

CrEE
REPORT ON THE PILOT SCHOOL
GIRONA June 2002

CONTENTS

1. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

- 1.1 The relationship with the school
- 1.2 The methodological process

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

- 2.1 External context: Description and analysis of environment
- 2.1 Internal context: The school

3. AN ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVITY STUDIED

- 3.1 Description of the activity
- 3.2 Aims of the fight against discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities
- 3.3 Analysis of the results

4. CONCLUSIONS

5. ANNEXES

- INTERVIEW GUIDE
 - For the head teacher
 - For the teaching staff
 - For parents
 - For students
- CARRYING OUT THE INTERVIEWS
 - For the head teacher
 - For teachers
 - For parents
 - For students
- Introductory letter
- Agreement with the schools

1. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 The relationship with the school

Of the 32 schools, which returned the questionnaire, this one was one of nine that answered “yes” to the question “Would you be interested in taking part in the CrEE project?”

At the beginning of the second stage of the project in February, we got in touch with the school’s head teacher to explain the project. We went to the school in order to be able to deal directly with any doubts that may come up.

The week after this first meeting the school agreed to participate in the project and we were even able to carry out one of the first interviews with the aforementioned head teacher. The second interview was with a group of three teachers, the third interview with a group of mothers and finally we collected the views of the boys and girls on their school and on the activity.

This school, then, has shown a high level of interest from the beginning, even though we did encounter some difficulties concerning the setting of the agenda and agreeing on the length of each interview.

This has mostly been because the teaching staff has felt that there is not enough time for them to carry out their work without pressure, and they could not see the possibility of fitting an interview of any more than 20 minutes into their timetables. In this way, we have had to adapt ourselves to their timetables and set up shorter interviews in order to avoid the failure of the project. Despite all this, once each interview was started, they stayed with us until the end, answering all the questions.

We feel that the school has showed a high level of interest from the beginning in receiving our support, that it has been very keen on organising activities but it appears to have few resources, regarding school equipment as well as human and educational resources.

We are able to report a good relationship between the interviewed members of the educative community and the CrEE professionals, and there has even been some collaboration in finding a person who could participate as a musician in the event that we organised.

1.2 Methodological process

The methodology employed is based on the technique of the interview, in group dynamics and participant observation.

It needs to be said of the planning stage that the size of the focus groups and their duration has had to be adapted to the reality of the school and the availability of the people to be interviewed. Bearing this in mind, the methodology was as follows:

Date	Technique	Participants	Duration
5 th May	Interview	Head teacher	60 minutes
8 th May	Discussion group	3 teachers	60 minutes
20 th May	Discussion group	3 mothers	60 minutes
9 th June	Group dynamics and participant observation	18 students	1 hour and 15 minutes

Basically, the variation to the initial plan has been the size of two of the discussion groups, in that we originally planned for there to be six people in each one. In the case of the teaching staff, the ones who came were those most interested in taking part in a focus group, even though the remaining six teachers also got involved in the activity. In the case of the parents, the three mothers who came were those who participate most in school activities and who make up part of the AMPA (The parents' association).

Regarding the preparation of the guide for discussion groups, we have based it on the content of the interview or on the previous group. Therefore, from the teacher's replies, we saw that there was a need to study the perception of the neighbourhood in more depth, as the geographical situation of the school is very important for each one of the school participants.

With regard to the group of students, information was collected through the group's dynamic. On the other hand we applied the technique of participant observation during the aforementioned dynamic. (See the guides in the annexes).

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

2.1 External context: Description and analysis of the environment

The school, Carme Auguet is located on the outskirts of Girona, in a district of 2000 inhabitants.

Like other districts of Girona, it was built in the 1970s for the purpose of housing a population which arose as a result of internal immigration from the South to the North of the Spanish state. These migrations were basically due to economic factors, of people from poor rural areas of Andalusia, Murcia and Extremadura.

Nowadays the majority of people living in this district are elderly. They are the ones who moved here in the 1970s and their descendants live here as well as other newly arrived groups, principally 10 newly arrived families of Moroccan, Gambian and Latin American origin. Therefore the residents of this district are mostly working class and with regard to language, Spanish speakers.

The type of housing is very simple, subsidised council housing with the right to buy; it consists of identical high-rise blocks of flats. The district initially had the minimum infrastructure necessary to live there, however, a new play park has been constructed and a sports centre is being built.

