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Mind the gap! Policies and practices of educational reception in Rotterdam and Barcelona

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Chapter 6

Practices of educational reception in Barcelona

As an old harbor city, Barcelona shares with Rotterdam a past linked to the industrial revolution and a long tradition of labor migration. Catalonia was, together with the Basque Country, one of the main industrial areas which led the economic development of Spain from the 19th century on. During the 1960s the growth of the industrial sector drew many unskilled workers to Barcelona from other regions of the country, particularly Andalusia and Extremadura. Nowadays the region of Catalonia has the highest percentage of foreigners in the whole country: 21.3% of the total population. Most of them live in the city of Barcelona (Secretaría de Migraciones 2006). According to data from the 2006 municipal register, 16.5% of the 1.6 million inhabitants of Barcelona were foreign-born, notably above the national average of 9.3% (Padrón Municipal 2006, INE 2007). The major immigrant groups in the city come from Asia (mostly from the Philippines, China, and Pakistan), North Africa (especially Morocco), as well as from Latin America (Ecuador, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic).

Barcelona also shares with Rotterdam a great concern about the education of its inhabitants. Despite the relative wealth of the city, the educational levels of the population reflect a marked polarization. The last available data of the 2001 population census shows that 20.17% of the city's inhabitants have a university degree, 45.28% have secondary studies (ISCED 2-3-4), and 34.6% have primary studies (IDESCAT). Also, general indicators of education in Catalonia show a negative trend. The PISA studies (2000, 2006) reveal that the number of students with reading deficits has increased in Catalonia, from 19.2 % in 2000 to 21.6% in 2006. Also, Catalonia has one of the highest student drop-out figures of the whole European Union (UE-27), as 31.5% of youngsters between 18 and 24 years old abandon their studies before obtaining a degree (in comparison to the European average of 14.8%) (Ferrer Julià et al 2009).¹⁹¹

The increase of foreign migration to the city has brought to light the deficits of the educational system. Since the year 1992-1993 the presence of foreign students has grown dramatically in Catalan schools. In obligatory secondary education (ESO) this growth is particularly remarkable, increasing from 3.4% in the year 2000, to 13.5% in 2006 (Departament d'Educació 2007). Of the foreign students who have arrived between 12 and 16 years of age, the two major nationalities are Moroccan (23.6%) and Ecuadorian (21.7%), which together add up to almost 50% of the total newcomers.

¹⁹¹ Several studies have associated these problems with the funding of the educational system in Catalonia since the regional level of public expenditure in education (2.52%) is way below the Spanish average (3.18%) and the European one (3.92%) (Bonal et al 2005, 2006, Ferrer Julià et al. 2009).

Table 18. Level of education of population in Catalonia of 25-65 year-olds. (2000-2006)

		2000	2002	2004	2006
ISCED 2 or lower	UE-27	35.7	34.2	31.8	30.0
	Spain	61.7	58.3	55.0	50.6
	Catalonia	57.8	56.2	52.6	47.8
ISCED 3 & 4	UE-27	44.9	45.8	46.5	47.1
	Spain	15.8	17.1	18.6	20.9
	Catalonia	18.6	18.1	19.5	22.9
ISCED 5 & 6	UE-27	19.5	19.9	21.7	23.6
	Spain	22.5	24.6	26.4	29.0
	Catalonia	23.5	25.8	27.9	28.6

Source: Ferrer Julià et al (2009) based on EUROSTAT/ IDESCAT data. Legend: ISCED stands for International Standard Classification of Education. Level ISCED 1 = primary education; Level 2= lower secondary education; Level 3 = upper secondary education; Level 4= postsecondary non-tertiary education; Levels 5 & 6 = tertiary education (first and second stages, respectively).

One of the great topics of concern is school segregation. In Catalonia the school system is extremely segregated, with a clear division between the socio-economic profile of students who attend public or semi-private schools. Immigrant students, in particular, are extremely segregated in schools. In table 18 we can see that in the year 2006-2007 public schools in Catalonia had 19.1% of immigrant students (compared to 5.3% in private schools), while the average for public schools in Spain was 12.2% immigrant students (Ferrer Julià et al. 2009). This means that the majority of immigrant students study in public schools (84.6% in 2003) and that in some areas, as in the case of the Ciutat Vella district, over 30% of pupils in most public schools are of immigrant descent (LIC, 2003: 9).¹⁹² Over time, the rate of concentration of foreign students in public schools has increased, reaching 23.4%, in 2009 in Catalonia (Ferrer Julià et al. 2009).

Table 19. Immigrant students in primary and secondary education in Catalonia (2000-2007)

Percentage of immigrant students in:	2000-2001	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Catalonia	2.9	10.2	12.3	13.7
Public schools	4.5	14.3	17.2	19.1
Private schools	0.9	4.0	4.7	5.3
Spain	2.2	7.5	8.7	9.9
Public schools in Spain	2.6	9.1	10.6	12.2

Source: Ferrer Julià et al (2009) with data of EUROSTAT and INDESCAT.

Recently arrived immigrant students bring about specific challenges for education. The so-called '*nowinguts*' (newcomers) are estimated to form 4.9% of the total student body and 19.5% of all foreign students for the year 2010¹⁹³ (Serra & Paludàrias 2010). A first issue of concern is newcomer students'

¹⁹² The official figures are challenged by some studies. Soto & Carrasco (2003) found in a study based on a sample of the city of Barcelona that immigrant students actually represented 13% of the student body in public schools. This figure reaches 42% if we include pupils at least one of whose parents was born abroad, while the official sources only recognized a total of 4.8%.

¹⁹³ According to the study by Serra and Paludàrias (2010) based on a sample of 18 secondary schools in Catalonia 3.2% of the students with non-Spanish nationality was born in Spain. Also, 8.5% of foreign-born students have obtained the Spanish nationality.

persistence. A recent study done on a sample of schools providing obligatory secondary education (ESO) found that 42.5% of newcomer students did not finish obligatory secondary education while only 14.6% of them did complete ESO and continue studying (Serra & Paludàrias 2010). At the same time, the large inflow of foreign migrants has posed a challenge to the policy of 'linguistic normalization' in schools. Newcomer students constitute a threat for the consolidation of Catalan language vis-à-vis Spanish, not only because of the presence of a great number of Latin-Americans who already speak Spanish, but also because Spanish has become the 'lingua franca' among immigrant students of diverse origins. Spanish is spoken among them in the school yard and in the corridors, following an inertia established in relationships between Catalan-speaking and Castilian-speaking students. Spanish was the language of the previous wave of migration -the Andalusians and Extremenians who arrived in the 1960s to work in Barcelona - and thus it is the common language in the working-class areas where (foreign) newcomer students live. Parents of Pakistani or Chinese students who have a shop in the Raval neighborhood speak Castilian to their customers instead of Catalan.

Table 20. Foreign students enrolled in obligatory secondary education (ESO) and post-obligatory education (academic track –Bachillerato- and vocational track –CFGM-) in Catalonia.

School year	Students enrolled in ESO (obligatory secondary education)		Students enrolled in <i>Bachillerato</i>		Students enrolled in CFGM	
	Total of students	% Foreign students	Total of students	% Foreign students	Total of students	% Foreign students
1999-2000	267,029	6,352 (2.4%)	102,064	1,032 (1.0%)	22,974	229 (1.0%)
2000-2001	257,318	8,177 (3.2%)	101,862	1,235 (1.2%)	28,141	390 (1.4%)
2001-2002	253,340	11,090 (4.4%)	96,959	1,576 (1.6%)	30,370	597 (2.0%)
2002-2003	253,424	14,955 (5.9%)	92,844	2,286 (2.5%)	32,302	955 (3.0%)
2003-2004	256,556	20,261 (7.9%)	90,131	3,040 (3.4%)	32,619	1,418 (4.4%)
2004-2005	258,746	23,532 (9.1%)	87,964	3,665 (4.2%)	34,131	1,997 (5.9%)
2005-2006	260,966	31,160 (11.9%)	85,238	4,292 (5.0%)	34,597	2,694 (7.8%)
2006-2007	264,829	35,864 (13.5%)	84,442	-	36,209	-

Source: Departament d'Educació (<http://www.gencat.net/educacio/depart/cestad.htm>).

In the late 1990s, the issue of education gained importance in Barcelona's political agenda. Despite having few responsibilities in the area, the local government produced in 1999 the 'Educative Plan for the City' (PEC 1999), a citizen pact between 43 organizations –political parties, trade unions, employers, municipal administration, social organizations- aimed to improve the situation of education.¹⁹⁴ In 2006 the municipality of Barcelona and the regional government of Catalonia created a common system of educative services, the *Consorci d'Educació*, which unified the service delivery while both policy tiers kept shared responsibilities.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Interview P. Soto.

¹⁹⁵ Similar tendencies emerged in the whole region of Catalonia; for instance, in 2006, the 'National Pact for Education' specifically aimed to increase the public expenditure in education in the region in order to meet the European average (6% of the GPB) (Ferrer Julià et al. 2009).

In Catalonia, two major public policies have offered educational reception to newly arrived foreign students in the period under study (2004-2006): the TAE program (1996-2003), and the LIC program (from 2004 on). Since 2009, the Department of Education has introduced a new procedure to concentrate all newcomer students arriving in the entire city after April 20th in a single reception center.

