

# ***“Som escola”*. The construction of an inclusive intercultural community in a school undergoing transformation<sup>1</sup>**

## **ABSTRACT**

The present article describes a study carried out in a rural school in the province of Valencia (Spain) that is currently immersed in a process of transformation towards an inclusive intercultural school. The objective of this study is to learn about the process of constructing the school's educational community and the factors involved in this process. The study used intrinsic case study methodology in which, through interviews, focus groups, participatory social diagnostic techniques and participant observation, we examine how this educational community is being constructed. The results show the dynamism and complexity of this process. The search for identity symbols, the need to continually inspire motivation among the members of the community and the emergence of a dichotomous discourse determines its evolution. The democratic participation of the community is demonstrated as a core element in the process of constructing this inclusive intercultural educational community.

## **KEYWORDS**

Inclusive and intercultural education; educational community; democratic participation; identity

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## **Introduction**

Inclusive intercultural education calls for a new vision of education in which diversity, in all its aspects, is respected, and every type of inequality and exclusion is challenged (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 1997; Sales, Traver and García, 2011). This educational model is based on democratic attitudes and values of equality, respect, autonomy and solidarity (Pérez Serrano and Sarrate, 2013), guaranteeing the presence, participation and learning of all the students in the life of the school (Echeita and Ainscow, 2011).

In educational improvement some factors have been identified as crucial to moving transformation forward (Murillo, 2003; 2006). These factors are: a) the perceived need for change, and the impulse, coordination and monitoring of the improvement process must come from the school itself; b) the influence of school culture; and c) distributed leadership.

Many studies in the literature also refer to the construction of the educational community as a key aspect in the transformation process (López Yáñez, Sánchez Moreno and Altopiedi, 2011; Moliner and Sales, 2015). The democratic participation of all the educational community is also considered essential in the construction of an inclusive intercultural school (Guarro, 2005; Osler and Starkey, 2006).

But what do we mean by an educational community? What are the implications of constructing the school as a community? There is a patent need to explore the concept of community in a school undergoing a process of transformation towards an inclusive intercultural model.

## **Theoretical framework**

A community maybe described as a situation in which people know each other, have shared interests, analyse their problems together and pool their resources to resolve them in a given space (Frigerio, Poggi and Tiramonti, 1992). Communities are characteristically dynamic; according to Montero (2004), “the community is a group in constant transformation and evolution that generates a sense of belonging and social identity in its interrelations, the members of which develop an awareness of themselves as a group, thus strengthening it as a unit and a social potential” (p. 100). This sense of belonging and social identity arises from the group’s shared history, interests and values, which give it its own identity and differentiate it from other groups.

In the case of the inclusive intercultural educational community, Roa and Torres (2014) define it as a group constructed on the basis of emotional bonds, solidarity and collective action where power is not exclusively held by the institution’s managers; it is

a real community in which neighbours, family members, teachers and students are all involved, and that is not confined to the strictly academic function; in other words, its relationship with the environment comes from building networks. It is a community with a common educational project, and shared interests and values (Dobles, Hernández and León, 2010; Howarth and Andreouli, 2015).

In inclusive intercultural communities, one premise for ensuring this interculturality and inclusion is community participation (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; Escobedo, 2016). This is a mechanism for democratic participation through which everyone in a community takes decisions after listening to the plurality of voices and committing as active members in the inclusive construction process (Stainback and Stainback, 1999; Arnáiz, 2003).

Another key element in the inclusive intercultural school is distributed leadership, which fosters the development of an inclusive culture by pursuing consensus and compromise with values such as cooperation and a sense of belonging (Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2004; Torrance, 2013; Gómez, 2013).

Similarly, in constructing an inclusive intercultural educational community, numerous studies (Zollers, Ramanathan and Yu, 1999; Walker and Shuangye, 2007) emphasise the importance of nurturing an inclusive school culture based on the collaborative participation of all members of the community, around a common intercultural education project they feel belongs to them. Essential to this shared project is intercultural communication that allows members of the community, with different cultural references, to relativise their own culture, understand alternative values and reach consensus with those who have different views (Rodrigo, 1999; Rizo, 2013). Interactions are based on dialogue, negotiation and mutual enrichment in an attempt to establish conditions of equality and social justice (Aguado, 2004). Both the community and its culture are understood to be dynamic in a hybrid, cross-cultural and open social and school context (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006).