It needs to be said that the district is located right next to, on a dividing road, of another more established which previously had its own city council and a very different type of population: higher economic standard, Catalan speakers, etc.

The public infrastructures like the civic centre are in the older and more established area and to which the residents of Carme Auguet school's district have little access. It must be noted that the interviewees believe themselves to be living in a district apart, far from the centre of Girona and they do not have a feeling of belonging to the city, even though they would like to.

With regard to the school, this year it will celebrate its 25th anniversary and next year it will have a nursery school for infants next door.

2.2 Internal Context

Carme Huguet is a state primary school (3-12 years). It has a total of 93 pupils and a teaching staff of 8. It is a single line school (one classroom for each age group) and some classes (primary 5 and primary 6) even share classrooms for some subjects. It is therefore a small school that has some

of the characteristics related to the aims of the CrEE project such as a “homely” atmosphere, poor resources etc.

Carme August is a special school. This is a status which is awarded after the teaching staff request it and it is considered by the education council of the autonomous Catalan Government. The criteria for a school receiving the status of special school depends on the educational and social needs of the students, their families and the social conditions of the school’s district.

Another characteristic of this school that we’d like to highlight is the unequal way in which pupils are divided between the two primary schools in the area. In this district there are two primary schools: Carme August and a grant maintained school (publicly and privately funded). At the moment the grant maintained school has a high number of registered pupils and applications and we can state that it is taking all the pupils who come from the more conventional families, whereas Carme August, having vacant places, gets most of the pupils with special educational needs. The ratios are therefore unequal with respect to the reality of the district.

This is a tendency which applies to many areas of Catalonia where the native and more conventional families of a district are putting their children down for places in grant maintained schools due to their belief that an influx of immigrants to state schools has caused a drop in standards, or that due to a limited number of difficult cases, integration is not possible. The consequences of this are that the state schools, on the one hand, are left with a very high ratio of pupils with special educational needs and that, at the same time, due to the fact that they have unfilled places, immigrant children who arrive half way through a course can only find a place in those schools which are already straining at the seams. Carme August feels that they do not have sufficient resources at their disposal to confront this situation. Nor have any clear policy decisions been made to remedy this process (An inquiry into registration, single registration areas or special educational areas).

When we refer to children with special educational needs, we mean a category defined by the Department of Education of the Catalan Government, which outlines those cases which need more resources at their disposal. This evaluation is carried out by EAP teams (Assessment teams of educational psychologists) during the pre-registration period. Theoretically every state and grant maintained school is obliged to accept up to 4 children with special educational needs per classroom.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVITY STUDIED

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

3.1.1. title: Cultural Week

3.1.2. Type of discrimination being worked on: Discrimination against ethnic origin or culture and discrimination (exclusion) for social-economic reasons.

3.1.3 Aims

The aims of the activity are not set out in an explicit manner in any document, although in the interviews we did collect very similar aims from the various professionals. These objectives are:

General aims: Increase the knowledge between different cultural collectives within the school in order to learn to value diversity as an enriching factor. And work against the situation of exclusion or isolation from the city which these children may experience.

Specific objectives are:

- Promoting the involvement of families in the school
Promoting the cultural exchange between different collectives in the school
- Promoting knowledge about Girona and foster a feeling of belonging
- Promoting the involvement of pupils in organising school activities
- Promoting knowledge about and respect for nature.

3.1.4 Origin:

This year's cultural week is the third one to be organised by the school. The idea of organising a cultural week was first mooted by the EAP (assessment team of educational psychologists) in order to work with the different cultures of the school's students. Carme Auguet is a school with pupils from very diverse backgrounds, and this event was designed in order to work with and value the culture and origin of all the children while at the same time teaching them to respect diversity.

3.1.5 Methodology and practice:

Cultural week took place in April and for 5 days the school's rhythm changed completely and timetables, groups and activities were reorganised.