Unfortunately, data on the resources allocated for the TAE program is not available to the general public. Resources seem to have been meager, basically destined to paying TAE mentors' salaries. Overhead resources were nearly inexistent, according to informants' reports on the lack of computers or the limited support for designing teaching materials, among other things. In comparison with this under-resourced TAE policy, the LIC program represented a significant improvement in terms of material resources. Expenditure for the 2004-2005 school year was estimated at 35.3 million euros for the execution of the program in the whole region of Catalonia, for both elementary and secondary education (table 20). The largest chapter in the budget covers the salaries of the mentors of reception classrooms (14.4 million euros) for 565 teachers in total (in public schools). The expenses for paying LIC-agents (4.4 million) and TAE mentors of the remaining TAE classrooms (3.9 million) are also considerable amounts.

Table 21. Annual budget for reception of newcomers in Catalonia (LIC program) (2004-2005)

Objective	Annual income
LIC agents	4,458,206.86
Mentor teachers in LIC reception classrooms	14,437,994.18
Teachers in TAE classrooms	3,964,818.92
Training of teachers & reception mentors	35,880
Teachers' training & counseling of schools	12,000
Subsidies for reception in semi-private schools	720,000
Teachers for semi-private schools	1,038,543.19
Grants for books	3,000,000
Grants for lunch	9,218,160
Elaboration of teaching materials	93,500
Computer material (only year 2005)	1,021,160
TOTAL	35,300,263.15

Source: *Pla per a la Llengua i la Cohesio social*, Departament d'Educació (Generalitat de Catalunya) 2004: 24.

Moreover, regional and municipal educational authorities apply several instruments to encourage a more balanced distribution of immigrant students among schools. One of these mechanisms is to reserve two spaces per class for pupils with 'special educational needs' (NEE); such NEE spaces must be kept free during the pre-inscription period so that immigrant students who arrive later to have a chance to enroll at the school. In addition, cities apply different zoning policies in order to distribute students among schools on the basis of the delimitation of catchment areas.¹⁹⁶ Since 1985 parents' freedom to choose a school for their children is regulated by law (LODE 1985); according to this law, three conditions increase a child's likelihood of securing placement in a desired school: proximity of residence, having brothers or sisters at

¹⁹⁶ Zoning policies regulate students' access to schools supported with public funds (public or "charter" schools). Such access depends first and foremost upon the availability of spaces.

the school, and income level. Residing within a given catchment area improves the likelihood of being placed in that area. Barcelona has a zoning model in which small catchment areas include several public schools (normally 2-4 of them) while “charter” schools have broader catchment areas (the district).¹⁹⁷

In this context, those public schools offering obligatory secondary education (ESO) which provide reception education for newcomers have been confronted with very complex challenges (concentration, bilingual context, speed of changes). These challenges are increased by the suboptimal situation of the Catalan educational system in general, already loaded with its own contradictions and deficits. The rest of this chapter will study the practical responses of three school-cases of Barcelona in terms of educative reception. The selected schools are located in those areas where the concentration of foreign students was first noticed, due to the residential patterns of immigrants. Interestingly, many foreign migrants have chosen as gateway to the city the same areas which internal migrants chose back in the 1960s, particularly the neighborhoods of El Raval and Poble Sec. Tapies school is located in the neighborhood of El Raval, and Dalí and Gaudí Schools are in the adjacent areas of Montjuic and Poble Sec.

The first school that we will discuss, Dalí, works under the TAE program, and thus provides part-time reception teaching for pupils coming from different schools in the vicinity. The second, Tapies, started delivering reception education within the TAE program and later continued within the LIC program. We will see that the TAE classroom in Tapies was made up of students exclusively from the school itself, and this created a quite different mode of operation than in TAE Dalí. As we will see, schools providing reception under the LIC policy coincided in time with some TAE reception classrooms still operating under the previous policy, as the idea was to substitute the latter by the former in a gradual process. Finally, Gaudí school initiated its experience in receiving newcomers within the present LIC policy, so the school offered reception to its own newcomer students only.

1. Salvador Dalí school

Salvador Dalí school is a secondary school teaching obligatory and post-obligatory secondary education. Post-obligatory education at Dalí covers only its academic variant (Bachillerato). Dalí school is located in the district of Sants-Montjuic, a working-class inner-city area where (foreign) immigrants started settling at the end of the 1990s. By the year 2006 immigrants made up 18.5% of the district’s population, confirming this area as the second preferred area of settlement after the district of Ciutat Vella (45.6%)¹⁹⁸ (Guia estadística de Barcelona, Municipal Department of Statistics 2008). Within the district of Sants, the school is located in the Fuente la Guaña neighborhood.

In the school year of 2003-2004, Dalí school had 343 students between the ages of 12 and 16, distributed among the four years¹⁹⁹ of obligatory secondary education (ESO).²⁰⁰ If we include those enrolled in post-obligatory education, the students add up to 504. Among these, students of migrant origin represent 17,6% of the total. That figure is slightly below the average percentage in the public centers of the district (18.6%) for the same year, but way above the mean of semi-private centers (4.2%).

The characteristics of Dalí School as a whole, however, merely provide context for our story. My observation unit must be referred to, strictly speaking, as the “Dalí reception classroom”, as the whole

¹⁹⁷ Since 2008 Barcelona has designed a zoning model based on the parents’ residence. Bureaucrats establish for each student which public and charter schools (three of each) are closer to his/ her home address.

¹⁹⁸ For a thorough discussion of the residential segregation of immigrant communities in the city of Barcelona see Fullaondo 2008.

¹⁹⁹ As different school systems use different terms to refer to the annual progression of students through the successive levels of education, I should clarify that in this study I follow the British usage, using the term "year" (i.e. 1st Year, 2nd Year) to refer to what in other systems may be referred to as "grades", "forms", "promotions", etc.

²⁰⁰ The fieldwork in the Dalí reception classroom took place in 2004-2005 but I only had access to data in the Dalí School as a whole for 2003-2004.

school was not studied, but rather one single reception classroom. This Dalí classroom offered reception education within the framework of the TAE program (1996-2003). In the TAE program newcomer children were gathered in area-based reception classrooms. Students attended special lessons in the area-classroom in the mornings, Monday through Friday, from 9 to 1pm. In the afternoon, students attended their schools and followed regular lessons in the class that corresponded to them by age.

The Dalí reception classroom was first established in 1997 with 18 pupils and two teachers. It was one of the first two units of reception in the city. The reception classroom was housed within the Dalí school but it received pupils from several schools in the vicinity. Paradoxically, the reception classroom did not have an operational interrelation with the school in which it was located. Rather, the reception unit operated almost independently from the school. Resources and guidelines for the Dalí reception classroom and the school itself came from separate sections within the Department of Education. Teachers working in reception were not part of the school personnel; rather, they were directly allocated to the classroom by the Department of Education and therefore did not fulfill any additional functions in the school. Teachers working in reception and in the school as a whole did not cooperate or interact much with each other in carrying out their tasks. Personal interaction between the two faculties was also reported to be limited, since reception teachers were not considered part of the school but rather ‘temporary tenants’. This singularity of the relationship between reception unit and school was typical of area-based units within the TAE program.

Likewise, newcomer students attending reception lessons in the Dalí classroom were not encouraged to mingle with their peers in the regular education tracks of the same school. They could not interact with other Dalí students since breaks for the two student bodies were scheduled at different times. The Dalí reception classroom represented in this sense a small world in itself. It represented a school context of 100% migrant students. All of the students in the classroom were in a comparable situation of ‘newcomers’, i.e., they had recently arrived to Barcelona and were learning the Catalan language for the first time. Moreover, there were no Romance²⁰¹ language-speaking students admitted to the unit since they were not part of the TAE policy’s target group. The reception classroom had a wide range of nationalities and ethnic backgrounds that did not fully match the ethnic composition of students in Barcelona. All in all, these conditions created a parallel school context in which students enjoyed dynamics of mutual support and an illusion of equality. Within the reception classroom nobody was different because all were different vis-à-vis the society outside.

Table 22. Number and ethnic distribution of pupils in the Dalí reception classroom

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Number of pupils	35	34	36	33
Main nationalities	Chinese Moroccan Pakistani	Chinese Pakistani Moroccan	Chinese Pakistani Moroccan Russian	Chinese Pakistani Moroccan Romanian

Source: Mentor teachers in the Dalí reception classroom. Number of pupils by the end of the school year.

²⁰¹ Romance languages are those derived from Latin, i.e. Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Romanian. See Gleason, H.A. An introduction to descriptive linguistics. London: holt, Rinehart and Winston 1969: 458-459.

The teachers of the Dalí classroom also need to be introduced in our story. The two mentor/teachers²⁰² working in the Dalí reception classroom, *Merce* and *Pau*, are native, Catalan-speaking women. Both are middle-class, middle-aged women with progressive ideological values reflected in their pedagogical approach and their private political views.²⁰³ Both of them were qualified as teachers of secondary education and specialized in the teaching of Catalan language. Unlike many teachers in the initial reception programs in schools who were young and inexperienced, reception teachers at Dalí had many years of teaching experience. They had a fixed status as civil servants with a permanent job post.²⁰⁴ Yet, for them working in the reception classroom was a personal choice motivated by their desire to teach migrant children, although their seniority and rank entitled them to much ‘better’ functions in the hierarchy of educational jobs.²⁰⁵ These very same teachers remained in their posts until the closure of the classroom in 2006.

Mentors at Dalí take a broad view of the issues at stake in reception. According to them, newcomer students confront not only a language disadvantage, but also very important socio-economic deficits and emotional-psychological difficulties. The mentors think that the official TAE reception policy lacks this multidimensional perception of the problem. Still, they consider the teaching of Catalan crucial, particularly in secondary education when the academic contents taught to students are quite demanding.

