-based observations were as follows: when writing a heading title, all the pupils use coloured pencils—they decorate it as they please. After finishing a task, children from Basic Level pick up a photocopied activity from their personal folders and start working—they do not wait for the teacher's suggestion to do it.

These and other situations lead to think of certain climate of freedom, a situation where children are the ones managing their learning resources. In the following observations, however, observers began to note that such atmosphere of freedom and autonomy occurs only in certain activities and in certain moments as the ones previously described; they observed these situations were actually representing habits and routines deeply rooted in the children after having been imposed by the teacher along the years. Neither proper autonomous work, nor management of the learning resources did exist: when the children were about to use a specific resource and it had not been instructed by the teacher, nor did it appear in the task description, they consulted it with her.

This underlying controlling model can be noted also in the attention paid by the teacher to each thing children are about to write down. The whole group is working on the topic of population census. A census officer is present in the classroom. The teacher proposes that the students make questions while one of them—a student girl—writes the answers on the blackboard. On several occasions, a child asks anything and the teacher rephrases the question, or even makes a new one, immediately thereafter. Also, each time the student girl is about to write on the blackboard, she is asked: «What are you going to write?» The comment made by the girl is or is not approved and then the teacher rephrases and dictates it.

So, how do teachers direct their students' autonomy? Is autonomy oriented only in terms of following the rules imposed by the school institution? These

questions are not easy to answer. Based on the observations, it can be noted how the teacher is permanently performing his/her role under a controlling model, and therefore she is, first of all, restricting their students' freedom of expression.

If we comprehend Boix' idea of autonomy—a concept already proposed in this paper—, then it follows that teachers need to take the most appropriate decisions so that their pupils develop self-reliance and are able to act and decide freely and responsibly. Therefore, we lead to the conclusion that, in terms of theoretical perspective, it would be necessary to agree to those models and paradigms that consider autonomy as a skill developed by learners in order to manage their own learning processes. In that way, autonomy would entail, at least, recognising and choosing some of the strategies, resources and paths to approach knowledge.

It seems that the fact that the classroom has an «atmosphere of freedom» is not enough to foster learning autonomy. Autonomy is rather intentional and therefore it needs to be taught. Autonomy should be an educational objective and should be considered as part of learning content.

This would entail, among other things:

- Diversifying teaching proposals so that diversity is addressed.
- Presenting open proposals to be solved in different ways, so that they lead to critical thinking, in such a way that pupils' work process is given value.
- Organising multigrade groups in different ways according to the activity or topic worked, thus allowing the children to interact in varied ways both with the teacher and among themselves.

Some teachers, although unconsciously—or at least without having and explicit intention to do it—do not boost autonomy through their proposals out of fear of losing control over their classes and subsequently loosing the security they are in need of. Teachers cannot be the only guilty part in here since this is the preponderant role imposed upon their profession since very long ago (Gabbiani, 2000).

The censor officer scene example reveals that the teacher does not give her students the chance of taking their own decisions and, for each act they perform, she is constantly interposing the need of approval. Resistance to give up to the core place the teacher considers her own—and defines her role—is reflected in this example.

As expressed by Beatriz Gabbiani (2000), language and discourse play a core role in classroom interaction. In fact, different discursive practices will offer the students different situations involving learning. Teaching and learning in the classroom are determined by discursive practices and discursive formations. Stubbs (1984) maintains that «learning is not a merely cognitive or psychological process since the social relationship between teacher and student can play a vital role» (p. 88). Teachers' discourse is fundamental for the vision developed by the students about the type of relationship established in the classroom. It is through language that the teacher's values for which he/she advocates his/her right to manage speech in the classroom are put at stake. This is intrinsically linked to certain basic socio-cultural values and certain status relationships (Gabbiani, 2000). Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) talk about how the distribution of speech turns in the classroom is organised around three movements: initiation–response–feedback. Teachers assume movement 1 and movement 3, and leave to the students the second speech turn. The gap left to the students' interventions does not follow a path very different from the one expected by the teacher.

Perhaps it can be inferred that the teacher wants to help the students to build the answers that were going to be written on the blackboard as means of «scaffolding» (Bruner, 1987), however, the high frequency of her interventions may also be a way of exercising control and reveals an «asymmetry in the relationship» (Gabbiani, 2000). The teacher organises and manages the situation. We have already seen how she chooses the responses she prefers and how she ignores others—even «rephrasing» them. «To the asymmetry typical of institutional roles, it must be added the fact that teachers are adults» (Gabbiani, 2000). When she speaks about control, the author is referring to how decision-making works in relationships. This aspect seems to play a core function in small social structures such as family or the classroom. And the strategies used by teachers to control what their pupils learn and do are many.

SECOND OBSERVATION: DEPENDENCY AND CONTROL

In the *Centre School* no sequential autonomous work is observed—it is performed only sporadically, relies on the teacher and is always under his/her control. In order to make progress in their task, the children are in constant need of her endorsement. Individual work requiring the children find strategies to solve situations on their own is scarcely done.

The teacher states that she keeps them (in relation to the children) «constrained», because this is a group «without autonomy», so if they are left working on their own, they «cannot manage and get distracted with anything». In order to take control of the class, tasks are being suggested all along. There is no place for «idle time». The teacher is afraid of having a messy situation and losing control over the group, as last year she worked in a one-teacher environment.

Beatriz Gabbiani (2000) refers to control and power issues and to how decision-making works in relationships. To quote Wieman's words (1985), she understands control as a «constellation of constrictions mutually assigned by people by means of manipulating the structure and content of interactions, thus limiting the available options for each of the speakers and for the relational system as a whole». Language is used as a control element and the student is managed through it, «a specific discipline is imposed on him/her through language and even in situations where speech is dominated by someone else's speech, to the point that it could be said that it is not the person who is speaking (...).» As long as the teacher finds ways of keeping on speaking, students will pay attention; as long as he/she is able to orchestrate or to preset others' speech, he/she will maintain control. (Gabbiani, 2000)

First of all, it needs to be said that the issue should not be about groups with or without autonomy. It has been already stated, as maintained by Boix, that autonomy is a skill and therefore has to be taught. Absolute autonomy does not exist—it is developed. The fact of recognising that the children are dependent on her may be a teacher's strategy to keep under control what they learn and do; she institutionalises this dependency relationship and considers it is something characteristic—a feature.

For Gimeno (1988), in the school context there is clearly a leader—the teacher. His/her actions do not only determine the actions of each of the students, but also the class-evolution as a group. If the established relationship is based on dominance, students will have to retreat and inhibit themselves from spotlight. If the predominant interaction is that of a personal relationship, then a tutorial system will be set up.

Based on this information, the relationships of dependency linked to interactions in the classroom can also be seen. Within this environment, the teacher is the one who, as a matter of principle, determines tasks to be done and rules to be followed. This definition can be more or less clear and flexible, and can address to a greater or lesser extent the students' interests, and conse-

quently it can be negotiated. However, this does not change an essential fact: the enormous difference in power implied in performing the teacher role in relation to performing the student role.

For this reason, we think that these observations carried out within the research reveal dependency relationships, which result in some ideas, summarised below:

- Class organisation is always the same and interactions are performed always in the same way.
- There are not any diversified work proposals; it is either the same one for the whole group or the same one for the whole grade.
- Paths and resources to be followed are provided in work instructions, in which some elements from the behavioural approach are underlying.

THIRD OBSERVATION: INDIVIDUALISED INSTRUCTION *A PRIORI* (SOUTH SCHOOL)

The teaching proposal made by the teacher is based in individualised instruction to their students. This is described as «a priori», since daily activities are planned as individual work. The teacher proposes shared activities to the children of the same grade, but these are designed to work on them individually. During the seven observation days, the teacher proposed only two activities to the group as a whole, and individualised instruction was equally applied when supervising children's autonomous work.

It is observed that, even though the teacher provides individual attention, neither does it respond to learning modalities, nor to the children's learning difficulties. Likewise, these aspects are not considered in work activities, which are the same for all same grade students. The most used resource is photocopied exercises: they are given to each of the children, who then glue the worksheets onto their notebooks.

This proposal contradicts what Multigrade Teaching theory (Santos, 2006, 2007, 2011a, 2011b) maintains in relation to the achieved asset that interrelationships taking place within diverse groups in a time-sharing and space-sharing situation entail. A different instruction for each grade is observed here and this does not enable teacher-student interaction, let alone peer interaction; it only enables that the assignments are returned after being appropriately graded.

Even though learning is based on a process both interpersonal and shared, ultimately it is always a personal acquisition—which does not mean that the process has to be carried out individually. In order to accomplish learning, an issue or situation that makes our knowledge unstable has to arise. Children frequently work individually with materials previously created by teachers including clearly sequenced and progressive activities about different topics—which are called «worksheets».

Zabala (1995) speaks of the «personal work contracts by Freinet». The teacher proposes to the students learning activities appropriate to their aptitudes and interests. Beyond the difficulty of creating and developing—and correcting—these specific work files, autonomy is fostered, as is commitment and responsibility to ensure contract compliance. Group/class work, level group work, or grade group work, do not exclude individual work and effort; on the contrary, the aforementioned foster both purposeful personal work and responsibility as an active integrant of the process.