Bearing in mind these key factors in the construction of an inclusive intercultural educational community, in this study we examine the process of transformation in a rural school in the province of Valencia, Spain. Our aim is to analyse the process by which this educational community is being built, and identify the factors that have shaped it over the last three academic years.

## **Case study**

### ***Context***

This research is framed in the context of a *centro rural agrupado* (CRA), a rural primary school serving two small populations on different sites, but for administrative purposes considered as a single school, in the province of Valencia. Since its foundation one of the school's aims has been to go beyond the purely administrative and construct a new way of seeing itself as a community with shared values, one that learns and works cooperatively and collaboratively on its path to becoming an inclusive intercultural school, despite being based on separate sites in two neighbouring villages.

The processes of transformation towards inclusion are complex. There are currently tensions between several families in the school, and between some families and the teachers, around the concept of the community and who belongs to it. These tensions bring to the fore the process of construction of the educational community in the school, a process we have followed and analysed as part of our role as companions, consultants and "critical friends" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) during the last three school years (2013–2014 to 2016–2017).

## **Methodology**

We carried out an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1999), based on participatory action research (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014), to compile information over the three year period in an endeavour to understand aspects of the complex process of school transformation. From this broad case study we focus here on two research questions: What process was followed in constructing the educational community in the CRA? What factors have determined the process of constructing this educational community?

### ***Data collection instruments***

Information was gathered for the case study through interviews and discussion groups with various aims: a) to uncover the perceptions held by the groups involved about the participation and involvement of community agents in the project; b) to discover the communication practices arising in the community; and c) to understand how the different groups perceived the process and indicators of school democratisation. Participant observation was also used to collect data through photographs, videos and a field diary. Finally, we used documentary analysis to examine the minutes of a range of meetings and the management project, the document explaining the school's philosophy and educational principles.

Within the participatory action research (PAR) process, we applied various participatory social diagnostic instruments (Alberich et al., 2009; Herrera, 2012; Chevalier, Buckles, and Bourassa, 2013), namely: a) *a timeline* covering the key events

in the school and the local environment; b) *my dream school*, which enabled us to identify the collective imagination of the members of the educational community; c) *praise-criticise-propose*, used to evaluate the first cycle of action research following the 2014–2015 academic year, and d) *the Socratic wheel*, applied to evaluate the participatory action research as a tool to guide the educational improvement process.

By combining a range of instruments and obtaining information from multiple informants we were able to triangulate the information, thus guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the data obtained (Donolo, 2009). The participants in the case study and the instruments used are described in the following table:

Action	Data collection instruments	Participants
Open Days: A timeline My dream School The Socratic Wheel (2013-2014) (2015-2016)	Observations (O) Results of Participatory Social Diagnostic techniques (PSD) Documental Analysis of Meeting minutes (DA) to plan the Open Days	Research Group members (RG) School community participating in Open Days
The Mirror technique (after Open Days) (2013-2014) (2015-2016)	2 Discussion Group (DG) In the Cultural Centre 2013-14: Quart 2015-16: Benavites 2 Hours each DG Conductor: 2 members of the research group	1 management team member (The Principal) (P) 2 teachers (T) (1 man, 1 woman) 2 students (S) (1 boy, 1 girl) 2 family member (F) (1 mother, 1 father) 1 member of local Administration (The Major) (LA)
Perception of education community sense and democratization process (2016-2017)	Documental Analysis of Management Project 11 Interviews. In the school site. Timing: during 2016-17 course year. 30 minuts each interview Interview: 1 member of the research group.	Research Group 4 family member: 2 parents from Benavites, 2 parents from Quart. 3 Students: 1 from Benavites, 2 from Quart 4 teachers: 2 from Benavites, 2 from Quart

Table 1. Description of participants in the case study and instruments used

The process for categorising data for analysis had several dimensions. The content units were selected according to their significance in relation to the proposed research questions and to the deductive categories defined in accordance with the

theoretical framework. This was followed by the inductive process, in which open codification was carried out based on reading and examining the data to be analysed, selecting the content units related to categories that compiled the meaning of emerging categories (González and Cano, 2010) (see annex 1). The Atlas.Ti program was used for the content analysis.