Merce and Pau complained about the scarcity of resources allocated to reception policy. They held the opinion that it is ‘socially unjust’ for the system to try to “spare itself” an extra year of reception for those students who need it. They also complained about their superiors, often in an ironic way, and about the way they and other reception mentors were treated. In their view, high-level civil servants from the regional Department of Education are not interested in newcomer students. Rather, these students are perceived as a burden which ‘they want to get rid of’ (Interview with the mentors at Dalí).

Merce and Pau feel *abandoned* by their superiors, who simply gave them basic instructions about the reception program when they first started and then disappeared.²⁰⁶ According to them, the problem is that ‘we have too much flexibility’ and ‘room to maneuver’. Their feelings resemble those of low-level bureaucrats in other policy sectors in the face of the treatment received from their superiors, which has been described as “delegation by abandonment” (Manço 2001). As a response to this situation, Merce and Pau undertake their job with a very idealistic attitude, working themselves to the bone, even working overtime - 25 hours per week instead of 18 as established in their contracts - devoting some of their free time to do volunteer work or to collect resources to help students pay for their textbooks (“Our friends say that we have an NGO!”).

In 2006 the Dalí classroom disappeared as a result of the substitution of the TAE program by the LIC program. Reception classrooms functioning under the TAE program were gradually closed to facilitate a smooth transition from one policy to the other. The Dalí reception classroom was one of the last three classrooms to be closed in the city of Barcelona.

²⁰² Reception mentors have both *moral* and teaching tasks. In the rest of the text I will refer to them simply as ‘mentors’ or ‘reception mentors’ to distinguish them from ordinary teachers; this is particularly necessary in the schools in which other teachers also teach in the reception classroom to provide a specific subject (but do not participate in reception decisions).

²⁰³ One of them was member of the left-wing Catalan nationalist party “Esquerra Republicana” (fieldwork Dalí).

²⁰⁴ In Spanish ‘*plaza fija de funcionario*’.

²⁰⁵ As an indication of this, one of them became a school principal (in another school) after the unit’s closing.

²⁰⁶ When policy took a turn in 2004, practitioners revealed a marked skepticism about ‘what, in the end, will happen in practice’.

a. Registration of pupils

In Barcelona, an enrolment commission is in charge of distributing foreign pupils among secondary schools, as described above. Under the TAE policy and following this procedure, pupils were assigned to reception classrooms according to their place of residence and order of arrival. The enrolment commission bureaucrats were in charge of making the decisions and placing newcomer students in a given secondary school and in the corresponding TAE unit of the area. Placement decisions were based on the place of residence and in the availability of space in the schools.

Mentors of the TAE reception classrooms were obliged to admit all the students that the enrolment commission of the city sent them, even if this meant overbooking classes beyond their formal limits. The number of students often surpassed the maximum officially established. In fact, the limit was constantly extended, from 18 in 1996 it continued increasing until reaching 26 in 2004. At the beginning of the school year, the class normally started off with 25 pupils, and as we have seen (table 19, pp. 113) by the end of the year it had reached 33 to 36 students. Reception mentors can exert little effective opposition to the assignation of pupils done by civil servants higher in the hierarchy.

We phoned them (our coordinators at the Education Department) because, well, we have 26 pupils, what's this?, and the regulation says maximum 22 students. And then they answered saying, "No, (now) the regulation says 25" (Mentor in the Dalí classroom).

Mentors in the the Dalí TAE classroom felt powerless because they could not modulate the size of their class:

In each TAE there are 25 pupils. Well, we now have 26 (...). They do not realize what this is. We are not able to cope with it (Mentor in the Dalí classroom).

The TAE regulation established that reception teachers were required to only accept new students arriving with a resolution from the educational inspector. This document assured that the pupil had been assigned both a place in a high school in the vicinity of the student's residence and a place in the TAE unit of the neighborhood. However, in practice, assignation of pupils seems to have followed sometimes irregular channels. Informants at Dalí report cases of students sent to their reception unit without any formal document of assignation.

Protesting against irregularities in the procedures yielded little if any result. Mentors in the Dali classroom were not able to 'send back' students who formally did not correspond to them. Their complaints were normally answered with pressure from the educational inspectors obliging to accept the decision made by their superiors:

The inspector came to scold us, directly or indirectly, to make us accept some students that we don't know yet if they are *ours* or not. And she 'jammed them into our classroom.'²⁰⁷ And then we called this telephone number to protest. (Mentor in the Dalí classroom).

Moreover, reception mentors at Dalí School did not have any influence over which categories of pupils could enter or not in their reception classroom. Their power as gatekeepers was thus quite reduced. They explicitly criticized the policy target of TAE because it left aside students who spoke Romance languages other than Catalan. Nevertheless, it was beyond their reach to facilitate the access of Romance-language speaking students to their reception classroom. Officially these students were not included in the TAE target and the city's enrolment commission would send them directly to a regular school.

²⁰⁷ In Spanish "*Nos los metió en el aula*".

b. Clustering in classes

Officially, pupils in TAE units were not to be tracked. Students were assigned a TAE classroom based more or less on residence. As a result, TAE groups were extremely heterogenous in terms of their cultural backgrounds, ages, levels and previous schooling. Normally each TAE classroom formed in this top-down manner worked with all the students together, without distinctions between them.

However, the Dalí mentors felt the need to further differentiate their teaching strategies for different categories of pupils. In the school year of 2005-2006 their group included a little bit of everything: from Polish students with good schooling in their country, to Senegalese and Chinese who were just learning to read and write. Often they also had illiterate students: in 2005, there were only five but in other years they had reached 10 and 15.²⁰⁸

Mentor 1: We have people from China, Morocco, Pakistan, Ukraine, etc. ... This year they have given us one from Romania, because they have decided that that is not a Romance language. That student is doing fantastic. (...) He has a very advanced level; he catches everything very fast.

Mentor 2: As you can see, we have pupils with very diverse levels. It is a very heterogeneous group. This makes work very difficult (Interview with mentor teachers at Dalí).

Mentors in the Dalí classroom applied different approaches for students with dissimilar levels of knowledge and different types of prior schooling. To carry out different teaching strategies, Dalí mentors clustered their students in two subgroups most of the time. This method was used for doing individual work with each pupil, one by one, but it was also applied for doing group activities. The group was normally divided according to the students' level Catalan language (more advanced/ less advanced) and each of the mentors dealt with one subgroup:

In the second period we divide them into two groups. She takes one group and I take the other. Today we are all together due to space limitations. Normally, one of us stays here and the other takes half of the pupils to another classroom. (...) In these groups we do a little bit of everything: math, language, social sciences... (Interview with mentor teachers at Dalí).²⁰⁹

Clustering by level of language acquisition allowed the teachers to develop activities with different degrees of difficulty for the two groups. Still, the resulting groups were very heterogeneous with manifold differences between students, thus the degree of differentiation was very rudimentary ("You would almost have to make as many subgroups as there are students!").

c. Curriculum, methodology and teaching

In broad terms, the Dalí reception classroom followed the standard *modus operandi* of TAE units. Most organizational aspects of TAE classrooms were centrally decided by high-level civil servants of the regional department of education (issues regarding registration, clustering, staffing, and transfer of pupils). Yet in other aspects practitioners had more autonomy and room for their own interpretation of rules. Particularly, the content of the lessons and the teaching method were much less constrained.

In principle the curriculum for the TAE program was standardized in the book *Vincles*, designed and published by the Regional Department of Education. The handbook follows the methodology for learning Catalan developed by the SEDEC department, which is in charge of the normalization of Catalan

²⁰⁸ Field diary from Dalí, p.1.

²⁰⁹ Mentors had informally arranged with the school to use an extra room for one or two hours per day for this clustering strategy, but this was not always possible.

language (Departament d' Educació 1995). However, reception mentors in Dalí used a combination of books and teaching materials. They did not consider the official textbook *Vincles* the best tool for newcomer students because “sometimes it goes too fast and sometimes too slow”.²¹⁰ Besides this book, informants reported that actually the regulation of content and methodology was rather loose. In fact, lessons' content was very open to teachers' own initiatives:

The problem is that we have too much freedom. These gentlemen of CIU started the program off thanks to the paternalism of “how we are going to take care of migrants?” (...) They gave us three pages that said: Catalan curriculum, Natural Sciences curriculum, and Social Sciences curriculum. And... there you are! Since then they haven't given it another thought (Interview with mentor in the Dalí classroom).

In theory under the TAE program students were to have 20 hours of reception teaching per week: Monday through Friday from 9am to 2pm. Time was to be distributed between three subjects: Catalan language, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. In practice, teachers in the Dalí TAE unit adapted the original contents of the Natural Science and Social Science curriculum to students' capabilities. Recently-arrived students or slow learners were simply taught Catalan and some vocabulary related to Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. When students accepted ‘more challenges’, teachers began to introduce subject content into their lessons, besides Catalan language. This implies that teachers somehow assessed the *learning drive* of each student. One of the Dalí mentors described it in terms of responding to the students' needs/ effort on a demand-supply basis. According to this child-oriented view of learning, a child learns when he or she is receptive to it. The educator has to follow the child's initiative and take advantage of windows of opportunity.

Then you would say, “No problem, I know what to do”. If the children *pull*, I *pull* more. If they don't pull, I don't pull either. In that case, I simply teach *words* [vocabulary of the area] and that's it (Interview with mentor at Dalí).