In view of the necessity of analysing the classroom situations observed in the research in accordance to the theory, we should ask ourselves, «What does 'teaching' mean?» According to Fenstermacher (1989) «…that relationship established between at least two people; one of them have some knowledge, skill or another content form that aims to transmit to another person who lacks it». The author considers that two people need to be present in the act of teaching, while in the case of learning this is not essential. Learning relies more on specific factors such as mindset, study time, motivation, etc., than it does on teaching. Teaching can occur without entailing learning achievement, and learning can also exist without a systematic teaching process having taken place.

The work of teaching entails an enormous responsibility and it is not only about passing on wisdoms and knowledge. The idea we have of teaching defines to a great extent the way practices have been structured—which in turn is inevitably linked to personal and disciplinary stories.

«Teaching practices presume an ideological identification which makes teachers structure that field in a specific way…» (Litwin, 2001, p. 94) Then, it is good trying to interpret those practices so as to foster reflection upon them. As in any human work, mistakes may be made in the micro world of practice. The important thing is to have elements in order to study, analyse and think about the subject permanently.

«If in the years to come we are not able to think more deeply than today about some of the complexities that dwell in the very heart of teaching; if we are

not able to appreciate more fully the role that teachers can play—and indeed play—in our lives, we are condemned to have those schools and those teachers whose educational potentialities will never be developed.» (Jackson, 1990)

FOURTH OBSERVATION: AUTONOMY AND PARTICIPATION (WEST SCHOOL)

Children seem to be autonomous—autonomy being perceived as something being taught. They listen to work instructions and work without expecting to be supervised by the teacher. They tend to ask each other and to the teacher if needed be. When they are on their own, the same working atmosphere is maintained—likewise when they carry out tasks outside the classroom. No distraction from the topic that calls them together is observed. They are able to stop, talk, or gesticulate, but they are always focused in the subject. They participate orally, in an active way, using good vocabulary—which is being constantly increased by the teacher: she requests synonyms, «another way of saying it», etc. The children are enthusiastic about the suggested tasks.

Below is the transcription of a classroom situation that we see as a resounding example:

> Children seem to be autonomous—autonomy being perceived as something being taught. They listen to work instructions and work without expecting to be supervised by the teacher. They tend to ask each other and to the teacher if needed be. When they are on their own, the same working atmosphere is maintained—likewise when they carry out tasks outside the classroom. No distraction from the topic that calls them together is observed. They are able to stop, talk, or gesticulate, but they are always focused in the subject. They participate orally, in an active way, using good vocabulary—which is being constantly increased by the teacher: she requests synonyms, «another way of saying it», etc. The children are enthusiastic about the suggested tasks. (Category 1.3. Field note from the West School)

In the light of theory we interpret that in this scene circumstances to develop the students autonomy have occurred. This can be inferred from the way they take responsibility for the learning process and do not rely constantly on the teacher's guidance: they make decisions so as to make progress. They keep up

the pace of work even when they are outside the classroom. The teacher puts the students in situations they have to solve, without having previously given an explanation, since she knows they manage certain level of conceptualisation. She motivates them to find solutions, firstly with their peers, and then they turn to her if necessary. This teacher provides opportunities to interact and stimulates mutual support. She organises space areas—perhaps according to the topic she intends to teach—and it can be seen that the children are used to go outside the classroom and work responsibly.

In relation to the progress of the knowledge acquired by the children, it is important to highlight the presence of the teacher. We could ask ourselves if autonomy is linked to children participation since the planning stage or if it is the teacher the one making decisions and organising activities. In some way, the education system gives the teacher the responsibility of decision-making: he/she has to select and give a hierarchy to the contents so that they are taught; teachers have to promote that all children enjoy the same opportunities to engage with knowledge. This task will depend upon the teacher's intellectual autonomy, which involves discipline knowledge, experience and commitment.

In that sense, autonomy is a competence, and as such should be taught; and, multigrade classrooms are ideal settings to develop it. Autonomy is the foundation of lifelong learning and it is strengthen as children began to realise that the responsibility for their own actions belongs to them.

CONCLUSIONS

Our aim was to look thoroughly into the teaching situations taking place in multigrade classrooms of rural schools. For that, participant observation method was applied, since we understand it enables a dual intellectual action: a look from the inside—by immersing ourselves in the setting where events are produced; and, at the same time, enjoying certain perspective and the distance provided by the fact of us being researches and by the theoretical corpus adopted in this work. From that position we went on to observe certain categories and indicators in which, based on the theoretical knowledge available, we were particularly interested: teaching strategies, time management, space organisation, the use of teaching materials, assessment mechanisms.

The outcomes were, to some extent, surprising. According to what has been aforementioned above, we expected to find settings that showed a certain set of features—where teaching situations based on the features of the selected schools corresponded, to a greater or lesser extent, to what theory suggests. However, we found a remarkable diversity of manifestations of teaching practices in multigrade groups: some of them were in the order of what was expected while others were far from and even contradictory to the theoretical framework of multigrade teaching and the active-participative methodological approaches. But these unexpected scenes throw much light on multigrade reality and contribute to the creation of teaching proposals for rural schools and their extrapolation to other types of schools. Therefore, these are included in the descriptive categories expressed and in their subsequent interpretation.

In that respect, the Uruguayan team worked on the basis of two successive processes. On the basis of the field notes generated through participant observation method applied in the four schools selected, various descriptive categories were created; each of them was given a *scene*, which was named, described and illustrated with examples. These categories that were at first linked to the schools where they had been generated, were later organised into four groups based on what we initially intended to reveal. The second process comprised the interpretation of the categories in the light of the theoretical corpus selected. This part of the work produced a text which is still under construction, although its core elements are included in the present report. Therefore, these conclusions are necessarily partial and leave the path open so as to continuing working on it. The inputs generated in the field work thus merit it, both for its potentiality and for the hermeneutic-interpretative possibilities they open.

Regarding teacher-students interactions in multigrade classrooms, observations suggest a clear tension between autonomy and control and dependency. Much has been said about autonomy of students in rural schools, and specifically in multigrade classrooms, and thus we expected to find indicators of it. Autonomy did appear, although complexly expressed due to the diverse manifestations that, according to what we noted, it acquires in reality. Only in the case of the West School did we find a type of autonomy linked to children participation, since a process of having taught such autonomy is noticed on the part of the teacher. This fact is necessarily seen in the observations—even though they correspond to a short period time—since the decisions

made by the children and the dynamics they acquire in the class development cannot happen by chance. On the contrary, the children participate autonomously in the day-to-day running of the classroom which, however paradoxical it may seem, highlights the teacher's role as educator and responsible for those events. Only under the teacher's attitude and her decisive influence is possible to achieve the level of autonomy observed. Under these advantageous conditions the multigrade group structure helps that autonomy be expressed in an effective manner. Observing that the children «are used to ask each other and to the teacher if necessary» reflects the potential of asymmetric relationships within the multigrade group and, therefore, the purpose that inquiries and interactions among learners take.

In the other cases observed autonomy reveals differently and reflects the complexity of this subject and the difficulties it presents for teaching processes and strategies which can be applied in order to foster it. As it was proved, autonomy has to do with the way the student manages in the classroom, but also it is closely related to the teacher's role and his/her attitude towards his/her ties with the children. Two facts seem to be clear. Firstly, judging from the teachers' discourse and the primary images produced by their gestures, autonomy is something of value and as such entails legitimacy so as to be performed. Autonomy is seen as a positive feature that has to be sought in the classroom, specifically and because of its characteristics and the theoretical weight lying behind it, in multigrade classrooms of rural schools. The alternation between directed work and autonomous work, and the fact that the teacher cannot always attend all the children directly, contribute to this previous idea of autonomy as something desirable and necessary in multigrade classrooms. Secondly—and in tension with the foregoing—, certain sense of *danger* exists in light of the students' autonomy. That is linked to an eventual loss of control on the part of the teacher, who feels the group «is getting out of control» unless she directly intervenes in each decision made or each event taking place. But that danger is also linked to losing her position in the classroom, that position of the one who teaches and permanently regulates interactions. The observations revealed indicators of both strands of that danger implicitly associated to autonomy.

As both facts—considering autonomy as something positive but at the same time experiencing it as dangerous—, while being contradictory in many cases cohabit, the descriptive categories that were generated are particularly remarkable. However, they are strong indicators of what occurs in reality

within the classroom, and of the danger the superficial gaze of those who want to render account of it entails. Participant observation method made possible to generate descriptions that were much further from what can be seen «at first sight». That is the case of the «apparently autonomous controlling model», in which the teacher does not give up control and her position as regulating officer of the classroom dynamics, but she does so by establishing a series of guidelines and detailed routines. When these are performed they project the idea of autonomy, but only apparently, as behind it there is a controlling model. Routines are applied in a mechanical way, and so the children are not able of solving any conflict or situation different from what it is expected, unless the teacher is present. Additionally, a necessity can be observed on the part of the teacher for having the last word and permanently building up a scene as a kind of problem-free picture. The first thing is revealed in the way she rephrases the children's discourses, including ultimate amendments about what has to remain written or said. There is a power relationship where it is clear that, whatever is said, it will be teacher the one who will legitimate a «truth». The second thing is revealed in the anticipation processes exercised by the teacher to the actions performed by the children. Everything that does not follow a routine and a protocol—being therefore under control—is submitted to a prior trial so as to not showing it incorrectly or insufficiently. The girl who is about to write something on the blackboard does not have the autonomy to write as she wish, and so, before writing she has to say it to the teacher and will only be able of doing it if she gets her approval. A power relationship is present here, too, and is materialised in a stronger manifestation than the latter—the teacher has not only the last word but also the control over the situation even before it happens.