Activities which have taken place this year and which are the most relevant to the aims of the study are:

a) Multicultural afternoon snack. Mothers prepared typical dishes from their country of origin and these were shared out at school as an activity open to all families.

b) Workshops on traditional makeup and jewellery (African hairstyles, Henna, earrings and bracelets) The mums also took part here as tutors and they shared in discovering each other's cultures.

c) Exhibition of costumes and souvenirs from other countries, an exhibition where parents brought in something typical from their country of origin.

d) Activities to foster respect for nature: A project based on the school's flora, natural dyes workshop and taking part in the Girona cantata...

e) Getting to know Girona: Activities to make the children feel more a part of the city seeing as the school is located in a district a long way out from the centre and people don't see it as part of Girona. This can sometimes cause a sense of feeling marginalized or different, or simply not feeling like part of the city. This activity will try to let the children get to know their city better and teach them how to make use of it.

f) Workshop and discussion for parents: A theatre workshop took place, various discussions on "Our children's education", "diet", "Life stories of the district's elderly residents, we're all immigrants"...etc. These activities are designed to, on the one hand, find out and work on the way parents relate to their children's education, raise awareness of these issues and at the same time to increase parents' involvement in the school.

g) Parents in the classroom: This activity involves inviting different parents to the classroom so that they can tell the children all about their job or their cultural traditions. By doing this it is hoped to give value and importance to all the children's family experiences and in this way to work on self esteem and respect for others. Bringing a parent into the classroom with their respective knowledge gives value and importance to what they say and by the same token to their own child who often either doesn't relate to his parent's experience or undervalues it.

h) Catalan Literary event (equivalent to eisteddfod), to make the most of St Jordi's day (a Catalan festival on 23rd April which is also international day of the book) a literary competition was held with the school pupils. This activity was open to all the families too.

3.1.6 The participants

This activity is an attempt to involve the entire school community:

- The teaching staff: On one hand the teaching staff are the ones responsible for bringing the plans to life, coordinating different activities and gathering the necessary resources for each activity. The staff are the ones who decide on and plan for cultural week. Each teacher, especially at the planning stage is the one in charge of motivating and involving the parents in the activities.
- The pupils: How we view the pupils as the recipients of the activities but in spite of that fact, they take little part in the management of activities. All the pupils at the school take part in these activities although they take part in different activities according to their age.
- The parents: They take part as workshop tutors in different activities which take advantage of their knowledge. The parents' association (AMPA) has a larger involvement in the design stage of the activities.
- Other people in the district: Although their contribution at the interview stage was seen as very necessary input to the project, at the moment this group does not have a large role to play in the activities. But as well as inviting the parents, people involved in events in the civic centre and those cases known to the social educator were taken into account.

3.1.7. Resources

This activity makes up part of the programme "Quality in Education" of Girona city council. This programme gives financial support to some of the activities organised by Girona schools which hopefully improves the quality of intervention in the centres. It concerns, therefore, an activity financed by local government with the aim of encouraging an improvement in the quality of state education, and also to implicitly promote the state schools which are suffering from a lack of prestige.

3.1.8 Evaluation by the school:

The activity is evaluated by the staff and the head teacher in a final report which is needed to justify the funding received from the city council.

3.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

3.2.1 What is the situation or problem at the school which might maximise the potential of the anti-discrimination activities?

All the participants (teaching staff, families and pupils) emphasised in their interviews that there aren't any problems of discrimination or exclusion within the school. As the head teacher told us "There are the typical scuffles between the children but not much more than this." In fact, the activities during the cultural week were not really set up to address a conflict problem but to enjoy and make the most of the cultural diversity of the school as a way to enrich the lives of the children and their families.

However, all the participants in the project highlighted more general situations which lead us to conclude that the school and the district do suffer from types of discrimination and exclusion.

We can summarise these situations as follows:

-The district's social situation: The primary school, Carme August as a special needs school. We have already explained the characteristics of the school and why the school has been given special education status. These characteristics have stigmatised the district as well as the school itself as a "ghetto" for people not originally from this district. Furthermore, original residents say that they feel "abandoned" by those in power and that they live in a run down district with no services. It is worth pointing out that despite being an area of high immigration those interviewed don't think that is any social conflict between newly arrived groups and original residents. On the contrary, they think that people get on and integrate well due to their common experience of immigration.

-Unequal allocation of pupils between the area's two primary schools. The group of mothers especially wanted to highlight the discrimination towards the school shown by many families who send their children to the private school and who stigmatise and underrate Carme August. This tendency applies to many parts of Catalonia when the native and more conventional families from each district are registering their children at grant maintained

schools with the idea that the arrival of immigrants at state schools has caused a decline in standards - or, based on a few isolated cases with difficulties, that integration is not possible. This means that on the one hand state schools have a disproportionate amount of pupils with special educational needs, and that at the same time, due to their having free places throughout the year, immigrant children who arrive mid term can only get places at schools which are already stretched to the limit. It is in this sense that Carme Auguet feels it does not have sufficient resources to confront this situation nor has any clear political decision been made to compensate for this phenomenon. (Registration commissions, single registration areas or special education areas).