This ability to adapt to student's needs and capabilities required that contents be diversified. For pupils with strong Catalan, Dalí teachers used the curricula and textbooks from regular classes. Instead of having strictly Catalan language lessons, these students received extra support for Catalan while (simultaneously) studying regular subjects:

For instance, to a fourth-grade Philippine girl who is doing very well we have told her to bring her regular class textbooks and we work on them here (Interview with mentor at Dalí).

This child-oriented curriculum indicates that in the Dalí TAE classroom modern teaching techniques were applied. The teachers explained that they only gave classical lessons (lectures) during the first days. In this phase of the reception trajectory the teachers based their work very much on visual aids:

In the beginning it has to be all based on video, theatre, and images. In the beginning of the school year we do not teach [other] subjects, just language, language, and language. With many visual resources (Interview with teachers in the Dalí classroom).

After the initial months, teachers gave up classical teaching and required students to work autonomously, handing them individual assignments and sometimes doing group work. Most class-time was spent on individual learning activities. The two teachers walked around, spending time with each pupil individually.²¹¹ Pupils were subject to a personalized work plan, adjusting teaching contents and methodologies to their particular needs. Recently arrived students spent more time reading, learning new

²¹⁰ Field diary of classroom Dalí, p.5.

²¹¹This practice is an illustration of the “busing” technique of Sharp & Green (1973).

vocabulary, and answering basic comprehension questions; more advanced students had to do analytical comprehension and synthesis by writing summaries of what they read and answering questions about the content. The two teachers worked as a closely coordinated team, which indicates that they shared fundamental views about how to carry out their work.

Group exercises were also used for expressive purposes, to encourage group identity and interaction between students. Activities were designed in the form of games, and teachers tried to motivate pupils to learn by letting them have fun as well. The teachers used a considerable dose of humor in their lessons. The atmosphere in the class was cordial and relaxed and students were usually in a good mood. When pupils went back to individual work after a group activity, most were very concentrated and the atmosphere was orderly but friendly. It was remarkable that students kept a steady work pace. The class period lasted four hours with a break to go out to the yard. During the period, unlike regular students who had a five minute break every fifty minutes, newcomer students worked non-stop despite the bell ringing for every class change. Apparently, the efforts of teachers to motivate students were quite fruitful as the high attendance and participation registered in this reception unit indicate.²¹²

A constant source of tension for the mentors in the Dalí classroom was the liaison with their pupils' ordinary schools. Merce and Pau complained about how regular schools dealt with newcomers, saying it "counter-effects [our] work" and like that "we cannot progress". Particularly, during the TAE period teachers at regular schools tended to break the norm of teaching in Catalan.

Teachers are giving the lessons in Castilian, because that way they avoid hassles and all their pupils can understand. ... And sure, in the afternoon you send the students to their regular school, and in the morning they come back speaking Castilian!!

Above all [it is a problem] because it discourages them [from learning Catalan]. Because you tell them: "Why to learn Catalan? Because the school language is Catalan". You tell them so. And then they respond: "No. The mathematics teacher teaches in Castilian, the social sciences teacher teaches in Castilian, the Science teacher...". And then, what can you argue? (Interview with mentors at Dalí).

d. Schedule-making

As mentioned above, teachers in the TAE reception units had considerable discretion in organizing the students' timetable. Not only did they have very broadly-defined, loosely-regulated guidelines and scarce control²¹³ but also the fact that they had the same group of students for so many hours gave them much flexibility. Teachers could follow the Department of Educations' very broad guidelines for the curriculum and yet distribute subjects at their convenience throughout the week. Teachers were able to come up with an idea, keeping in mind the limitations of space and personnel, and on the spot readapt the schedule accordingly.

Dalí mentor teachers actually opted for a less clear-cut distinction between subjects because of their preference for child-centered, tailor-made, personalized teaching methods. Given that Merce and Pau hardly taught classical lessons, it really made no difference whether they clearly established specific times

²¹² Field diary from Dalí, p.4.

²¹³ No further evaluation procedures were foreseen, other than students' final exams, to evaluate TAE teachers' performance.

for each subject or not (Field notes, pp. 3). Work was organized in individual assignments so that each child would distribute time according to his/her own choice and needs. One child might need to spend more time on Mathematics and the other on Catalan language.

Quite another thing was the afternoon schedule that TAE pupils had when they went back to their home high schools. Schools were very reluctant to adapt their schedules to the needs of newcomers. According to informants, schools had a widespread lack of interest on newcomers, who were seen as adding an extra burden to their work:

It is possible that schools are very overwhelmed, but... damn it! They are not interested. They only want to get rid of these youngsters (Interview with Dalí mentor).

According to the Dalí classroom's teachers, most schools did not devise any special initiative; rather, schedules for newcomer pupils were in fact the result of coincidence or convenience. Schools and regular teachers shared the opinion that it should be reception teachers' responsibility to take care of newcomers' education. Instead of adapting the general school's schedule to newcomer students, schools were content to let newcomer students use ordinary class-time to complete the homework they brought from the reception course in the mornings. Informants from the Dalí reception unit reported that schools asked them to provide their pupils with extra homework and/or adapted teaching material to be used in the afternoons. Teachers from the Dalí unit refused to do so, as they considered it was not their task.

e. Evaluation and transfer

Within the TAE program the evaluation and transfer of pupils to regular education was centrally organized by the Regional Department of Education. As a result, TAE units in the Dalí and Tapiés schools (see next section) followed similar lines for evaluation and transfer. There were centralized Catalan language exams administered directly by civil servants of the Regional Department divided into four dimensions: comprehension, writing, reading, and speaking. These exams were taken at the end of the school year and the grades achieved were kept confidential even from reception teachers. Students were automatically transferred by the end of one full school year of reception (9 months) regardless of their exam score.

Reception teachers often requested an extension of reception time (an additional trimester) for students who had great difficulties learning the new language. Normally, Chinese, Pakistani, and Moroccan students got an extension of 3 months, staying a total average of 12 months (4 trimesters) in the reception classroom.²¹⁴ Yet informants reported that applying for extensions implied confronting their bosses at the Education Department. Administrators saw extensions as extraordinary procedures, or even more, as an *excess* on the part of the mentors:

If you ask for one trimester extension for somebody that is doing quite badly it seems that it is '*Wow!*' (Interview with reception mentor at Dalí).

Some students remained longer in the reception trajectory simply as a result of administrative mistakes. Merce and Pau refer to the case of a Chinese student who is in his third year of reception, but "he didn't lie, they [the bureaucrats of the Department of Education] simply saw that he was Chinese and enrolled him here".²¹⁵ Such an administrative mistake is informed by an specific representation of what a 'newcomer' student is. Here we observe an essentialization of the category of 'newcomer' (*nouvingut*), particularly in students with visible markers of ethnic or cultural difference: somebody is a newcomer and as far as the collective imaginary is concerned he or she continues to be so, which implies that he or she

²¹⁴ Informal conversation with mentor at Dalí.

²¹⁵ Field notes from Dalí reception classroom, p. 1.

belongs in reception education (and not in ordinary education). In this line Sayad (2004) reminds us that according to the categories of state thought, immigration is an 'original sin' which "can never be totally bracketed or neutralized, even when we try to do so in all objectivity" (2004: 170).²¹⁶

Finally, deviations in the rules of transfer were the result of discretionary practices of regular teachers and schools. During the TAE program, regular teachers and the school acted as gate-keepers that limited the actual participation of newcomer pupils in educational activities. Pupils under the TAE program were expected to attend their regular schools for ordinary lessons in the afternoon. The description that Dalí informants provide in this respect is very discouraging. Newcomers attended to whatever subjects their peers had in the afternoon and were not given special assignments or extra support from the teacher. Peers hardly communicated with newcomer students, although they were not necessarily unfriendly. Teachers were very reluctant to have these students in their classes. They felt that it was senseless for newcomers to be there; at the same time they saw newcomers as an obstacle for the development of the lesson and for the rest of pupils. According to the Dalí reception mentors, ordinary school teachers refer to newcomer students sitting in their class like 'pieces of furniture', because they simply sit there and neither understand nor are able to participate in the normal class. This account is supported by informants from other schools.

It is reasonable to expect that this attitude of regular teachers would be reflected in their interactions with pupils and that the latter would be aware of them. *Merve* and *Pau* held that newcomer students self-excluded themselves within regular schools because the schools' structures usually were not adapted to them. The informants reported that they had frequently seen students reluctant to be transferred to ordinary education, who at the smallest opportunity returned to the *safe haven* of the reception classroom:

11.00 In the third period, some Chinese girls enter the classroom. The mentors tell me about one of them, S., who is a frequent visitor since she left the reception classroom three years ago. "S. is an ex-TAE student and in her breaks she comes to visit. This are her 'mentor hours'", says *Pau* ironically to me. And *Merve* adds "If you propose that she integrate [with her native peers] and tell her that she is not allowed to come, then she goes [in her breaks] to the library to do homework" (Field diary from the Dalí classroom, p.4).

Newcomer students reacted to schools' and teachers' attitudes in another way as well. Absenteeism among newcomers was reported to be very high in the afternoons, in contrast with systematic participation in the morning reception classes.²¹⁷ Apparently, high schools did not do much to enforce attendance, either because they were simply overwhelmed by other responsibilities or because they considered that this was not their task. A more cynical interpretation would point to the convenience of this absenteeism for teachers in regular education. Teachers at Dalí thought that when many pupils skipped afternoon courses in regular education "the schools did not mind: they had fewer complications in their life!"²¹⁸ According to informants, students were sometimes explicitly discouraged by teachers and principals to attend ordinary instruction:

We have a [student] whose school principal told him: Look, do not come back until we call you. And they have *just* called him. We are at the end of the [academic] year!!! (Interview with mentor from the Dalí classroom).