Prior to gathering the data, participants were informed of the research aims and how the data would be used, and their collaboration and informed consent to participate in the research was obtained, together with their permission to analyse the data and disseminate the results. Data confidentiality and informant anonymity were guaranteed throughout the study. The research results were presented to the participants prior to publication as material for reflection. In the final phase of the Project, researchers prepared an evaluation session showing, on a Prezi presentation, the main results and dinamizing participative activities where students, teachers and families together, in small mixed work groups, discussed and reflected on the future implications and actions for their school (improve proposals for next school year).

## Results

In what follows we present the results for each research question. A conceptual map is provided showing the relationships and correspondences between the research categories to clarify the explanation and understanding of the data.

### *What process was followed in constructing the educational community in the CRA?*

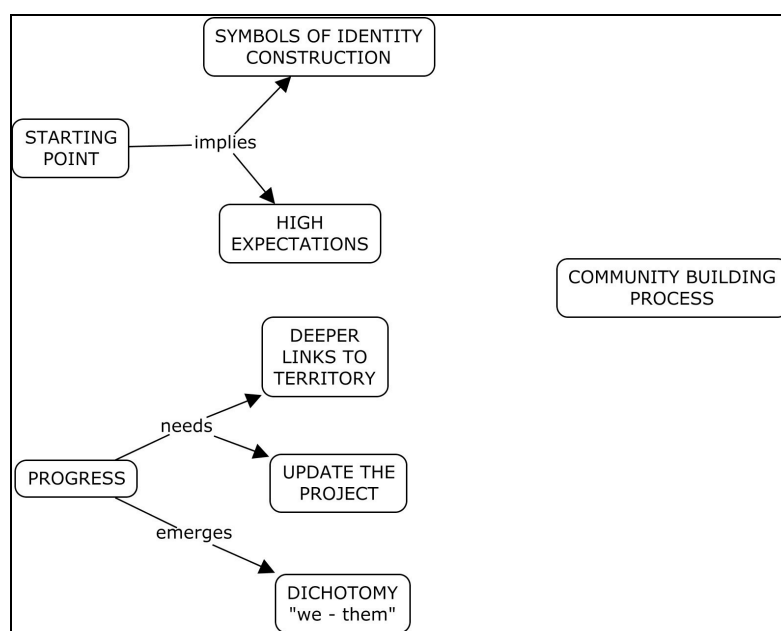


Figure 1. Process of constructing the educational community in the CRA

One of the main actions in the process of constructing this educational community is the search for identity symbols. During the Open Days (2013–2014 school year) the members of the community selected the motto: “Som escola” (literally, “we are school”), *a slogan that for all those involved represents the style of the school they wish to see: inclusive, integrated in the territory, democratic and dialogue based (management project, DA)<sup>2</sup>, a slogan that invokes plurality, we are a school that unites and we are one school, two villages but one school* (research group, RG).

This search for identity, the construction of “we”, undertaken with enthusiasm and high expectations, set in motion the community construction process. This “we” embraced common ideals and a shared project aimed at constructing an intercultural and inclusive school.

During the construction of the community, it became clear that there was a need to open up the school, to build links with the territory and to encourage more agents from the community to join the project. As a result, at the start of the 2015–2016 school year a Welcome Day was organised at the Font de Quart, a local site of natural beauty near one of the schools.

Although the first year was marked by keen interest and high expectations, in the second year it not only became clear that other agents from the community had to be engaged, but also that the involvement and sense of belonging required constant reaffirmation, and that efforts were needed to re-engage some of the members whose motivation had waned.

*Family members commented that the project had gone cold, which is sad, but it has lost some of its life. One father noted a certain stagnation, and that people need re-engaging and motivating once again.* (Meeting minutes, O)

This stagnation and lack of motivation were often due to the complexity and slow progress of the school transformation process: *“in the end it’s a social change, and social changes don’t happen overnight, they take time”* (family member, I).