3.2.2 Are these activities appropriate to contribute to the fight against discrimination and for equal opportunities at the school?

On one hand this activity contributes to the fight against discrimination because it is designed to improve relationships and cooperation between the families from different cultural origins in the area. It is understood that this is one way to smash stereotypes and create an integrated social network. The proposed strategy of the school to achieve these aims is a cultural exchange between the different ethnic groups represented at the school and to increase understanding between the representatives of these cultures and the district's residents. The "Multicultural afternoon snack" activity is designed to promote this exchange.

Another activity to work against discrimination are the various discussion forums that the school is organising for parents. The aim of these forums is to improve the social education competence of the families. It should be remembered – as stated by the teachers – that many of the families of Carme Auguet pupils belong to a "high social risk group". That is to say that many of these families may be classified at differing levels as dysfunctional due to a precarious financial situation, recent migration (difficulties with language, a poor social network, little knowledge about the society etc...), personal problems amongst themselves and so on. These factors usually cause these families become involved in a process of exclusion and this has repercussions on the whole family and above all on their children's education. Thinking up strategies to improve their education may also help to break these processes.

On the other hand, we believe in creating equal opportunities between the pupils through the study in an educative context of the cultural model of the children's families, to place value on their cultural origins and therefore to increase self-esteem and self-recognition amongst the pupils. Activities

such as the “traditional make-up and jewellery” workshop and “parents in the classroom” are some of the activities which are designed to work towards these aims.

Due to the physical characteristics of the district which relate to its infrastructure, the residents view their neighbourhood as dilapidated and abandoned by Girona. To create a positive feeling of belonging to Girona it is necessary to set up activities not only to confront the causes of marginality but also to work on self esteem and recognition of those who may feel marginalized and without the same level of equal opportunities. Although of a more tangential nature we'd also like to describe here the activities at the school to foster respect for nature, as we are aware that on a more global level, the world's ecological disequilibrium and inequality of resources are increasingly responsible for social differences, forced migration and the poverty gap.

It is therefore understood that in principle these activities are appropriate to work toward the objectives of the fight against discrimination and the creation of equality of opportunities. However the practical results of these activities need to be analysed to see if they are making any real difference.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE ACTIVITIES

3.2.3 What measures have been used to evaluate the results of the activities with a view to the planned aims?

The measures of evaluation which allow us to analyse the success or failure of these activities and which we have studied for the investigation are:

On the aims and results:

- The mothers' opinions on the improvement of relationship with residents/neighbours after the activity.
- Opinion and value of the usefulness of the discussion forum for day to day family life.
- The children's opinions regarding the value they place on other people's cultures.
- The staff's opinion regarding self esteem and the academic improvement of the ethnic minority pupils.
- The children's opinion on their district and their city. Knowledge about Girona.

- The satisfaction level of the various participants with the activity.

Methodology

- Awareness and involvement of professionals involved in the aims of the activity.
- Participation of the various educational participants in the decision making stage (design and evaluation) of the activities.
- Number and diversity of participants involved.
- The importance of the activity within the curriculum and the Education Project.
- Involvement of the administration.

3.3.2 The results of the activity

a) Overall evaluation

The overall aims of the activity are, on the one hand, to increase knowledge amongst the participants of the different cultural groups in the school in order to learn to value diversity as an enriching experience and, on the other, to work against the feeling of exclusion or isolation from the city that these children may experience.

In general the majority of interviewees think the activity is positive, although it is difficult to say whether specific results are being achieved or not. The teaching staff and the families feel that these objectives must be worked towards in a more comprehensive way along with education for families and the district. *The overall opinion is that these activities help raise awareness of the need for cooperation and good relationships but they are not sufficient to change attitudes.*

However, it must be said that no problem situation was detected within the school on which the activities could have had an influence, which made it more difficult to measure the success of the activities. Nevertheless, the objectives of raising the pupils' awareness of the richness of cultural diversity and their feeling of belonging to a district and a city were indeed fulfilled.