²¹⁶ It is considered an 'original sin', or an 'intrinsic delinquency', "because the immigrant is already in the wrong simply because he is present in the land of immigration, all his other sins are reduplicated and aggravated by the original sin of immigration" (Sayad, 2004: 170).

²¹⁷ Interviews with I. Almecija, Pepi Soto, and Celia (Casal del Raval).

²¹⁸ Mentor in the Dalí classroom.

2. Antoni Tapies school

Tapies school is a medium-size school located in the working-class inner-city neighborhood of El Raval. It has a student population of 420 pupils and a faculty of nearly 50 teachers. Technically speaking Tapies school is a secondary school (IES)²¹⁹ teaching obligatory secondary education (ESO) and also post-obligatory secondary education in both academic (*Bachillerato*) and vocational training tracks (*Ciclos Formativos*). Historically, Tapies School's student body has been socio-economically and socio-culturally disadvantaged. Presently, 95% of the school population is of migrant origin, and the three largest minorities are Pakistanis, Ecuadorians and Moroccans. Historically, Pakistani, Moroccan, and Philippine students have had a strong presence in the school, corresponding to the main ethnic communities in El Raval neighborhood.

Table 23. Foreign-born students in Tapies school

Study year	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Percentage of foreign students	80%	85%	92%	95%	96 %	95%
Majority groups	Moroccan Phillippine	Moroccan Pakistani	Pakistani Ecuadorian Moroccan	Pakistani Ecuadorian Moroccan	Ecuadorian Pakistani	Ecuadorian Pakistani

Source: School's administration.

As immigrants' historical gateway to the city, El Raval is not only the neighborhood with the highest percentage of non-EU foreigners in the city-center district Ciutat Vella, but also the district with the highest percentage of migrants in the entire city (40.9% in 2006). As a 'transition area',²²⁰ El Raval also scores badly in indicators of socio-economic deprivation.

Tapies school is a relatively young secondary school located in a beautiful building from the Republican era. This building housed a primary school since 1931, but it was only in 1996 when it was split into two sections and Tapies high school was founded in the right wing of the building. The origins of the high school were somewhat turbulent, and the first board lasted just three months. Tapies school started off as one of the few high schools in Barcelona running the pilot program for the new educational system ESO, which is currently the prevailing scheme of obligatory secondary education.²²¹ After the first board, a professional manager was hired as principal and he tried to get a grip on the situation by introducing new working methods. One year later, he was succeeded by his chief of studies, *Adrià*, who continued as principal until the school year 2008-2009. For ten years, *Adrià* led his administration with a clear progressive approach, focused in increasing students' equality of opportunities and improving the school's external image. Nowadays the school is well-known for combining one of the highest proportions of ethnic minority students with good quality education.

²¹⁹ IES is the acronym for school of secondary education (*Instituto de Educación Secundaria*).

²²⁰ According to Burgess' (1924) concentric model of the city, immediately after the inner city district there was a second ring of run-down dwellings inhabited by the poor and ethnic minorities. This ring was understood as a *zone of transition* as its inhabitants would move out as soon as their social position improved, leaving room for the next newcomers settling down in the city.

²²¹ The introduction of the reform of secondary education was highly controversial and stirred a great deal of opposition among teachers. In the new system students' selection is postponed until age 16, in the post-obligatory secondary education. Obligatory secondary education (ESO) forms a comprehensive, common line for all students between 12 and 16 years old. Previous BUP schools of pre-university education were transformed into ESO schools that also had to teach to pupils without academic skills.

The progressive orientation of Tapies school and teachers' predisposition to work with a disadvantaged student population can be traced back to the origins of the school. Founded as an ESO school, Tapies teachers are probably more open to teaching a more diverse student body than schools that started off as BUP centers and only taught students oriented towards University. Without the burden of institutional inertias from the past, Tapies teachers have been more receptive to the idiosyncrasy of the neighborhood, willing to adapt the education they offer to the characteristics and needs of their public.

The school defines itself explicitly as a “public, secular, pluralist” school “embedded in the line of progressive education, understood as the defense of freedom and equality of all leading to a more just world”.²²² In the public presentation of the school it also identifies its goal as “actively supporting a population that previously did not have access to secondary education”. The main values guiding Tapies' pedagogical approach are: solidarity, respect for ‘Others’, inter-culturality and dialogue between cultures, and co-education. Also, ‘constructivism’ is acknowledged as the main pedagogical approach of the school, according to which “the student is not a blank page but rather someone who already knows many things”.²²³

Due to the characteristics of its student body, Tapies is one of the secondary schools in the city with the longest traditions of dealing with foreign newcomer students, and since 1999 it has had a reception unit functioning within its walls. Newcomer students present slight differences in ethnic composition relative to the overall student body of the school (see table 21). Newcomer students originate from a broad variety of countries, with the largest ethnic minorities being Moroccan, Pakistani, or Philippine (see table 22), and arrive with very diverse levels of schooling.

Table 24. Number and nationality of newcomer students in the Tapies reception classroom, per year

Study year	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Number of newcomer students	46	54	55	54	42	33 (*)
Majority groups	Moroccan, Philippines	Pakistani, Moroccan	Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Ecuadorian	Philippine, Pakistani, Ecuadorian, Bolivian	Pakistani, Colombian	--

(*) Provisional figure (number of newcomers who had arrived before January 2009 -it may have grown).

The origin of newcomers' reception in Tapies school dates from the mid 1990s when large numbers of foreign students began to arrive “and none of us knew what to do”.²²⁴ In the absence of an official policy of reception, Tapies school improvised solutions relying upon its own resources. Immigrant children were incorporated into regular classes, but the school also organized additional Catalan lessons for them using the free time of some teachers. When the regional government inaugurated the first two reception classrooms of the TAE program in 1996, Tapies' newcomer students were sent there. Tapies teachers noticed soon that there were so many Tapies' students that they filled up the classroom area.²²⁵ At the end of the school year, Tapies school made a proposal to the Department of Education offering to launch their own reception unit exclusively for students from their own center. As a matter of fact, newcomer students at the school were so numerous that they had to create two reception classrooms.

²²² Website of Antoni Tapies school, “About the IES”, p. 3.

²²³ Website from Antoni Tapies school, “About the IES”, p. 4.

²²⁴ Interview with coordinator of integration at Tapies.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Since 2004-2005, Tapiés reception classrooms have continued to exist under the LIC system. Tapiés school developed its 'own model' of mixed reception in which newcomer students attended separate classes or regular ones discontinuously throughout the day. Inaugurated within the TAE system, this model survived the LIC reform. Tapiés' informants reveal a high level of satisfaction with 'their model'. Informants from the school consider that their way of doing things increase the integration of newcomer students with native peers. Proudly they claim that their way of doing things was in fact an inspiration to regional policymakers when formulating the LIC program.²²⁶ In fact, the similarities are undeniable. For instance, the main change introduced by the LIC program - having the reception unit within each school - aims to improve the integration of newcomer pupils in the school.

The team teaching in the reception classrooms in Tapiés school has been notably continuous over time. The school has three reception professionals with background in psychology-pedagogy. Two of them are mentor-teachers in the reception classes, specifically assigned to the school by the Department of Education for providing reception education to newcomers. The reception mentors teach most of the newcomer students' classroom hours. The third person in the team, *Montserrat*, was not assigned as reception personnel but is part of the ordinary school's staff. She is a Catalan teacher and member of the management team, with the function of 'coordinator of integration' within the school. For some years she also worked as a newcomer mentor, but presently she is mainly in charge of coordinating other teachers and only teaches few hours in the reception classroom. The three professionals have all had many years of experience in education, between 17 and 35 years. Two of them have worked in the school's reception classroom since its origins and the third started in 2002.

Besides the mentors and the integration coordinator, another 10-12 different teachers teach lessons to newcomers in reception classrooms. They are fairly representative of the profile of the average school worker in public schools of Barcelona, with an overwhelming majority of white, native Catalanian, middle class, middle-aged women. Male or ethnically different teachers are exceptional.

A last actor in the reception process needs to be introduced in our story. Since the LIC program was launched the so-called 'LIC-agents' appeared in the school scene representing the regional administration in everything regarding newcomers' reception and integration. These civil servants from the Educational Department give permanent advice to schools and reception mentors. A legion of these agents is spread across Barcelona, each of them covering between 5-7 schools to ensure a constant physical presence and close follow-up. They also function as a liaison between the Department and the schools and are expected to participate directly in some decisions at the school level, like for example in transferring pupils to ordinary education. The LIC-liaison in the case of Tapiés School, was not a very active one and Tapiés' practitioners complained about it. The reception coordinator says that "some LIC [agents] work and some don't. Ours doesn't. She doesn't step in the classroom. She doesn't know our pupils... But then she gives her opinion in the meetings!".²²⁷ Practitioners in the Tapiés school considered that the LIC-liaison performed tasks of control rather than assisting with practical problems. In the words of the mentor at Dalí "they [the LIC-agents] are inspectors in the shadow; they get ideological-political training".²²⁸ The LIC agents, for their part, complained about the lack of cooperation from teachers in secondary education and described their work as LIC liaison "as a sort of Chinese water torture", because they had to be constantly repeating things to 'change [teachers'] mentalities', but also as a '*missionary*' work in bringing in 'new ways of doing things'.²²⁹ "We need to be very diplomatic", they say, because "high school teachers

²²⁶ Several interviews with teachers, coordinator, and principal at Tapiés school.