In other situations, what happens is not a type of control disguised as autonomy, but a more explicit, recognised and accepted control, assumed by the person exercising it. This is the case of the observation carried out in the Centre School, where the scenes revealed little autonomy and an extreme dependency of the children on the teacher, and a tight control and a permanent supervision on the part of her. It is interesting pointing out that the teacher's discourse is clear: she admits that such control is necessary. She does not feel that she should hide or cover up reality by dressing it up with other clothes. This fact is expressed in the need she says she feels about «constraining» the children because she thinks is a group «without autonomy» and the fear of «mess» and of not being able to «manage the group». This lack of autonomy

the teacher appreciates within the group presupposes the idea of autonomy as something given and pre-existent, instead of something that, as it has been said within the theoretical framework using Roser Boix' words, can be fostered and enhanced by the teacher. For this teacher, these children are not autonomous, period. What remains to be done is «constraining» them; providing guidelines for each step and for each event they are going to be involved in. The vicious circle which is thus generated leads to prevent that absent autonomy will ever appear. The teacher provides guidelines and leads every action point by point because of that lack of autonomy, wherewith she is not favouring for it to emerge. In other words, children are not autonomous because the teacher does not allow them to be, in a process of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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RURAL VS URBAN CROSSED APPROACHES: SCHOOL AND TERRITORY REPRESENTATIONS OF PUPILS AT THE END OF PRIMARY EDUCATION. CASE STUDY OF DRÔME, FRANCE

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ABSTRACT

Learning, trajectories and social representations of pupils at the end of primary school (CM2) have often been the object of territorial analysis, both rural and urban. But, so far, few comparative studies have picked up on this subject. This is what began here: after twice characterizing the education of rural students in CM2 (in 2000 and 2012, in the context of longitudinal studies), in 2014 the Ardèche and Drôme researchers of the Observatory of Education and Territories (OET) proceeded to «survey» CM2 students from three schools—one in a «small town» (Privas), a downtown one in a «big city» (Valencia) and one in a «difficult neighbourhood» in a big city (Valencia once again)—in an attempt to explore and map out the future research that started in the spring of 2015. The very first «results» are presented in this article, which focuses on an ongoing experiment in the field of «educational planning» («didactique du territoire»).

KEY WORDS

Language apprenticeship; Learning territory; Social representation; Rural school; Urban school.

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Rural vs Urban Crossed Approaches: School and Territory Representations of Pupils at the End of Primary Education. Case Study of Drôme, France[1]

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INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS OF RESEARCH

The Observatory of Rural Schools (OER) was undertaken through a five-year longitudinal follow-up of 2,500 rural and mountaineer students at the end of primary school (CM2), through six high school southern regions (east of France). The students were questioned on four occasions, as well as their parents and teachers, to build the object «rural and mountain school» (Alpe & Fauguet, 2008; Champollion, 2013). The results of this survey in the long term have identified key contextual features of this specific school and its performance in terms of results and school trajectories (Alpe, Champollion, Fromajoux, & Poirey, 2001; Alpe & Poirey, 2003; Alpe, Champollion, & Poirey, 2005, 2006, 2010). An international research project involving Chile, Spain, France, Portugal and Uruguay, led by the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the University of Barcelona (principal investigator Roser Boix) between 2009 and 2013 under the Innovation and Development program, enabled us to approach the essential teaching and learning characteristics (Champollion & Floro, 2013). Since 2009, OERs have become the Observatory of Education and Territories (OET) due to the expansion of their investigations to the projected urban school, having

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launched a second longitudinal follow-CM2 from the same school questions in the same schools: this second investigation, currently under way, is designed to measure any changes at work in the rural and mountain school.

Different researchers, who have tackled the task of characterizing the rural and mountain school in all its dimensions—contextual, organizational, teaching and learning—, now want to go further: they now wonder if the urban students, including those from «sensitive» urban schools, and rural students, especially those who are more isolated, may exhibit similar behaviours, outcomes and sometimes trajectories (Champollion & Floro, 2013) and if, again from the same perspective, organizations and school forms (such as the «multigrade» class) developed in rural and mountain territories in response to the «challenges» of demographic decline and, in extreme cases, of rural desertification are likely (after de-contextualization and re-contextualization, of course) to provide «solutions» to recurrent learning difficulties experienced today by many students in difficult urban areas. Conversely, they also wonder if teachers' teaching practices and instructional strategies, beyond «regularities» found in all practice territories, are not partially «territorialized» and if, in the same order of ideas, teachers' professional identities are not influenced by the territoriality of their practice field (Rothenburger, 2014).

It is in this broader interrogative context that the Drôme OET researchers proceeded, in the spring of 2014, to «survey» the CM2 students from two urban schools in the city of Valencia, one located in the city centre (Jean Fountain school), the other in a «sensitive» neighbourhood and benefiting as such from the city policy of support from the State and involved municipalities (Rigaud school), using the same questionnaires for students and parents which had been previously used in rural surveys. The very first results of this initial comparison are presented below. They are only «exploratory» because of the weakness of the urban workforce investigated (as discussed later in detail)... Further investigations are currently (2015) under way in the regions of Ardèche, Drôme and the Rhône, to try to deepen the first Drôme surveys made in 2014 and, initially, to check that they are «significant», that is to say, that they conceal many systematic variation factors which explain the observed differences.

PRESENTATION OF SOCIOLOGICAL AND TERRITORIAL CONTEXTS OF BOTH URBAN SCHOOLS SURVEYED

JEAN DE LA FONTAINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (VALENCIA / 1 LEVEL / 1 CLASS / 22 PUPILS)

The completion of the questionnaire took place in late March 2014 in a class of CM1-CM2 with 26 students including 22 CM2 (only queried) distributed as follows: 19 normal age students, a student one year ahead and a student one year late. The La Fontaine elementary state school consists of four classes, including three double level ones, with a total of one hundred students. «School of Application» ESPE [École supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation] antenna Drôme, it hosts throughout the year teacher-student interns as an institution of vocational training (from the late 19th century and the beginning of the public education actually). This is one of the oldest schools of the region. It has long been regarded as a «pilot» school because of its special status and, as such, welcomed, besides the students of the district, children of the social elites of the region. Indeed, up to the late 1980s it could hold every student of the district of Drôme. This is no longer the case, and its recruitment sector is now limited to the neighbourhood.

Its catchment area, situated in the city centre, is still very popular because of its location and relatively bourgeois habitat which comprises over 50% of detached houses with gardens, many green areas, and all shops needed for everyday life. The district retains the old reputation of being a neighbourhood in which to live. It should be noted that a recent local social diversity policy from the 1990s, has seen a proliferation of rent-controlled social housing hosting more and more families from disadvantaged backgrounds, including a significant proportion of single-parent families on welfare or unemployment benefits. In recent years, this demographic situation has generated profound sociological changes in state schools. Formerly mostly for the privileged classes, the trend has gradually reversed. Indeed it is clear that the most privileged families have gradually abandoned the state schools in favour of private schools which are well established in the industry and who welcome a majority of wealthy families.

When considering the sociological profiles of the 22 students surveyed, we find the characteristics mentioned above. Only five students belong to a select occupational category, most others being in the most disadvantaged groups. There are also five students living in single-parent families with several children. This profile is shared by all of the institution. Other indicators show a

constant socio-economic evolution «downward»: a constant increase in the number of teaching staff, a slow but steady increase in the number of early school difficulties at the various institutional evaluations, multiple partnerships between schools and socio educational workers.

Paradoxically, we can say that this school, though located in a middle-class neighbourhood, has had an evolution in the last fifteen years which nothing seems to stop. The characteristics of the public it accommodates brings it closer to those located in neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city, without benefiting from being labelled as an «educational priority» which would allow it to benefit from additional resources.

Pierre Rigaud elementary school (Valencia / 1 level / 2 classes / 38 pupils)

Two classes «CM2» (grade 5) of Pierre Rigaud elementary school were also surveyed. Located in the district of Fontbarlettes, in the peripheral urban area of Valencia, this school gathers 216 students spread over eleven «single-grade» classes and twelve pupils included in a Special Education class called CLIS 1.

The Fontbarlettes district is classified as a «priority intervention zone» by Valencia's policy, which has two purposes: reducing social and economic inequities, and decreasing development discrepancies existing within one single territory. Several problematic issues coexist: low income (median 8,009 euros/year) migrant and low graduate population (67.2% without degrees), high unemployment rate (41.3%), degraded low rent social housing, reduced state services (two elementary schools, three pre-elementary schools, a social housing administration office, a post office, a public library). Major urban improvements have nevertheless been carried out in recent years: apartment blocks were destroyed and rebuilt, and green areas have been expanded.