The need to breathe new life into the project also arose because new members had come into the community; these people needed to be welcomed in, have the project explained to them and engaged in it. In fact, it was the recent incorporation of people from neighbouring villages that gave rise to new discourses among members of the

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<sup>2</sup> (source of information / informant, instrument for gathering information)

community, some of whom expressed unease, and felt that the school was not giving them full attention, alleging that everything was being done for *the outsiders*. At the same time, the incorporation of new members from other localities and the resulting modification of the social structure of the CRA community provided the opportunity to rethink the project and question the identity of the community: *Som escola*. Who is the school? Us, them? During the process, therefore, a dichotomy became visible between “us” and “them”, us being the people from the locality, and them, the *outsiders*. On other occasions the dichotomy was observed between people from the school’s two sites “*I know what happens in Benavites, in Quart I don’t know how they are getting on*” (family member, DG), “*there are more people from Benavites than from Quart*” (student, I), “*it is done here and there*” (student, I). Another dichotomy appeared between different levels of engagement, where “we” are more involved, and “they” are less participative and committed: “*it’s always the same people that participate*” (family member, DG), “*they don’t speak properly*” (student, PSD), “*a lot of the parents don’t really know how we are working*” (teacher, PSD).

The process of constructing the community was thus marked by the need to build a collective identity that would identify and renew the commitment and enthusiasm of the members of the community as the project progressed, but at the same time this dichotomous discourse was emerging that could divide the community, based on perceptions of themselves as culturally different.

***What factors have determined the process of constructing the educational community?***

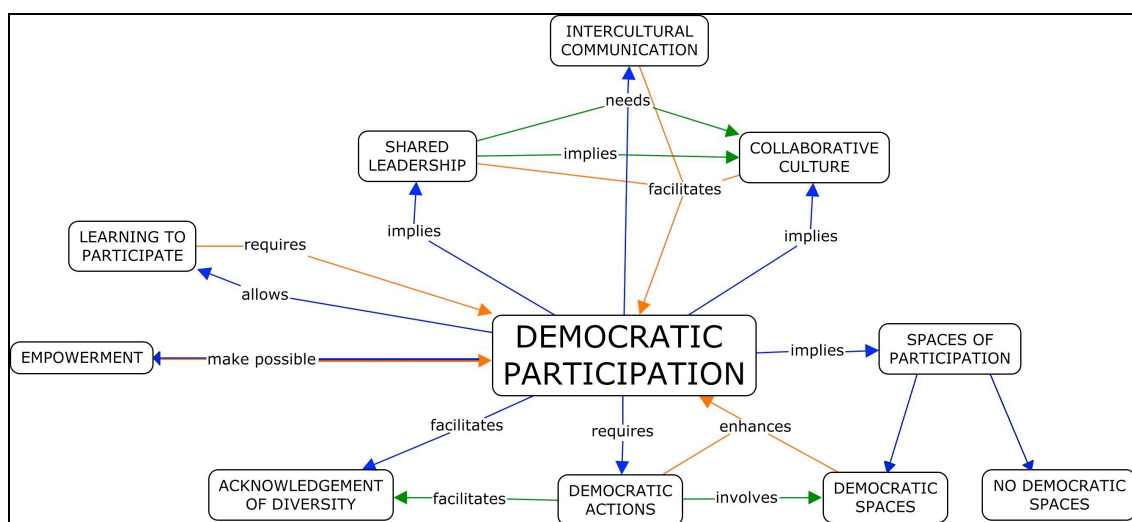


Figure 2. Determining factors in the construction of the education community.

In analysing how the CRA educational community has been constructed, democratic participation is a predominant key element in the process. The community learns to be a



participative community, but what does participating in this educational community imply?

Firstly, it implies a change in the head teacher's role from a more authoritarian function to being *more of a manager and mediator* (teacher, I). Responsibilities are seen to be delegated as decision-making bodies are opened up to the whole community in the form of mixed committees,<sup>3</sup> where different members of the community participate in preparing, running and evaluating the school's events and activities.

Notwithstanding, dilemmas also arise from this situation, concerning how far to delegate, listen, express opinions and so on. Throughout the construction process, in a variety of circumstances teachers reported feeling uncomfortable when family members gave their views on academic issues that the teachers believe are not the families' responsibility, and in these circumstances they consider they have no obligation to delegate. However, when the teachers do delegate the leadership role to other members of the community, the activity does not work as well, as in the case of the mixed committees. When teachers do not coordinate the committees, they tend to function less smoothly or participation falls off.