²²⁷ Interview with coordinator of integration at Tapiés.

²²⁸ Field diary of Dalí, p.4.

²²⁹ Interview with Tino Serra, coordinator of LIC-agents in Barcelona, Department of Education.

are very reluctant to take on this type of students. They cannot incorporate them into their classes, so they ‘park’ them [like a car]”.²³⁰

a. Registration of pupils

As mentioned above, immigrant students’ admission to schools is publicly regulated in Barcelona. A municipal commission comprised of civil servants of different levels and of agencies distributes immigrant students among schools based on their place of residence, order of arrival, and availability of places²³¹. In principle, this public distribution should ensure a relatively even allocation of students to schools. Yet, Tapies informants claim that their school has a much higher percentage of immigrant students than the area’s average because “other schools do not admit them”²³². This is supported by the striking differences in the percentage of immigrant students that public and semi-private –*concerted*- schools have²³³.

In the TAE system, school bureaucrats providing reception for newcomers have little decision-making power to influence assignation of students to their classrooms, as we have seen in the case of Dalí school. However, school-based units, like that of Tapies, have more leeway than area-based units. As one of Dalí’s teachers said, “Those Tapies people, yeah, they just do whatever they want” (Interview with mentor at Dalí, 28-5-04).²³⁴ Indeed, Tapies opened its TAE reception unit to a category of students that was formally excluded from the policy’s target. The TAE program was targeted to non-Romance-language speaking students between 12 and 16 years old, leaving aside Spanish-speaking students and others with Romance mother tongues. Tapies school decided to create a second reception classroom for Romance-language speaking students taught by volunteer teachers from the school’s regular staff:

Then there is Group 2, which fundamentally works with Latin-American students who have just arrived. Why? Because they are pupils who have just been incorporated into the system, they don’t go to the TAE because they speak Spanish but they have no idea of Catalan. Which is the vehicular language, in principle (Interview with the principal of Tapies school).

Besides allowing access to the reception classroom to certain student categories, practitioners at Tapies were able to influence the number of newcomers assigned to their classrooms more than the teachers at Dalí. As a school-based TAE unit, students can only be assigned to Tapies if they have a place in both the reception classroom and the ordinary classrooms. The school can reject new inscriptions when the TAE reception classroom reaches the maximum number of places, although as seen in the case of Dalí, this is not very effective. But the great difference with Dalí school is that Tapies can always reject new reception students when there is not an available place for them in ordinary education at the school. This allows the school to control the size of their reception unit more than in the TAE unit of Dalí. As the principal of Tapies school says:

The first thing that we do when a new pupil comes is check his or her age, and see if it corresponds with that of secondary education because sometimes... And the first thing that we do is to check if we have a place. If we have a vacant place that corresponds to the pupil’s age, he or she gets it. If we don’t have it, we automatically send him/her back to the Territorial Service of Education, and that’s it!

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ As different school systems use different terms to refer to vacancies available for admitting new students, I should clarify that in this study I again follow the British usage, referring to each vacancy as a "school place" or "place".

²³² Interview with principal of school at Tapies School.

²³³ As we read in chapter 4, although semi-private schools must be free of costs like any other publicly subsidized school, research has shown that semi-private schools use deterrence mechanisms to discourage immigrant parents, such as imposing an unofficial additional fare (Carbonell & Quintana 2003).

²³⁴ Interview with reception mentor at Dalí.

In 2004 the TAE program was substituted by the LIC program, and Tapiés' reception classroom continued existing under the new policy. Under the LIC program, Tapiés school continued acting in a similar way to keep the size of the reception classrooms within feasible limits. Like in the TAE system, if there is no vacant place in the school's ordinary classes, new incoming pupils can be sent back to the commission to be placed somewhere else. This solution could be labeled *external*, in the sense that it redirects student surplus to another agency.

This external strategy for keeping the size of the reception unit under a certain limit is mainly dependent on the availability of places in ordinary classes. Thus, as long as the school has places in regular education it has no grounds to reject incoming students, even if the size of the reception classroom grows over reasonable limits.

Under the LIC program, things get more complicated. Unlike the TAE scheme, the LIC does not establish a maximum number of students per reception classroom. Therefore, having an overcrowded reception classroom is not sufficient argument for a school to reject a newcomer student assigned to it by higher tiers. Furthermore, the Education Department foresees no procedures to assign additional reception teachers during the school year in order to meet a growing demand. If the reception classroom becomes overcrowded due to continuous arrivals, Tapiés school applies an *internal* distributive strategy. The school decides to transfer some newcomer students to regular classes sooner in order to make some room in the congested reception classroom (see p. 133-134).

b. Clustering in classes

Tapiés school has always had its reception unit within its own walls, which allows it more flexibility when it comes to clustering the newcomers conveniently. In the TAE period the reception classroom was physically inside the building, which allowed newcomer students to spend the whole school day in the same location. Based on that, Tapiés reinterpreted the TAE policy in its own way, and now has newcomer students attending separate reception classes or regular classes discontinuously; in this way they mingle with other students. Newcomers can attend reception lessons "in the morning or in the afternoon, depending on what [better] suits the lesson schedule".²³⁵

Reception students in Tapiés' TAE classroom were always tracked according to their Catalan language and Mathematics levels. Many regular teachers of the school participated in the reception classroom, which meant the groups could be split for certain subject periods. For instance, there were advanced and beginner levels of Mathematics. These two levels roughly corresponded to the division between Romance-language speakers and non-Romance language speakers. Non-Romance language speakers are generally put together in the lower-level (beginners) cluster. For the rest of the subjects, both streams of students are together.

Having the TAE unit in the same school where students attend regular classes also allows for better internal arrangements and reorganization of the pupils. Tapiés school applies a system of '*flexible tracking*' in general (not only for newcomers) which streams students into groups according to their level only for some subjects. Tapiés school covers two groups per year (i.e. for first year there is 1A and 1B) which are reorganized following flexible tracking for four subjects: Spanish, Catalan, English, and mathematics. Students are grouped into four different performance levels for these subjects. In addition, the school divides children into two clusters for lessons in social sciences and natural sciences, so that slower learners can receive the so-called 'reinforcement lessons'. After their transfer to ordinary education, newcomer students also participate in this tracking system. The school's *flexible tracking* policy allows teachers to

²³⁵ Conversation with the principal, field diary from Tapiés, p. 1

incorporate newcomer pupils earlier into regular classes because if they need support they can get it in the lower tracks of each subject:

We have flexible tracks in Catalan, Spanish, and mathematics. This allows us, for example, to make sure that a Chinese student transferred to regular classes who has high math level but is weak in Catalan or Spanish can be placed in an intermediate level of mathematics, although in Catalan or Spanish he is in a lower track (Interview with chief of studies of a school outside the sample).

As the former chief of studies says, tracked lessons in regular subjects make it possible to transfer newcomer pupils before they have completed the nine month reception period. In this way, the Catalan and Spanish lower tracks (and to a lesser extent, other subjects) become a prolongation of the reception classroom. Newcomers make up the majority of pupils in groups “D”. Also those who are transferring gradually, who little by little attend the reception classroom fewer hours and participate in more regular subjects, are incorporated into this system. According to informants, flexible tracking is very convenient for dealing with newcomer students with diverse situations as it differentiates students according to their dissimilar needs:

(Flexible tracking) has the advantage that, because everything is done in the same day, that is, three days per week at the same time (all students of classes A, B, and C have math, for example), we can promote students as it is more convenient (Interview with principal of Tapiés school).

After the LIC program was launched not much changed: the arrangements for clustering newcomer pupils in the LIC period resemble those of the TAE period. In a path-dependent way, Tapiés school continued the same pattern of clustering after the LIC reform of 2003. Tapiés continues to separate Romance language speaking and non-Romance language speaking newcomer pupils. Also, once newcomer students transfer to regular education, the school’s (flexible) tracking structure for regular classes is also applied. Students get a different treatment according to their skill level.

In 2007-2008 the school had to eliminate its two reception classrooms to one in response to cut-backs. The school lost one reception teacher as well as one Catalan teacher from the regular team. As a consequence, the way of working in reception had to be “dramatically reorganized”.²³⁶

c. Curriculum and methodology

Another distinctive trait of the Tapiés TAE classroom was the diversified curriculum that newcomer students received. Since its early years as a TAE unit, Tapiés’ students got all-in-all more subjects than the students in Dalí’s TAE unit.²³⁷ Newcomers’ weekly schedule was distributed between 9 hours of Catalan language, 4 of mathematics, 2 of natural sciences, 3 of social sciences, 2 of English, 1 of music, and 2 of sports. They also get 3 hours of guidance counseling from the reception mentors. In addition, students can also attend after-school workshops taught by volunteers from the social organization *Casal del Raval*, aimed to support language training through leisure activities.

While constituting a clear example of parallel reception, Tapiés school made its own interpretation of the TAE regulation. Each week newcomers completed 20 hours of reception training out a total of 26 hours/week, and during these hours they followed a very intensive language program. In the remaining 6-7 hours, newcomers attended regular classes. The school introduced newcomers into those mainstream curriculum lessons in which they would be able to keep up with the pace, but without extending the hours

²³⁶ Interview with the coordinator of reception at Tapiés, May 2008.