The Fontbarlettes area has benefitted from a set of State and local collectivity actions targeting social and economic aspects, including health, employment and education. Pierre Rigaud elementary school has therefore been labelled as of Priority Education which prevents classes from exceeding twenty-five students each and allows it to benefit from a supernumerary teacher, in charge of helping colleagues in their teaching duties within the school.

The two surveyed classes are made up of 18 and 20 pupils, ten of which are one year behind in their scholar courses. Twenty-two of them have Maghreb origins, ten are Turkish, three are African and three are French. They all

belong to lower social classes; 18 households have an active working member (19 fathers, 7 mothers).

FIRST CROSS URBAN SCHOOLS ANALYSIS LA FONTAINE – RIGAUD

DIFFERENCES OBSERVED

La Fontaine school students carry a slightly more favourable assessment (59.1%) of school than their peers in Rigaud school (52.9%). Students' perspective regarding their academic performance is also more optimistic in La Fontaine school: only 4.5% consider themselves to be in trouble, 59.1% considering themselves average, against 8.8% respectively and 50% of the students in Rigaud school. However, more positive success projections are observed (no difficulties reported) regarding the following school year with students of the Rigaud school (58.8%) than those of the La Fontaine school (45.5%). The perception of parents about the academic performance of their children differs greatly among the two schools: parents of Rigaud school students seem to be a true reflection of their children's perception, while the parents of La Fontaine school students perceive more good students among their children (68.2% versus 36.4%) and understate the number of average students (18.2% versus 59.1%).

Projections of study duration differ in the two groups studied. Students of Rigaud school plan a shorter study duration: 20.6% of Rigaud's students believe they will study until they are twenty years old, while 9.1% of the students in the Fontaine school think they will study until they are 26, 13.6% up to 25, and 9.1% up to 24 years of age. These are in line with the duration of studies planned by their parents (54% are considering long-type higher education for their children), whereas the parents of the Rigaud school consider longer studies (44.1%) than their children do. However, parents of La Fontaine school students are more likely to consider long higher education (54.5%) and only 4.5% of them are considering a general degree against 26.5% of parents of the students in Rigaud school. It may be appropriate to mention here that 11.8% of fathers of students and 5.9% of mothers of students of the Rigaud school hold a baccalaureate level degree +2, compared with 59% of fathers and 45.5% of mothers of students in the La Fontaine school.

It is also very interesting to note the existing disparities under consideration—which are all territorial representations—as to possible future

workplaces in the two samples studied: there is a strong preference of Rigaud school students for a «big city» type of environment (73.5% against 31.8% for La Fontaine school), supported by a strong correlative disinterest in the «rural» milieu: 58.8% say they would not like to work in rural areas against only 31.8% of students in the La Fontaine school.

If relatively few differences were observed in terms of projected mobility, disparities do exist for effective mobility: Rigaud school students travel more within their region (58.8% versus 36.4%) while those of the La Fontaine school prefer travelling in another area (68.2% versus 29.4%). When travelling abroad, the country of origin of the parents is a more popular destination for students from the Rigaud school (67.6% against 31.8%), while more students in the La Fontaine school travel to other foreign countries (40.9% against 20.6%). The social composition of the respective families of the two schools probably explains this.

Finally, and more anecdotal, a «school effect» seems to emerge from the professions mentioned by the students of the Rigaud school. Indeed, they have mentioned a significant amount of book related professions: authors (10), illustrators (9), writers (5), editors (6), whereas writer was only quoted twice by the students in the La Fontaine school. The annual participation of the Rigaud school in the «Book Fair» of Valencia, with meetings with authors / illustrators, can perhaps explain this disparity, knowing that the visits to cultural places generally happen more through the school than through the family for these students.

Places	Family	School
Cinema	47.1%	58.8%
Theatre	11.8%	23.5%
Concert	8.8%	2.9%
Library	26.5%	32.4%
Museum	8,8%	26,5%

TABLE I – DISTRIBUTION OF THE MODE OF ATTENDANCE OF SO-CALLED «CULTURAL» PLACES

CONVERGENCES OBSERVED

They are not as pronounced or common as the differences, but they are no less significant. Here are the main ones:

- Whichever the school concerned, the parents feel that their child will easily attend college (middle school?) in roughly equivalent proportions (63.6% for La Fontaine school and 61.8% for Rigaud school).
- In terms of mobility, low attraction for the «small town» brings together students from both schools: 27.3% of La Fontaine students and 29.4% of Rigaud students reported that they wouldn't like to work in that type of area.
- Among the most mentioned professions, there are also similarities: police officer, doctor, fireman, teacher / schoolmaster:
    - When asked about the desired and planned professions, no student mentions those of their parents.
    - Among the desired professions, high media exposure ones are mentioned first in both schools (singer in La Fontaine school, football player in Rigaud school), followed by scientific professions for La Fontaine and medical professions for Rigaud.
    - Reluctance concerning mobility to «rural areas», more strongly observed among Rigaud students, has led us to question their knowledge of «rural professions» which are mentioned in similar proportions by the students of both schools and none of them are carried out by students' parents.

But what happens if, for exploratory purposes, we compare these early trends—still to be confirmed—observed in urban Valencia with what was found in the rural areas of the two neighbouring regions of Valencia?

COUNTRY COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS (RURAL OER 2000 / OET 2012 ARDÈCHE AND DRÔME)—URBAN (OET VALENCIA 2012)

This brief comparative review—merely «exploratory», because of the low numbers of the two urban «surveys» conducted this year in the La Fontaine and Rigaud schools—is based, in addition to the two surveys conducted in urban schools of Valencia briefly described above, on the two previous studies by the Observatory of Rural Schools (OER) and the Observatory Education and Territories (OET), shown on the next page:

- OET longitudinal follow-up of 1,208 2011-2016 CM2 students from the predominantly rural areas (Champsaur, 1998) of three regions of the southeast of France (AHP, Ardèche and Drôme / balanced distribution between isolated rural, rural under low urban influence and rural poles / same schools as in 2000).
- OER longitudinal follow-up of 2,394 1999-2005 CM2 students from predominantly rural areas (Champsaur, 1998) of six regions of the southeast of France (AHP, Ain, Ardèche, Drôme, Haute-Loire, Haute-Saône / balanced distribution between isolated rural, rural under low urban influence and rural centres).

FIRST TRENDS

The first results of the comparisons—which (let us bear in mind) can only be «exploratory» at this stage of the investigation—of the opinions of CM2 students and their urban and rural parents regarding their liking for school, current and future projected grade level, their projected orientation, their potential mobility, their cultural activities at home and in school, and so on, show that in terms of their liking for school, grade level and school ambition, the rural specificity seems to fade somewhat. By the guide of the rural / urban comparison, the reduction found by the OET researchers at CM2 in 2012 between the two longitudinal studies of OER 1999-2005 (follow-up over) and OET 2011-2016 (follow-up in progress) indeed seems to be confirmed in the partial «results» observed in both urban schools of Valencia. The trend toward homogenization is even more strongly expressed by the parents...

As examples, here is what happened with the investigation regarding students' liking for the school place in the different territories surveyed:

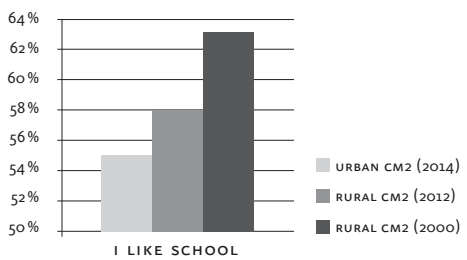


FIGURE 1 – STUDENTS' ENJOYMENT OF SCHOOL

The way students predict how the next school year will run…

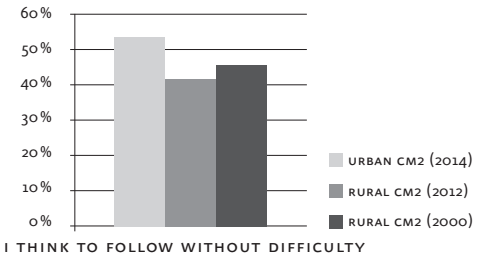


FIGURE 2 – STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR

The way parents predict how the next school year for their children will run…

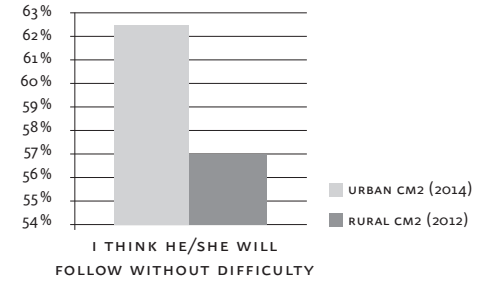


FIGURE 3 – PARENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR

The same—a tendency towards homogenization—applies as regards graduation age expected by students…

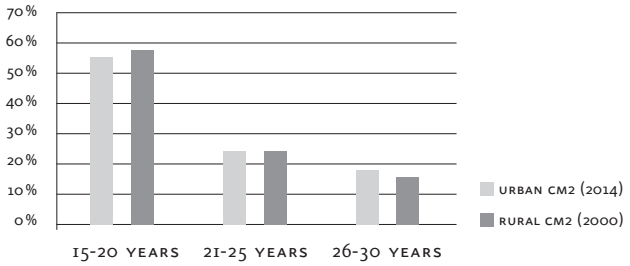


FIGURE 4 – AGE OF COMPLETION OF STUDIES EXPECTED BY STUDENTS

Like the parents' point of view concerning the same question...