In addition, a collaborative culture is implicit in the construction of a participative community in which formal leaders delegate responsibilities. Members of the various groups highlight the potential of working collaboratively despite the extra time it involves.

*"It takes me between three and four hours to do at home, whereas in the committee it's still not done in a week; it seems that instead of making progress the committee slows up many of the tasks that need doing. But it's true that if just two of us do the work together, then there is no participation and other voices cannot be heard"* (teacher, I).

Prioritising participation in the construction of a community, delegating responsibilities to the agents from the community, committing to community participation in decision making and working collaboratively all require meanings to be negotiated. This negotiation of meanings, from the field of intercultural communication, was observed in several communicative situations. On one such occasion, many of the teachers abstained in the vote to select the school timetable for the following year, on the grounds that a blank vote *"meant giving a voice to the families and not conditioning the timetable for the next course"* (Principal, DG); however this upset some family members, who considered they had been left to take an important yet controversial decision on their own.

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<sup>3</sup> A group of people made up of members from different sections of the community set up to respond to the planned changes in the school. There are normally several mixed committees, each one responsible for one area and for intervening in that sphere of activity.

Although negotiation of meanings sometimes occurs, this is not always the case. In this negotiation, arguments cannot be based on prejudices; however, communicative situations have arisen in which prejudices are present in the discourse of some community members:

*“Some families only find out what they want to know”* (family member, I),  
*“people don’t want any more obligations than those they already have”* (family member, I); *“people don’t appreciate the school we have”* (family member, I)

Similarly, lack of empathy and of intercultural mediation is observed in numerous communicative situations. In the contexts opened up for participation from all the educational community, the language and the materials used are not accessible to all voices. This can, for example, foster students’ boredom and silence in these spaces. The absence of intercultural mediation has been highlighted in several community appraisals and some changes have occurred as a result. Teachers now occasionally mediate with students to encourage them to participate in community assemblies, for example. Teachers prepare the students interventions in a classroom assembly, to enhance their own voice in the School Councils and to make sense of the topics covered. Even the agenda for community assemblies, Open Days, and school councils are collaboratively arranged to include issues and format accessible for all (visual, simple, translated into different languages), and disseminated by several channels (school website, whatsapp groups, classroom tutors). That’s the way teachers are trying to improve intercultural communication and to become aware of the need of an inclusive diversity management.

On the other hand, democratic participation in the educational community requires spaces for democratic participation where the community can take decisions. One such space is the coordinating committee, set up in recent years in the school as the *fundamental body for discussion and decisions of the CRA, made up of teachers, family members, students and representatives of the local administration, and with the occasional collaboration of the research group* (management project, DA). This committee meets once a month and all members of the educational community are invited to participate. It differs in this respect from the school council, the official decision-making and management body of schools in the Spanish education system, in which only a limited number of representatives from each group can participate, whereas the coordinating committee is a kind of broader school council.<sup>4</sup> But these spaces specifically designed for dialogue and democratic decision making are not the only spaces where community members participate. Throughout the construction process they referred to their participation in other non-democratic spaces such as the square next to one of the school’s sites, where issues are discussed but are not then

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<sup>4</sup> The name the school originally gave to school council meetings opened up to allow more community members to participate.

brought to the coordinating committee, and where criticisms are made and information distorted.

*“Outside, people criticise or they ask for the things they want, but when it comes to the moment of truth... [...] What’s more, one’s listening, they say things that are true and things that aren’t, they create confusion and then, well, they say things about the school that are not true”* (family member, I).

Participating also involves discussion of democratic actions such as dialogue and seeking consensus in the decision-making process, and are present in the democratic spaces. The community places a great deal of importance on dialogue. In the decision-making procedure, agreements are generally sought and *the general dynamic in taking decisions always involves dialogue, consensus and democracy* (management project, DA). However, on occasions when decisions are not taken unanimously or by a vote, but through consensus, some people become angry when their own personal views do not coincide with the final decision: *“that’s my opinion and if that’s not what’s decided then I get angry and I leave”* (family member, I), *“it’s democratic when we do what I want and if not, then there is nothing more to be done”* (family member, PSD)

Listening to everyone’s opinion is another action implicit in community participation and takes place in democratic spaces; however, throughout the community construction process students voices are often silenced. This has been a major concern in the educational improvement process, and to transform this situation student assemblies are now being held in school time where students’ opinions are heard and decisions are taken before being passed on to the coordinating committee.