²³⁷ We have to keep in mind, however, that this schedule includes a whole school day, and not only the morning (from 9 to 14) as in the case of Dalí Unit.

of regular lessons beyond what the regulation prescribes. With this working method, Tapies' practitioners attempted to improve the area-based TAE system in two ways: by better integrating newcomers with their peers in regular education and by adapting the curriculum better to the educational needs of recently arrived students.²³⁸ Tapies' reception style is in line with the school's goal and discourse of equal opportunities for students with disadvantages. Both regular and reception teachers in the school believe that the intensity and the linguistic immersion offered by semi-parallel reception is the best way to enhance the opportunities of newcomer students in the host educational system.

Despite the apparent emphasis on teaching other subjects besides Catalan language, lessons were in fact oriented to teaching the terminology of specific disciplines. "Basically what they do is learn the language. Other things too, but essentially Catalan language."²³⁹

By teaching two different clusters for beginners and more advanced learners puts the emphasis on language training. In the lower level classes teachers set out to transmit basic vocabulary, while in the higher level they try to introduce some additional subject content. Nevertheless, teachers highlight language acquisition over the comprehension of content. This can be observed in a social sciences lesson, for example. The teachers wrote a short piece on the blackboard about the neighborhood and its human geography. Pupils were asked to copy the text and teachers walked around correcting misspellings, but there was no further discussion about the content.²⁴⁰

Strikingly, newcomer students got two hours of English per week while Spanish was postponed until they were transferred to regular education. According to one of the English teachers, the reason why English is taught to immigrant students is to give them a feeling of being integrated with the rest of pupils in the school:

The objective of the (reception) classroom is to produce integration. Why do we give them English? To create a feeling of integration with the rest of their peers. Pupils in regular classes have different subjects; different teachers come through [their classroom to teach a lesson], etc. (Field diary from Tapies, p.2).

Nevertheless, learning Spanish was also seen as a priority at Tapies. As explained before, Tapies school expanded the policy's target by introducing Romance language speaking newcomer students in its TAE lessons. Teachers at Tapies saw the necessity of teaching Catalan to students who already spoke Romance languages so that they could better follow ordinary classes. Likewise, and contrary to the philosophy of the TAE policy, Tapies school offered extra Castilian lessons to non-Spanish-speaking newcomer students. These Castilian lessons were given after the pupils finished their nine months of reception trajectory. The TAE regulation only made provisions for teaching Catalan language to immigrant students. Practitioners of this high school justify their initiative, which clearly deviates from the official policy, by saying that "the policy does not take into consideration that TAE pupils have to learn two languages, Catalan and Castilian, in order to get around in the [Catalonian] society".²⁴¹ In this way, they acknowledge the bilingual character of the social context in which newcomers have to integrate.

After the shift from the TAE to the LIC program, not many things changed in the curriculum of Tapies reception unit. The newcomer students' schedule remained the same, made up of the same subjects as before. However, a pivotal change was introduced in the 2008-2009 school year, and almost all subjects began to be taught to the newcomer children alone, separate from their native peers. The 6-7 hours a week of sports, music, etc., in which they were mixed with the ordinary groups became newcomer-

²³⁸ Interview with the coordinator of reception.

²³⁹ Interview with the principal of Tapies school.

²⁴⁰ Field notes from Tapies school, pp. 5-6.

²⁴¹ Interview with the principal of Antoni Tapies school.

exclusive. Informants explained the reduction of the number of subjects that newcomers take in regular classes as a result of external constraints on resources, especially personnel cutbacks implemented by the Department of Education in the last years. In any case, this suggests that in Tapiés after the introduction of the LIC (from 2008-09 on) the emphasis lies on teaching specific vocabulary linked to the main content subjects such as mathematics, etc. It is still too early to say whether this signifies a shift in the school's reception style (pressed by the need to cope with organizational constraints).²⁴²

Table 25. Regular subjects newcomers attend in Tapiés school, 2003-2004 until 2008-2009.

School year	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Subjects	Sports Music Visual Ed. English	Sports Music Technology English	Sports Music Technology English	Sports Music Visual Ed. English	Sports Music Technology	Sports
Nr. of subjects	4	4	4	4	3	1

Tapiés' curriculum reveals hardly any changes despite the autonomy granted to schools by the new policy. The school has not taken advantage of this autonomy to modify old TAE reception arrangements. Tapiés' reception style remains quite similar to the TAE system. In fact, this means choosing a more segregated version of mixed reception than the one proposed by the LIC policy, since the distribution of hours in or out the reception classroom that was determined by TAE has been maintained. Presently Tapiés School keeps newcomer students separated from the rest for about 25 hours.²⁴³ Informants explained the choice of this semi-parallel schedule by citing the wide language gap experienced by non-Romance language speaking students. Receiving these pupils in a more integrated fashion is "impossible" according to informants:

Researcher: So your philosophy is to incorporate pupils into regular classes as much as possible?

Principal: Absolutely. What happens is that when Pakistani, Chinese etc. students arrive, it is impossible to do so. They are placed in the TAE [classroom], where they are approximately 20 hours per week. *Within* the school but in a special classroom. (..) And the rest, 6 or 7 hours, they are in natural groups where we try to make sure they have the minimum of language content that is possible. Sometimes we achieve that [objective] sometimes not (Interview with principal of Tapiés school).

As for teaching methods, reception teachers at Tapiés generally apply classical teaching methodology. Throughout the observation period, first in the TAE period 2004-2005 and then in the LIC phase 2006-2007, a fairly uniform teaching style prevailed. Classes followed classical dynamics: teachers explained and pupils listened; teachers asked questions and pupils answered. Although modern methodologies such as work in small groups or individual work are also practiced,²⁴⁴ the authority of the teacher prevailed and the students' actual degree of autonomy was quite limited. The classrooms' physical arrangement favored a traditional dynamic: students sat with their desks facing the teacher and blackboard in the front. This seemed counterintuitive relative to the school's general discourse and pedagogical approach which

²⁴² Since June 2008 the principal of the school, who had a very pro-active pro-newcomers attitude, has moved to another job. New changes may be the result of a weaker coalition within the school in favor of newcomers' interests. Without the principal's leadership the interests of regular teachers to keep newcomers away from their classes may be prevailing.

²⁴³ But its tendency through the years is to integrate them for fewer and fewer hours. A fully parallel schedule would clearly contradict the spirit of the LIC program.

²⁴⁴ Other scholars have pointed out that this combination of classical and modern teaching techniques is quite common (Woods 1985).

emphasizes 'constructivism' and child-oriented methodologies. Also, the pro-active and progressive attitude towards newcomers' education in Tapiés seemed contradictory to this way of teaching.

Tapiés mentors put a great emphasis on discipline in the classroom. The three mentors have a hard, authoritarian style when dealing with the students. For example, in one of the lessons observed some pupils had not done their homework and a mentor got overtly angry and threatened to 'punish' students:

Mentor [speaking to the class, aloud]: I tell you something: those who don't come will not have a break, because we have a lot of work to finish. By Friday I want to have all reports finished. Well, we can wait until Monday to punish (those who don't have it yet) (Mentor 3, Field notes, Tapiés school, p.6).

Informants justified their harshness citing the pupils' lack of discipline and laziness. After the incident described, one of the mentor teachers asked my opinion about the lesson:

Mentor: What do you think about it? Tough, isn't it? But you just have to repeat everything to them all the time. This is a very weak group: they don't study. You get tired of repeating the same things (Mentor 2, field notes, Tapiés school, p.4).

Whether it is a cause or a consequence, the atmosphere in Tapiés' reception classrooms is gray. Students work with little concentration and some of them explicitly show a lack of interest.²⁴⁵ Moreover, there are high levels of absenteeism, particularly for the first morning period or among particular categories of student (older pupils, males).²⁴⁶ In the following excerpt one of the mentor teachers scolds a boy for skipping the first two periods of the day:

Mentor: So! Where were you? Did you oversleep? Or were you perhaps playing in the basketball field?

Student: I was at the basketball field –answers the pupil very relaxed (Field notes diary, Tapiés school, p. 6).

Perhaps another reason for the lack of enthusiasm expressed by the class may be associated with learning Catalan. The informants report that students have little motivation to do so, and that they often question or even oppose the logic of learning Catalan.

They (the students) don't understand why, if everybody speaks Castilian, we are so insistent on teaching them Catalan. Well, here (in the reception classroom) everything is in Catalan but then students go to regular classes and teachers there see that they don't understand and talk to them in Spanish. (Interview with the principal)

Other teachers have a softer approach than the mentors and even use amusing strategies to make students happier. This can be interpreted as an attempt to increase the motivation of students, but also as a way of compensating them for the difficult process that they are going through. For example, a mathematics teacher explained the following:

I can't tell them off when I see that they are surfing for music or things about their country. Perhaps they don't have access to internet in other moments. At the end of the day they are going through a very tough time. Other teachers tell them not to do it –in principle they are not

²⁴⁵ This could be read as an adolescent performance to build their identity against teachers' and adults' world; but it also reminds us of Willis' (1972) resistance theory and Suarez Orozco's concept of 'strategic non-learning' (1987).

²⁴⁶ Several informants report about absenteeism: Tapiés coordinator, LIC-agents, social workers of the area.

supposed to during class hours- but I don't tell them anything. Well, I want them to have fun in the lessons. I think they do, after all. (Interview with mathematics teacher, Tapies school).

d. Schedule-making

Tapies School is characterized by an active advocacy in favor of the educational opportunities of immigrant students. This was already reflected when in the 1999 the school filed the Department of Education for its own reception classroom. This initiative was backed up by a coalition of Tapies' teachers in favor of a pro-active school policy of reception. This pro-immigrant coalition, led by the principal *Adrià* and supported by a majority of teachers, gained enough strength to dominate the decision-making in the school. As a result, advocacy in favor of newcomer students was conveyed in many of their reception practices, and most particularly, in the delicate decisions pertaining to the timetables for classes.