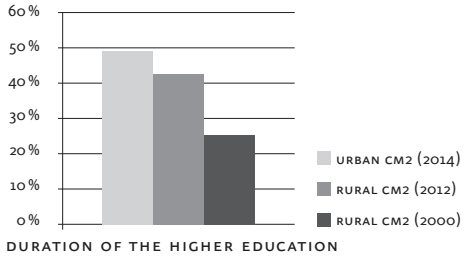
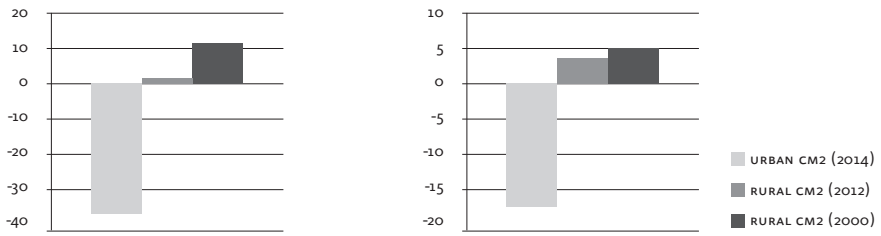


FIGURE 5 – AGE OF COMPLETION OF STUDIES EXPECTED BY PARENTS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

It therefore seems that the assessments made by the students—and by some of their parents—regarding their liking for school, how the next school year will run and the potential duration of future studies goes in the direction of a certain progressive harmonization... So is there a general trend towards the progressive standardization of representations and behaviours, a trend that would cross all types of territory? Will it ultimately be necessary to «deconstruct» the rural school, besides the current massive dissemination of its most emblematic «form», the «multigrade class», in urban areas, especially in priority education? Current in-depth investigations in progress, both in rural and urban areas, are expected to confirm—or not—these early trends.

Though much less clearly, the same applies to the respective representations of the city regarding the rural, and of the countryside regarding the urban—while still significantly differentiated, they are not as pronounced as previously. This is also indicated, or illustrated, given the statistical equity already issued, by the measures of the two following figures (DS means «significant difference», to be verified like the others in the larger sample being set up)...



FIGURES 6 & 7 – ATTRACTIVE/UNATTRACTIVE PLACES FOR STUDENTS: «COUNTRYSIDE» (LEFT) «SMALLTOWN» (RIGHT)

DEBATES AND «PENDING» REMAINING ISSUES

Many questions remain as we have seen today without scientifically attested answers, although trends, which are all avenues of research that could become research hypotheses, have ensued from the first results. Here are the main ones:

- What will happen, beyond the currently observed representations, to the reality of school behaviour and career choices in the future? This issue should be decided after the analysis of the result of the OET longitudinal follow-up (questions coming 3rd and 2nd)...
- Is rural territoriality, which was so difficult to identify, already being «diluted» progressively in a territorial ensemble homogenizing towards being predominantly urban?
- What about mountain territoriality, whose specificity is much more strongly attested? Is it also in «decline», at least partially? The OET longitudinal follow-up under way is expected to respond to this...
- Do subsequent urban analyses—whose development is necessary in view of these first «findings»—confirm the first urban «survey» done in 2013-2014? Investigations are ongoing in 2014-2015 in all the other «large» cities of the two regions of Ardèche and Drôme (Montelimar, Privas and Romans) to try to answer this... Some CM2 classes of the periphery of Greater Lyon (Saint-Priest, Villeurbanne) could add to it this year.

Beyond these previous questions, to which ongoing and future investigations will attempt to provide answers, a PhD research project was submitted in the autumn of 2014 to ascertain whether, in a difficult urban territory, the Valencia Network of priority education (REP), the educational use of the surrounding territory of the school may facilitate language learning in the final year of nursery school (students aged 5 to 6).

EXTENSION TOWARDS LANGUAGE LEARNING INVESTIGATIONS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

In line with investigations of educational science conducted by the University of Barcelona and discussed above, which planned to identify teaching

practices and innovative teaching strategies developed in the rural school, particularly those undertaken in Catalonia as part of the territorialized educational policy of the «Rural education zones» (Boix, 2004), or in the pedagogical continuity of Italian experiments relating to «educational planning» («didactique du territoire» / Pesiri, 1998), this doctoral research has been initiated to see whether—and how—the educational use of the territory surrounding schools can facilitate language learning.

This investigation will study learning from the construction of a common reference—the territory immediately surrounding the school, in this case the «suburbs» in all its dimensions—distinct from both the culture of country of origin of the students and the institutional culture conveyed by the school. Indeed, in order to learn, every individual must be confronted with 80% known matter and 20% unknown matter in order to establish points of reference which allow acquisition (Lentin, 1998). The teacher must, therefore, make sure he is in the zone of proximal development of his students (Vygotsky, 1985) and design goals within reach of their available capacities at the time of his teaching. Insofar as the most striking element in the distinction between oral language proficiency levels is the syntactic configuration of statements, there is a need to work first and foremost on the syntax complexity (Lentin, 1998; Boisseau, 2005). However, as children learns to share verbally by training in situations that directly concern and relate to their life experience, the use of verbal language occurs within a field of meaning, implying the acquisition—of a corresponding lexicon, besides that of a syntactic system. Building syntax in a known lexical field—which should of course grow—and common to all students, from life experiences related the environment outside school, thus appears to be less unequal than building a language school context impregnated with a socially distant culture from that of the families of the students involved. But the educational use of the territory surrounding the school as a starting point for language learning is currently not yet implemented or even contemplated by the Valencia REP teachers: validation of this initial finding is in progress via questionnaires and interviews with teachers since September 2014. The assumption is that the educational use of the territory surrounding school enables us to enter faster in the complexity of the syntax used in evocative situations founded on the common lexical capital built by all students, and is currently being tested with six classes of six different schools, each with an average of twenty-five students. The quantitative data are collected through pre- and post-experimentation evalu-

ations of transcripts of verbal productions of the students followed, comparative assessments of REP tested students with the results of students out of REP, to compare the progression «in REP / out of REP» and with the results of students who used digital tablets as learning support. As main indicators in pre-and post-test assessments, the quantification of simple sentences and multiple simple sentences (juxtaposed or coordinated) will be measured, as well as the quantification of the presence of complex sentences (with juxtaposed or embedded subordination) in the data gathered, and the quantification of the ratio simple sentences / complex sentences. Possible changes in student vocabulary will be excluded from assessments, researchers agreeing to point out the lack of scientific reliability of the existing vocabulary assessments (Lentin, 1998; Boisseau & Raffestin 1986).

These data will be complemented by qualitative data collection, on the one hand, through interviews with CP teachers to compare student performance from previous years with that of those benefiting from the scheme, as well as with teachers of the levels concerned (MS – GS) to measure the gaps between achievements before and after experimentation, and with parents of the students monitored as part of the experiment; and, on the other hand, through participant observation. The research hypotheses will be validated if the qualitative and quantitative data indicate that syntactic structures used in students' oral enunciation productions have become significantly more complex.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the various elements of comparison—projections and performance—collected between the two Valencia schools of La Fontaine and Rigaud apparently reflect the existing social difference between the populations of the two schools involved, especially on a global level. Instead, comparisons between the two OER and OET longitudinal studies attest a gradual approximation between the rural and urban cultures of the students, which obviously remains to be confirmed. Finally, a comparison between rural surveys in connection with the two longitudinal studies and urban exploratory surveys undertaken clearly indicates, beyond its initial trends which suggest the above-mentioned mild progressive homogenization of behaviours and performances, the question was worth asking, and is especially worth exploring further in the context of a statistically validated and well-equipped comparison.

In terms of future lines of research opened by this preliminary work, the following three investigations should obviously extend and / or improve the original investigations:

- Data collected in late spring of 2015 once additional urban surveys are processed by factorial correspondence analysis (AFC) to understand whether or not, as already established in the French «mountain zone» (Champollion, 2013) performance and potential trajectories of students of urban and sensitive urban territories (which should be both specifically characterized) are also the subject of a specific «territory» effect (which will also be characterized precisely after identifying).
- Beyond this first research question, and since the level of investigation (CM2) is identical, the «student» and «parent» questionnaires are similar (rural questionnaires having been used in urban areas) and therefore the information is comparable in volume, it is necessary to carry out territorially differentiated comparisons (hitherto scarcely studied) between statistically validated rural and urban schools, which should be quite enlightening...
- Finally, even though it is ultimately validated, the research hypothesis of the thesis presented in part 4 should demonstrate that besides influencing the school form, students' trajectories and teacher identity, territory is also likely to have a positive impact on student learning when it is effectively used pedagogically. In other words, this doctoral research would then lead to an example of «educational planning»...