Community participation and listening to a range of opinions facilitates the recognition of diversity in its many facets: diversity in students’ learning rates, cultural diversity, different ages, opinions and engagement.

*“Here, not everything is black and white. Some people want to collaborate, others don’t; there are times when they do and other times when they don’t”* (family member, DG).

Democratic participation by the community also empowers some members, some of whom explicitly refer to the importance of their voices in the educational improvement process and see themselves as agents of change.

*“It’s us who can speak out and see what we can change because we are the ones in the school; we’re the ones who can change the school to make it better”* (student, I).

Finally, participating in this community generates a need to learn how to participate, a learning experience that cannot be understood without participation. Various members of the community often mention this learning process when they become discouraged by the complexity and slow pace of change.

*“This process implies a social change; it might take one year, two, or ten... I think we’re also learning the mechanisms of participation, very often we don’t know very well how far, why, how... and all this you learn by doing”* (family member, DG); *“none of us knows, we are all going through this learning process”* (teacher, DG).

From the above, democratic participation stands out as an essential aspect of the community construction process. The school’s formal leaders are increasingly aware of the need to delegate functions. There is also a commitment to collaboration as the community’s way of working, implicit in which is the need for intercultural communication in this educational community. Democratic participation also involves creating democratic spaces in which to take decisions based on dialogue, consensus and listening to all opinions, which facilitates recognition and appreciation of diversity. Finally, democratic participation encourages empowerment of community members and allows them to learn how to participate, all of which are key factors in constructing this educational community.

## **Conclusions**

The results show the need to highlight the identity of the community at the beginning of the construction process, since collective identity is understood to be a psychological bond that enables people to unite with their group, the basis for developing a sense of belonging (Kraus, 2006; Campbell, 2010).

The findings also show that affiliation to a group is not sufficient for people to identify with it, but rather their active participation is required in collective practices, and if these are not in place community members need to be inspired and motivated again (Mercado and Hernández, 2010).

Additionally, dilemmas began to emerge during the construction of community identity, suggesting that identity should be understood not as a state but as a constantly evolving process (Redón, 2011). We cannot therefore understand the community identity, as in *we are the school*, as a constructed, closed entity; rather, it must be conceived of as something all of us are building, that *we are being school*, since the

community is a dynamic place in which new meanings of cultural understanding are produced and reproduced (Leiva, 2017).

Furthermore, modifying the community's social structure leads to a dichotomous discourse resulting from the different ways we understand ourselves culturally. As González and Noreña (2011) point out, in intercultural contact we frequently use comparative methods to describe our experience, establishing what is shared and what is different, and pointing up the values and beliefs that contrast with our own. Therefore, to avoid falling into a potentially exclusive dichotomous discourse a certain degree of ethnocentrism must be overcome.

Likewise, democratic participation in the community is an essential core element that connects with other factors. It has become clear that democratic participation is related to co-responsibility and shared sovereignty in the educational community. There is a visible trend towards distributed leadership in this community; although such leadership involves more than simply delegating tasks, these actions show that the community is taking the right path towards it (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004).

We observed a clear relationship between democratic participation, the trend towards distributed leadership, and a collaborative culture. Booth and Ainscow (2011) argue that collaboration is essential to community participation in the inclusive school. Collaborative culture increases the autonomy of community agents, allowing them to improve their decision-making skills and build together through dialogue and exchange (González-Vargas, 2014).

Similarly, there is also a clear link between leadership, collaborative culture and intercultural communication, since the community's democratic participation, with its trend towards distributed leadership and collaboration requires intercultural communication. There is a clear need to negotiate meanings and carry out appropriate intercultural mediation to allow different interpretations of reality to find points of agreement or approximation, to enable mutual understanding between community members, and to increase community participation (Moreno, 2006; Rizo, 2013).

Democratic participation in this educational community also appears to be linked to the need to reorganise spaces and structures (Besley and Peters, 2012).