In general the activity was judged a success by everyone involved. The basis of this judgement took into account the following criterion:

- The degree of satisfaction of the different people involved in the activity

- The number of parents taking part
- The level of responsibility taken by the parents for the activity's development.

b) Evaluation of the attainment of the objectives

According to the criteria described and the participants interviewed the results of the activity are:

- It has only superficially improved the relationship between families from different cultural groups: The families who were interviewed thought that the activities were useful to enable the mothers involved to get to know each other and to form relationships on the afternoon they met. This does not necessarily mean, however, that they will carry on this relationship outside the school.
- Families' participation in the school has improved: The head master as well as the interviewed mothers valued positively the involvement of families in the activities of cultural week and each year more families take part and respond positively to the event (honouring their commitments). Despite this, the teaching staff commented that some basic guidelines need to be worked out for some families (observance of timetables, etc)
- No important changes were noted in the *living together* between children of different cultural origins. Despite this, they have learnt to value diversity. This result was not considered as an objective as the people interviewed hadn't highlighted any problems in this sense. However this theme was worked on in the interviews with the children: The children we talked to, did indeed often comment that "this one who is different to that one" was used as a basis for fights, insults or making fun of others. They believe that the activity enabled them to see that those from other countries have as many good and positive attributes as those from here, and that it is important to know about them and value them. Nobody is worth either more or less for coming from another country.
- Self esteem improved as a result of valuing cultures of origin. The teachers who were interviewed agreed that the children placed great value on their parents' coming into the classrooms and that there were traditional objects and food from their place of origin. However this had no effect on the academic improvement of the pupils. The teachers don't believe that any differences in academic levels are due to family origin (except of

course in cases of late arrivals). There are individual differences which are usually more related to family structure, individual attention and family expectations than to cultural origin. What we did see was that the fact of introducing cultural aspects from the pupils' countries of origin made them feel prouder of themselves and their home life. During the interviews we realised that the children have high expectations about their future. (In the question "What would you like to be when you grow up?" they often said teachers, vets or doctors). The differences in this area were more pronounced between girls and boys with the majority of boys wanting to be footballers and the girls wanting to be kindergarten teachers.

- Conclusions on the getting to know Girona activity: The children's opinion on their district and their city. We do not have sufficient information on this activity to allow us to draw any conclusions.
- Opinion and evaluation of the usefulness of the discussion forums in day to day family life. We do not have enough information available on this activity and its aims. At first it was seen positively, however there was little family participation.

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Concerning the existence of discrimination we are able to conclude that Carme Auguet school does not experience problems of discrimination between its pupils or pupils' families. Although it is worth pointing out that the school community feel that they are discriminated against within a more general context, bearing in mind the types of families and the situation of the district in the city. We could therefore talk about a structural discrimination of the school.

The fact that, according to the teachers, the school may not experience serious problems of discrimination between students whilst in these children's wider social and family context discriminatory values or xenophobia may be frequent, is possibly due to the some of the school's characteristics, such as: it being a small school with a family atmosphere where any problems can be personally dealt with and the school's record of

attentiveness to families and pupils from excluded groups makes work on these values closely integrated into the role of the teacher.

It can therefore be seen that, on one hand, dynamics and general policies can also be discriminatory, affecting the school and its pupils and families; in order to avoid this, decisions need to be taken and strategies formed at a higher level than the school and at a political level. On the other hand, the teaching staff are fully aware of this social and political reality, which can be seen in their demands for necessary improvements.

With regard to the activities being analysed, they are precise activities, of an entertaining and cultural nature which help to raise awareness of the need for living in harmony and relationships but they are insufficient to change attitudes.

Although the activities analysed work towards fostering equal opportunities and fighting against discrimination in a low level way they are useful as strategies for:

- Widening knowledge about each other's culture.
- Promoting the participation of families in the school and improving their educational competence.
- Raising the children's self esteem with respect to their values and knowledge about their families.
- Introducing in the school curriculum cultural aspects of the minority groups.
- Promoting the feeling of integration to the town and district.

In relation to the methodology used to develop the activities, it is necessary to highlight the potential importance that is given to informal educational frameworks (family and neighbourhood), as contexts for the education of values and therefore as contexts for the learning of discriminatory or non-discriminatory attitudes.

The *network project* should also be highlighted as an axis to work on these activities (social workers, civic centre, school parents' association, school support teams and families and pupils). All of these allow for the out-of-school dimension that these activities have.

We are conscious however, that at this level, there are some aspects to be taken into consideration which could improve the efficiency of the workings of this methodology.

- Working on the awareness of all the professionals involved of the aims being worked toward in the activities.
- Involving the families and the children in the design and evaluation of the activities.
- Increasing the number of hours dedicated to working towards these objectives.
- Trying to involve other groups from the district.