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TEACHING PRACTICES FOR PASSIVE AND ACTIVE LEARNING IN RURAL AND URBAN ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to characterize, through a questionnaire, the degree of use of teaching practices related with passive and active learning in rural and urban elementary Portuguese teachers. Psychometric analysis of the questionnaire was conducted with a sample of 400 elementary teachers. For studying the degree of teachers' use of teaching practices related with passive and active learning the questionnaire was applied to a second sample of 140 elementary teachers from urban and rural schools. Use of teaching practices was compared between these two groups through a t-test (independent samples). Main results suggest the existence of a differentiation between a «participatory» and a «non-participatory» form of teaching in the inquired teachers; an higher general use of the former compared with the use of the later; and an higher use of «participatory» teaching in rural teachers than in urban teachers.

KEY WORDS

Active-passive learning; Approaches to learning; Rural education; Urban education.

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Teaching Practices for Passive and Active Learning in Rural and Urban Elementary Teachers[1]

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A recurrent perspective in Educational Psychology focuses on the fact that scholastic learning occurs by levels, more as a passive or an active process. One of the views that precisely emphasize this distinction is SAL (*Students' Approaches to Learning*) theory, which conceptualizes learning as the combination of students' motivation to study and learning strategies (Entwistle, Tait, & McCune, 2000). Previous researches within this framework consistently identified two major types of approaches students use: surface (passive) and deep (active) (Entwistle *et al*., 2000). A surface approach to learning comprises an instrumental motivation to learning (learning to avoid failure) and a surface learning strategy (rote memorization). On the other hand, a deep approach to learning involves an intrinsic motivation to learn (learning for its pleasure) and a deep learning strategy (comprehension, interrelation of information, critical analysis and creativity). Research had shown that approaches to learning significantly influence school achievement, with the surface approach linking with poorer results and the deep approach with richer ones (Cano, 2005; Diseth, 2007, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Studies also indicate that approaches to learning act both as relatively stable ways of coping with study

1 This paper results from research conducted in the context of the project ***La eficacia y la calidad en la adquisición de competencias caracterizan a la escuela rural: ¿es un modelo transferible a otra tipología de escuela?*** [Ref. EDU2009-13460], of University of Barcelona, sponsored by Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to António M. Duarte, Faculty of Psychology, University of Lisbon, Alameda da Universidade, 1649-013, Lisbon, Portugal.

tasks, on the basis of individual characteristics, and as variable responses, on the basis of specific contextual demands, like the teaching practices to which students are exposed to (Biggs, Kember, & Leung, 2001; Entwistle, 1987). Besides, there is evidence that the general learning environment, from which those teaching practices are a component, might differ according to the territorial context and especially as a function of its nature as urban or rural (Boix, Champollion, & Duarte, 2015).

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF PASSIVE AND ACTIVE LEARNING

Scholastic learning in general and students' approaches to learning in particular (i.e. surface and deep approach to learning—see previous section), are significantly related with the learning environment (Honkimäki, Tynjälä, & Valkonen, 2004; Richardson, 2011; Sadlo & Richardson, 2003). Effectively, approaches to learning are so sensible to the learning context that they actually «(...) give the barometer readings that tell how the general system is working.» (Biggs, 2001, p. 99).

Several studies revealed that students' approaches to learning are predicted by students' perception of their learning environment. These studies have shown that the deep approach to learning is positively predicted by a perception of the learning environment as characterized by good teaching, clear goals and standards, appropriate workload and appropriate assessment, while surface approach to learning is negatively predicted by such a perception (Diseth, 2007, 2013; Diseth, Pallesen, Brunborg, & Larsen, 2010; Lawless & Richardson, 2002; Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002; Richardson & Price, 2003; Sabzevari, Abbaszade & Borhani, 2013).

In general terms, surface approach to learning relates to a «transmissive» learning environment, where students are expected to receive information unidirectional transmitted to them (Burnett & Proctor, 2002), while deep approach to learning relates to a «constructivist» learning environment, where students are prompted to actively construct knowledge.

Specifically, previous research showed how different approaches to leaning differently relate with, or might be influenced by, specific teaching practices.

Surface (passive) approach to learning tends to relate with a learning environment mostly characterized by the use of what can be called «non-partic-

ipatory teaching»: A teacher's centred and depersonalized form of teaching (Biggs & Moore, 1993), in which the educator, taken has the epistemological authority, basically «transmits» facts (Gibbs, 1992), which «receptive» students are oriented to memorize (Biggs & Kirby, 1983) and then reproduce in single final tests (Biggs, 1990; Donnison & Pen-Edwards, 2012).

Oppositely, the deep (active) approach to learning is connected to «participatory teaching»: A student's centred and personalized form of teaching (Biggs & Moore, 1993), in which the educator, considered more as a kind of «guide», gives added freedom of choice to the students (Ramsden, 1988) and focuses in practices like: enthusiastically explaining (Ramsden, 1988); using students' language, questioning and discussing (Biggs & Moore, 1993; Chen & Dillon, 2012); addressing interesting knowledge structures contextualized on the exterior world and in relation with students' knowledge (Balasooriya, Hughes, & Toohey, 2009; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Ramsden, 1988); helping students in becoming aware of their conceptions (Svensson & Hogfors, 1988); teaching students learning strategies (Biggs, 1987); communicating trust on students' capacities (Dart & Clarcke, 1991); involving students in situations prone to provoke curiosity (Biggs & Kirby, 1983) and comprehension (Schmeck, 1988), like those of «independent learning», «collaborative learning» (Gibbs, 1992), «reciprocal teaching» (Biggs, 1990) and «problem based learning» (Ali & El Sebai, 2010; Sadlo & Richardson, 2003); continuously reacting to students (Ramsden, 1988) and evaluating them for correction (Gibbs, 1992); and encouraging students to apply what they have learned (Gibbs, 1992).

THE VARIATION OF EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN URBAN *VERSUS* RURAL TERRITORY

As mentioned above, students' approaches to learning (surface-passive or deep-active) are partly a result of the educational context (Biggs, Kember, & Leung, 2001; Entwistle, 1987). Moreover, the educational context can differ according to the territory, which is mostly differentiated in terms of urban *versus* rural (Boix, Champollion, & Duarte 2015; Hobin et al., 2012). In the next two sub-sections we present a characterization of the educational context in urban and rural territory.

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN URBAN TERRITORY

In general terms and when contrasted with rural education, the urban educational context is characterized as more resourceful in terms of a variety of aspects like accessibility, budget, technology, courses, special programmes, extra-curricular activities and specialized staff, like school psychologists (Clopton & Knesting, 2006; Khattri, Riley, & Kane, 1997).

Nevertheless, despite these apparent advantages, the urban educational context has been characterized as using an 'industrial model of education', more conductive to de-contextualized learning and disconnection from the local environment (Emmett & McGee, 2013; Pelavin Research Institute, 1996).

In particular, urban schools have a higher probability of being overcrowded, a fact that probably alienates more a close teacher-student relationship, since this is less typical in larger schools (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995; Enriquez, 2013; Hardré, 2007).

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN RURAL TERRITORY

In contrast with urban education, the rural educational context is generally characterized as more problematical, since rural schools have an higher probability of being isolated, having minor budgets, being less technology equipped, having less experienced, trained, specialized staff, and offering less courses, special programmes and extra-curricular activities (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995; Clopton & Knesting, 2006; Hedges, Laine, & Greenwald, 1994; Howley & Howley, 1995; Khattri *et al.*, 1997; Schafft & Jackson, 2011; Sipple & Brent, 2008; Williams, 2010). Additionally, in rural schools, there is a higher probability that teachers develop cultural conflicts with the local community's values (Hamon & Weeks, 2002), which might lead to a form of education not sensitive to the local culture and that eventually might promote values in rural students that are opposed to the local ones (Corbett, 2007).

It has been suggested that the lack of resources of the rural schools might lead, specifically in the third world, to a mechanization of teaching and a correlative emphasis on rote learning (Hamon & Weeks, 2002). Nevertheless, despite their limitations, rural schools seem also to offer specific potential conditions to learning.

Rural schools are normally less crowded, a circumstance that a number of studies have pointed as advantageous (Howley, 1994) since it facilitates

teachers' acquaintance of their pupils and a nearer liaison with them (Hamon & Weeks, 2002). As a matter of fact, rural educational contexts tends to involve a particular teacher-student connection (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995; Hardré, 2007), which seems to be a key factor for motivating students to learn (Hardré, Sullivan, & Crowson, 2009).

Moreover, due to the specific requirements of the rural context, rural education originated several «best practices» (Hamon & Weeks, 2002), like cooperative learning, peer tutoring, interdisciplinary studies and multigrade teaching. Furthermore, in rural schools there is an higher tendency to promote learning outside the classroom (Khattri *et al.*, 1997) and to exploit the social environment as a curricular resource, due to a greater closeness with it (Avery, 2013; Stern, 1994, as cited in Khattri *et al.*, 1997; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009), a fact that probably also explains the important role of rural schools in the consolidation of local cultures (Avery, 2013; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010).