Although we observed some inclination towards consensus and listening to all opinions in the community, this is not always the case. Students' voices often go unheard. This is in line with Bucknall's (2009) observations that even when changes are introduced over time, students' opinions are still not listened to in any significant way.

The link between democratic participation and empowerment is also seen in this community, in line with the study by Lauri Johnson (2017). Through participation community members become aware of their potential and see themselves as agents for change.

In addition, closely linked to democratic participation in this community is the need to learn to participate, a learning process that at the same time encourages participation because members are learning to participate through their own participation. There is no better place than the school for learning how to participate; indeed, Moliner, Traver, Ruíz and Segarra (2016) claim that the school is the perfect place for training every member of the community, for preparing critical citizens. All of this occurs when the school is understood as a place to learn with the community, for the community, and as a community (Murillo and Krichesky, 2015). In the words of Dewey, the school must be a live community with everything that implies (Dewey, 1995, p.279)

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## Annex

### *Annex 1.* Deductive and inductive categories of the study

<b>EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY</b>	A group that goes beyond the strictly academic, related to its environment and seeking to build networks. It is constructed through dialogue, conflict, tensions, mutual interests and shared values; it involves neighbours, family members, teachers and students.
<b>RECOGNITION OF DIVERSITY<sup>*5</sup></b>	Recognition that heterogeneity among the people in the educational community is natural; a positive evaluation of diversity as an enricher of social cohesion.
<b>DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP*</b>	Occurs when the whole school community is committed and involved in the workings of the school, in terms of ideas and effort (functions, tasks...).
<b>FEELING OF BELONGING*</b>	Awareness of the emotional, historical and cultural link with the school community and its surroundings. Positive recognition and appropriation of the intra- and inter-communitarian ties generated by the educational institution.
<b>COLLABORATIVE CULTURE*</b>	Attitudes, values and beliefs associated with the solidarity that guides the relationships between the members forming part of an educational context based on egalitarian, democratic and cooperative participation.
<b>IDENTITY</b>	Characteristics that mean no one person is identical to another, understood as a process in continual construction and that occurs due to the relationships established with others, through the sharing of meanings and experiences.
<b>INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION*</b>	Communicative interactions between people with different cultural references. It is a process of negotiation of meanings, practices and values in which the participants relativise their own culture and at the same time generate understanding of alternative values. Requires communicative skills based on empathy, removal of prejudices and intercultural mediation.
<b>DEMOCRATIC</b>	Mechanism through which people in a community take

<sup>5</sup> Categories marked with an asterisk (\*) were validated by experts in the R&D project “La escuela incluida en el territorio: Análisis de las estrategias de participación ciudadana desde la educación intercultural inclusiva” MINECO 2014 – 2015, financed by the Spanish Ministry for Economy and Competitiveness.

<b>PARTICIPATION*</b>	decisions having listened to all voices, and making the commitment as active members to a process of change and social transformation towards equity, inclusion and social justice
<b>LINKS WITH THE TERRITORY*</b>	Development of sustainable relationships and mutual support, through which a sense of belonging and reciprocal involvement is perceived between the school community and its environment
<b>REVIVING THE PROJECT</b> (emerging)	Process of rekindling the enthusiasm of community members whose level of involvement has fallen. It also involves welcoming new members into the educational community, explaining the project to them and motivating them to get involved.
<b>US-THEM</b> (emerging)	Dichotomy generated by incorporation of new community members, the school being sited in two different locations, and differences in levels of involvement.
<b>SPACES OF PARTICIPATION</b> (emerging)	Places in which the community participates in taking decisions. These are referred to as democratic spaces when they are cultivated and a range of voices are listened to, and where there is a commitment to dialogue and consensus. If these conditions are not in place, they are referred to as non-democratic spaces.
<b>DEMOCRATIC ACTIONS</b> (emerging)	Events that guide the decision-making process and facilitate participation based on principles of equality and equity.
<b>EMPOWERMENT</b> (emerging category)	Process that allows members of the community to feel in control of their circumstances and achieve proposed objectives, to feel they are important and have the potential to meet challenges.
<b>LEARNING TO PARTICIPATE</b> (emerging)	Process inherent to the action of participating that allows people to acquire strategies for improving participation, to feel comfortable managing conflicts and to be aware of the limits of participation in each situation.