The first goal of the study here presented was to characterize the degree of use of teaching practices related with passive and active learning (as defined in the above section «The Educational Context of Passive and Active Learning») in elementary Portuguese teachers. The second goal was to compare the degree of use of the same teaching practices in rural and urban elementary Portuguese teachers.

METHOD

To achieve the intended goals of this study a questionnaire was developed in order to measure the degree of use of teaching practices related with passive and active learning.

PARTICIPANTS

For the questionnaire development a first sample of 400 elementary teachers was used (11% males; 69.8% females; 19.3% missing cases regarding sex)—half from rural schools and the other half from urban schools.

For the study of the degree of teachers' use of teaching practices related with passive and active learning, both in general and accordingly to the territorial context, a second sample of 140 elementary teachers was used (13.6%

males and 86.4% females)—also one half from rural schools and the other half from urban schools. The average age of these teachers was of 41.4 years old, ranging between 28 and 58 years and their average number of years of teaching experience was of 17.7 years, ranging between 2 and 33 years.

MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Data were collected through a questionnaire constructed for this purpose—the «Questionnaire on Learning Context (1st cycle)—QCA 1st c.». The items of the QCA 1st c. are descriptive statements about teaching practices that research has found to be associated with students' surface (passive) and deep (active) approaches to learning. These items are based on a literature review on the topic of the relationship of the learning context with students' approaches to learning (see the above section named «The Educational Context of Passive and Active Learning»).

Considering what was to be measured, six types of items were defined, considering the areas of Educational Objectives, Curriculum Content, Teaching Methods, Educational Measurement, Educational Materials and Resources and Teacher-Student Interaction. Each item consists of a descriptive statement of the learning context provided by the teacher, seeking to ascertain the degree to which each respondent's recognizes it as characterizing his or her own teaching practice. Items are expressive of two kinds of learning environment: «non participatory» or «transmissive» (where students are expected to receive information transmitted in a unidirectional way to them—related with surface/passive learning); and «participatory» or «constructivist» (where students are prompted to actively construct knowledge—related with deep/active learning).

The group of items concerning *Educational Objectives* includes sentences that characterize the structure and content of educational objectives (the learning goals), as defined by the teacher. The *Curriculum Content* group gathers statements that refer to the quantity, relevance, interest and kind of curricular content which is taught. Concerning the *Teaching Methods* group, it gathers a set of items that expresses a series of educational methods or pedagogical procedures. On the other hand, the *Educational Assessment* items comprehend statements on the format, timing and function of the evaluation performed by the teacher (how student's learning is evaluated). The *Materials and Educational Resources* group includes items that seek to characterize the diversity and the

type of material used by the teacher, as well as the management of time and space in which learning takes place. Finally, the set of items *Teacher-Student Interaction* includes statements that characterize the interpersonal relationship of teacher and student in the classroom.

The final structure of the questionnaire comprises 54 items (the sequence of the items involved an alternation between all dimensions to study) in addition to demographic characterization questions (i.e. age, sex, years of teaching and location of teaching).

Each item is of a five-level Likert type, where 1 corresponds to «Never» and 5 to «Always», and expresses the identification degree of the respondent with the statement, in terms of its own teaching way. Each answer was recorded on a sheet, which contains the five-point scale. It was stressed for the teachers that the responses should be given «Based on what happens on a personal level—and not based on what one thinks that should come, or that the teacher would like to happen».

In order to pre-test the first version of these items, they have been submitted to the consideration of four teachers of first cycle, using individual interviews. Interviews were conducted in the teachers' workplace and lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Teachers were read the entire content of the questionnaire and for each item they were asked: What they understood of it; its clarity, length, fluency and the degree to which it measures what it intends to measure. This analysis was accompanied by suggestions for changes. A second improved version of items was then drafted.

DATA COLLECTION

After pre-test, the questionnaire was applied by presenting it as «A tool to collect useful information for a research project on teaching and learning in the 1st cycle». Teachers were also informed about its goal: to characterise teacher's educational practices with no intention to assess it.

It has been stressed the confidentiality of responses and their restricted purpose to the investigation. Thereafter, participants were introduced to the response format. The questionnaire was administered during the school year in elementary first cycle schools across the country.

DATA ANALYSIS

For the psychometric analysis of the questionnaire the first sample's responses were subject to a distribution analysis (by calculating the frequency and the variance of each item's response), an exploratory factor analysis, of first and second order, and a reliability analysis for establishment of subscales of first and second order (to check what the questionnaire actually measures). Internal consistency of each group of items was studied by calculating its Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (in general and with withdrawal of each item) and the correlation of each item with the total of the group to which it belongs.

After the questionnaire psychometric analysis, means and standard deviations were calculated for each subscale of first and second order, considering the second sample's responses. A t-test (independent samples) was then performed, to compare the means of rural teachers with the means of urban teachers in each scale (first and second order).

RESULTS

PSYCHOMETRIC ANALYSIS RESULTS

The analysis of each item response's distribution has kept all items initially considered.

The exploratory factor analysis of the items (through *principal axis factoring* method) has shown (according to the *scree plot* criteria) the existence of five main factors, with an explained total variance of 34.14%. Factors rotation (through *varimax* method with *Kaiser normalization*) identified the items that comprise the extracted factors (with a correlation superior to .40) as it can be consulted in Table 1.

The results of each group of items (factor) internal consistency can be found in Table 2 (see next page).

From internal consistency analysis the following subscales have been built.

Subscale 1 «Participatory Teaching – Mixed Practices» (group: 1 – alpha = 0.897).
This subscale comprises a variety of teacher centred practices and attitudes that characterize a kind of environment related with deep/active learning (see the similarity with the subscale 3 but, alternatively, the pointing out student-centred kind of teaching). This scale comprises the following items:

Itens	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	.453				
2					
3	.507				
4					
5					
6	.476				
7	.589				
8					
9	.676				
10					
11					
12					
13	.686				
14	.628				
15	.645				
16					.471
17					
18	.465				
19					.551
20					.513
21	.455				
22					
23					.538
24			.468		
25					.444
26					
27					
28					
29	.488				
30	.590				
31	.627				
32	.615				
33					
34					
35					
36	.410				
37		.534			
38					
39		.414			
40	.575				
41		.526			
42		.628			
43					
44				.441	
45					
46					
47			.501		
48			.406		
49			.453		
50		.428	.442		
51			.464		
52				.463	
53			.409		
54					

TABLE I — ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX (1ST ORDER)

Group of items (factors)	Item	Item-total correlation	Alfa with item withdrawal
1 (alfa = .897)	1	.394	.896
	3	.470	.894
	6	.493	.893
	7	.553	.891
	9	.661	.887
	13	.656	.887
	14	.640	.887
	15	.630	.888
	18	.463	.894
	21	.471	.894
	29	.534	.891
	30	.628	.888
	31	.657	.887
	32	.645	.887
	36	.486	.893
	40	.582	.890
2 (alfa = .730)	37	.547	.654
	39	.521	.669
	41	.500	.682
	42	.512	.674
3 (alfa = .755)	24	.342	.753
	47	.558	.707
	48	.496	.721
	49	.477	.725
	50	.574	.703
	51	.451	.730
	53	.412	.739
4 (alfa = .658)	44	.490	-
	52	.490	-
5 (alfa = .658)	16	.326	.644
	19	.442	.592
	20	.464	.581
	23	.497	.565
	25	.331	.642
	8	.225	-

TABLE 2 — INTERNAL CONSISTENCY (IST ORDER)

(1) «I try to explain the objectives of the learning tasks to students.»; (3) «I express enthusiasm for the subjects when I teach»; (6) «In class I use different curriculum materials.»; (7) «I have a close relationship with my students.»; (9) «I try to make interesting tasks for students.»; (13) «I encourage my students to try to understand the contents.»; (14) «I use learning tasks that promote curiosity»; (15) «I encourage my students to apply the acquired knowledge.»; (18) «I try to relate with my students.»; (21) «I express confidence in learning skills of my students»; (29) «I continuously assess my students.»; (30) «I teach learning strategies to students.»; (31) «I clearly organize the subjects I teach.»; (32) «I try that students become aware of their knowledge / ideas.»; (36) «I relate subjects to students' knowledge»; (40) «I react positively to students' positive actions (for example: by praising)».

Subscale 2 «Participatory Teaching—Understanding and Autonomy» (group: 2 – alpha 0.730).
This subscale consists of items that also express elements of an open education, specifically actions to stimulate the understanding (reflexivity, inter-relating information, discussion) and the autonomy of students. The scale comprises the following items: (37) «I propose questions for reflection in the classroom.»; (39) «I relate the contents to the outside world.»; (41) «I promote the discussion in the classroom.»; (42) «I foster students' choice of work procedures.»

Subscale 3 «Participatory Teaching – Differentiation» (Group: alpha = 3, 755).
This subscale comprises also items expressive of an open teaching, specifically practices or actions that reveal a concern to focus the teaching on the student and to differentiate it taking into account the student's specific profile. Note that while subscale 1 seem to reveal a context of open learning but whose main agent is the teacher, the items on this subscale express a context of the same type but having now the student as the main agent. This subscale comprises the following items: (24) «I use materials of the local context of the school (specimens, objects).»; (47) «I allow students the choice of learning activities.»; (48) «I provide opportunities for students to teach each other.»; (49) «In my classes there are different environments or spaces (corners, thematic sections)». (50) «I allow students to learn in small groups.»; (51) «I differentiate the attention span depending on the type of student.»; (53) «I negotiate with students the content to be learned.».

Subscale 4 «Participatory Teaching – Students Specificity» (Group: – alpha = 0.658).
This subscale consists of items that also feature an open education, involving practices that focus teaching on students and their characteristics, including their own language and their possible special needs. This subscale comprises the following items: (44) «I try to use the language of the students.»; (52) «I believe that pupils with special needs should have a specific answer.».

(heading 5) Subscale 5 «Non-Participatory Teaching» (Group: – alpha = 0.658).
In contrast to the previous subscales this subscale consists on items expressing pedagogical practices that appear to be tied to a more closed / traditional teaching view, focused on the contents and aiming the student to memorize and to have success in summative tests. This scale comprises the following items: (16) «In assessing students I give more importance to closed tasks (tests).»; (19) «I encourage students to try to literally remember what they

learn.»; (20) «In the curriculum, I give more importance to the facts than to what is behind these facts.»; (23) «I evaluate students only on the basis of tests and final papers.»; (25) «I worry more on teaching than in establishing a relationship with the students.»

As mentioned in Method, after building subscales it was carried out a new factor analysis, in order to check how subscales relate to each other and possibly obtain a more simplified image on how learning contexts differentiate. The intention was to verify the possibility of creating second-order scales expressive of «Types of learning contexts».

With the objective of a second order factors extraction, the means of items that compose subscales 1 to 5 were calculated. The second order exploratory factor analysis of these subscales shown (through *varimax* method with *Kaiser normalization*) the existence of two factors that explain 72.93% of the variance. The rotation of these factors (using the *Varimax method* with *Kaiser normalization*) allowed to identify subscales that comprise the extracted factors, as can be seen in Table 3.

Subscales	Factors	
	1	2
Subscale 1 – «Participatory Teaching – Mixed Practices»	.784	-.058
Subscale 2 – «Participatory Teaching – Understanding & Autonomy»	.843	.001
Subscale 3 – «Participatory Teaching – Differentiation»	.760	.166
Subscale 5 – «Non-Participatory Teaching»	-.082	.988

TABLE 3 — ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX (2ND ORDER)

After having identified the factors that aggregate the questionnaire's subscales it has been studied the internal consistency of the items that compose them, in order to build a scale (scale 1) that reflects «Participatory» teaching and another scale (scale 2) that reflects «Non-Participatory» teaching. In Table 4 it is possible to consult the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of these two scales, along with the correlation of each item with the total of its group and the alphas with removal of each item.

Groups of items (factors)	Item	Item-total correlation	Alfa with item withdrawal
1 (subscales 1.2.3 alfa= .896)	1	.339	.895
	3	.418	. 894
	6	.518	.891
	7	.480	.893
	9	.592	.890
	13	.522	.892
	14	.625	.890
	15	.507	.892
	18	.416	.894
	21	.466	.893
	29	.486	.892
	30	.630	.889
	31	.576	.890
	32	.583	.890
	36	.506	.892
	40	.538	.891
	37	.473	.892
	39	.575	.890
	41	.474	.892
	42	.433	.893
	24	.306	.896
	47	.383	.894
	48	.480	.892
	49	**.376**	**.897**
	50	.536	.891
	51	.453	.893
	53	**.262**	**.899**
2 (subscale 5 alfa = .655)	16	.326	.638
	19	.429	.593
	20	.468	.581
	23	.502	.555
	25	.334	.640

TABLE 4 — INTERNAL CONSISTENCY (2ND ORDER)

As can be observed, the values of alpha coefficient are high for both groups of items (0.896 and 0.655). On the other hand, the value of alpha increases in group 1 with removal of the items 49 and 53. Every item has acceptable correlations (above 0.22) with the total of its group.

Thus, the factor analysis of 2nd order allows us to understand the existence of a type of education characterised for being a «more participatory teaching.» The items that express this teaching emphasise understanding, establishment of an teacher-student relationship, ongoing evaluation and use of teaching methods that promote inquiry and reflection. Regarding the second type of education found—«non-participatory teaching»—the items point to tasks of literal memorization, summative evaluation, emphasis on facts and concern on lecturing and transmitting information, at the expense of building a relationship.

USE OF TEACHING PRACTICES

As it has been already mentioned in the Method, after the psychometric analysis of the questionnaire, means (and respective standard deviations), for each scale of first and second order, were calculated, considering the second sample of teachers already characterized.

In Table 5 it is possible to consult the results (means and standard deviations) of the second sample of teachers in each scale of first and second order.

	Urban & Rural		Rural		Urban		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t-test
Participatory Teaching – Mixed Practices (1st order)	4.45	0.62	4.54	0.55	4.36	0.65	2.86*
Participatory Teaching – Understanding & Autonomy (1st order)	4.08	0.65	4.10	0.65	4.05	2.11	0.56
Participatory Teaching – Differentiation (1st order)	3.52	0.80	3.58	0.79	3.46	0.79	1.41
Participatory Teaching – Students Specificity (1st order)	3.95	0.88	4.09	0.85	3.82	0.89	2.30
Non-Participatory Teaching (1st order)	2.43	0.87	2.36	0.81	2.51	0.92	-1.62
Participatory Teaching (2nd order)	4.15	0.67	4.23	0.63	4.08	0.91	2.48**
Non-Participatory Teaching (2nd order)	2.43	0.87	2.36	0.81	2.51	0.92	-1.62**

*p < .01 **p < .05

Note: t-test refers to comparison Rural-Urban

TABLE 5 — USE OF TEACHING PRACTICES – RESULTS OF THE QCA 1ST C

The analysis of Table 5 allows us to verify that for all subscales (1st order) teachers (urban and rural) have higher values in the practices that characterize a «participatory teaching» than in the practices that characterize a «non-participatory teaching». From the practices of «participatory teaching» both groups of teachers present higher values in «mixed practices».

It may also be noted that rural teachers show higher values in all subscales of «participatory teaching» than urban teachers and compared to these, lower values on the subscales of «non-participatory teaching.» These differences between urban and rural teachers are statistically significant (t-test for independent samples) for the 1st order subscale 1 ($t(127) = 2.86$, $p = 0.005$) and subscale 4 ($t(138) = 2, 30$, $p = 0.023$). For the remaining subscales 1st-order differences are not statistically significant.

Finally, considering the results of 2nd order scales, the difference between the scale of «participatory education» and the scale of «non-participatory

teaching» (in favour of the 1st for both rural and urban teachers) is higher for rural teachers (1.87) than for urban teachers (1.57). These differences between rural and urban teachers are statistically significant both for the scale of 2nd order 1 ($t(138) = 2.48$, $p = 0.014$) and for the scale of 2nd order 2 ($t(136) = -1.62$, $p = 0.014$).

DISCUSSION

Results of the questionnaire's psychometric analysis (specifically the 2nd order scales) suggest that it is possible to discriminate two kinds of teaching in the elementary teachers of the first inquired sample (urban and rural). The first kind of teaching corresponds to a «participatory» teaching, characterized for an emphasis on understanding, on teacher-student relationship, on ongoing evaluation and on teaching that promotes questioning and reflection. We know that this kind of teaching is more related to the use of students' deep/active learning. In contrast, the second kind of discriminated teaching—«non-participatory»—characterizes by an emphasis on rote memorization, on summative evaluation and on the transmission of information, at the expense of building a personal relationship with the students. This second type of teaching is usually related with the use of student's surface/passive learning. This dichotomy might reflect both a possible differentiation in teachers' conceptions of learning/ teaching (quantitative *versus* qualitative) and on schools cultures (traditional *versus* modern).

Furthermore, attending to the 1st order subscales, results suggest that while «non-participatory» teaching presents itself as unified, «participatory» teaching differentiates in a constellation of practices that include teacher centred mixed practices, comprehension and autonomy stimulating practices and differentiated student-centred teaching practices. This might be interpreted as a sign that while there is a variety of ways to use «participatory» (more flexible) teaching, the choice is more restricted concerning «no-participatory» teaching.

Besides, the second sample's results suggest that despite the fact that both urban and rural teachers use more «participatory» teaching than «non-participatory» teaching (which might be attributed to the fact this is the main trend in present education), that is more pronounced on rural than on urban teachers. This might be interpreted in the light of the differences between the

urban school (normally with bigger number of students and bigger distance to the community) and the rural school (normally smaller, with multigrade groups and more integrated in the community), a fact that might lead rural teachers to a more personalised relationship with their pupils and to the use of more «participatory» teaching practices. Particularly, the last result endorses a view that values and supports rural education, for its beneficial potential in the learning process (and in sustainability of the rural world), considering that certain features of rural schools can help with the critical analysis and improvement of education practices in other contexts, particularly the urban one.

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