Since the reception classroom was established in February 1999, the coalition pushed to adapt newcomers' timetable as much as possible to students' real educational needs. In doing so, Tapies school bureaucrats explicitly attempted to reach three goals: to teach newcomers as much Catalan as possible, to introduce newcomers to other school subjects and to the contents of ordinary secondary education, and to foster the contact between newcomers and regular students. According to TAE's requirements, newcomers had to get 20 hours of education in the reception classroom. Tapies school observed this norm strictly while including students in regular classes for 6-7 hours/ per week. The Tapies team carefully agreed upon a 'specific timetable for newcomers'. Reception lessons were adapted to students' needs and skills by providing them with customized training according to their level of achievement. In addition, newcomers also attended regular lessons, especially in subjects with scarce use of language. Such '*instrumental*' or '*manipulative*' subjects, as they are called in the teachers' jargon, are basically sports, art, music, and information technology.

Setting up a feasible schedule in which immigrant students get suitable regular lessons is a complicated task as it requires matching all time-tables in the school and involves the collaboration of several teachers. Since the reception classroom collects students ages 12 to 16, the schedules of most regular classes are involved in this bargaining exercise. At the beginning of the year, once the school knows the number of students enrolled and the number of teachers in the staff for that year, Tapies' management team prepares the time-tables for all the classes. This process involves a set of bilateral or multilateral meetings in which teachers negotiate the subjects and the amount of teaching hours that they get by department. After this, the management team creates a draft schedule which needs to be sanctioned by the team of teachers. Newcomers' schedule is made within this general procedure. Initially, an attempt is made to incorporate newcomer students only in *instrumental* subjects. Then, whenever that is not possible, the management team looks for possible alternatives. In this search the teacher's attitude prevails over the nature of the subject. Regular teachers that are more open to have newcomers in their classes are selected, regardless of the subject that they teach:

For instance, there is a group in fourth [year] doing social sciences. We try to look for '*manipulative*' subjects, but if it cannot be, well then... social sciences! It is not *manipulative* but there was no other way of making the schedule coincide. You have to accept it (Interview with reception coordinator at Tapies).

The resulting annual schedule is a compromise between the ideal goals and the actual possibilities. Informants insisted that, in practice, making a totally adapted schedule for newcomers has proven to be very difficult, even when the majority of the teachers agree on giving priority to newcomers' learning needs. This compromise means that newcomers get some regular subjects that exceed their level of Catalan language. This is reflected in the former excerpt, as newcomer students in Tapies have had social sciences class for several school years.

The continuity in the school's reception style can be explained by the stability of the school's micro-politics. Throughout ten years, the pro-immigrant coalition dominated the micro-politics of the school, and supported framing the issues in terms of equality of opportunities for newcomers.²⁴⁷ Over the years, this coalition has been able to negotiate with and persuade the team of teachers to comply with a newcomers' timetable acceptable for all. The stability of this agreement in Tapiés school is indicated by the schedule, which remained practically unchanged between 1999 and 2009.

e. Evaluation and transfer

Under the TAE scheme, students could stay one whole school year in the reception classroom, which meant a maximum of nine months from their arrival to the classroom. The standard procedure was to transfer students to ordinary education after completing exactly nine months. As observed in the Dalí classroom, a customary exam was done to evaluate the students' level of Catalan. However, the scores achieved by the students were not taken into account in deciding whether students needed further reception training. Since students arrived in different moments throughout the school year, the timing for evaluation and for the transfer of each pupil was different; nonetheless, the majority attended strictly nine months of reception training.

In the TAE classroom at the Tapiés school, however, students could be judged ready to transfer earlier. In principle, the Education Department and the school shared the responsibility for deciding when a student was ready to pass the final exam and eventually transfer. In practice, and as result of having their own TAE unit, Tapiés reception bureaucrats actually decided to transfer some students sooner to regular education whenever the reception classrooms grew beyond their desired limits. This was explicitly reported by informants at Tapiés:

After the children have been [in the reception unit] for nine months they take the test. But what happens? Well, since there have been new intakes for the TAE [unit], sometimes students are examined after only 5 or 6 months and they pass and get incorporated to the ordinary classroom and so other children can enter in their place (Interview with the coordinator of reception at Tapiés).

This strategy continued after the shift of policy. Since 2004 - enjoying relatively more freedom with the LIC scheme - teachers responsible for reception at Tapiés school decide when and to what extent students should be transferred. The coordinator of integration together with reception mentors determine when a student is prepared for transfer. The test is in principle administered by the LIC liaison from the Department of Education. "But it doesn't need to be administered by me; the teachers can also do it", says the LIC-liaison from the area. With the test results, Tapiés mentors and the coordinator of integration hold a meeting together with the LIC-liaison and decide whether or not each student is ready to be transferred. Evaluation meetings are held once per trimester.

Unlike the TAE scheme, the LIC program does not establish a maximum number of students per reception classroom. In addition, the allocation of one reception teacher - two at the most- is done once per year without any revision. This rigid allocation of resources produces great mismatches between demand and supply which have to be solved by the school itself. If during the year the number of pupils in the reception classroom becomes too large, reception mentors can decide to move some of them to regular classes earlier. Transfer decisions at Tapiés function as an *internal* distributive strategy to reduce the size of the reception unit. In this sense, Tapiés uses its broader autonomy in transfer functions as a *coping strategy*. In the face of growing demand, within the mentioned organizational constraints, reception

²⁴⁷ As we will discuss in the next chapter, pragmatic considerations and institutional inertias can be alternative interpretations, but these are not sufficient. School micro-politics appear to be determinant.

practitioners make discretionary decisions regarding students' transfer, particularly: who, when, and to which group they are to be moved.

First, discretionary judgments are made regarding which students are better suited to be transferred. Tapies' reception practitioners give treat different categories of pupils differently. The mentors and the school coordinator identify two categories of pupils - the Romance-language-speaking and the Non-Romance-language-speaking - from the moment of enrolment. Specific expectations are associated with each category: each one is expected to respond differently to educational stimuli. For example, Latin-Americans are expected to more or less follow lessons in Catalan, and to actually learn the language in a short time. Consequently, Tapies mentors use these categories and related assumptions as a predictor or diagnosis that justify certain decisions; for example, moving Latin-American students earlier than their non-Romance language speaking peers.

Decisions also have to do with the timing and degree of transfer. Transfer can be gradual, simply meaning that some students attend fewer reception hours and more regular lessons. Since the reception unit is *within* the school, Tapies practitioners can easily decide in favor of partial or total transfers to regular education at any point.

Besides the timing of transfer, another crucial decision in the transfer stage is to which class newcomer students should be transferred. We have already mentioned that Tapies school has two groups per year (i.e. 1A, 1B)²⁴⁸. School bureaucrats decide in which of these classes newcomers should be placed. In the first years of reception education, all newcomer students were transferred together to the same group so as to keep them 'concentrated':

Before, we put them all into group A when they passed to regular education. In order to have them concentrated. Because the principal that we had then wanted it so. Then, the inspector visited the school and said "How come that one class has 40 students and the other 20?" And he told us "No, no, you must distribute them (newcomers) (Interview with coordinator of integration at Tapies school).

After the negative response of the educational inspector, Tapies school stopped its practice of concentrated transfer. From that moment onwards, school bureaucrats have distributed newcomer students evenly between the two classes. Students are assigned to a group from the moment they enroll in the school. Assignment to a class is done based on order of arrival: the first to arrive go to group A, the second to group B, the third to group C, and so on. In addition, the procedure for transfer has become more standardized for pragmatic reasons of time-saving. Informants state that other considerations were taken into account in the past (like for instance respecting natural groupings and friendships among students) but these practices were too time-consuming:

Before, we tried to put them in a group with peers who they get along the best with. Now we don't do it anymore because in the meetings we used to spent one hour for each pupil. (Coordinator of integration, Tapies school).

Internal reallocation of pupils is a strategy in coping with the large number of newcomer students that the school receives. Yet it can also be used as a pressure strategy to obtain more resources from the Department of Education (in order to open another reception classroom). For example, the coordinator of integration explained that in 2008 they received 6 students although they had no vacant places in the reception unit and these students were simply placed in regular classes and received some additional hours

²⁴⁸ Tapies school used to have three groups per year. Since 2004-2005 it has only two groups due to cut-backs.

of Catalan. Tapies' reception practitioners are supported by a pro-newcomer coalition and therefore have a stronger capacity of negotiation with the administration.

3. Gaudí school

Gaudí school is a small-sized high school located in the working-class inner-city neighborhood of Poble Sec. Traditionally, newcomers to the city first settled in El Raval area and then moved to Poble Sec, at the other side of the ramblas, when they ascended socially. When Barcelona's immigrant population began to spread into parts of the city beyond the Raval area this was one of the preferred destinations. Gaudí school has 400 pupils divided among obligatory (ESO) and post-obligatory secondary education (Bachillerato/ Ciclos Formativos), and has a faculty of 50 teachers. The school uses a system of flexible tracking in four subjects: Catalan, Spanish, English, and mathematics.

The arrival of immigrant students was somewhat more recent to Gaudí school than to Tapies school. The reception classroom at Gaudí was opened only in 2003 with the LIC program. In 2003-2004, around one fourth of the 205 students in obligatory education (ESO) at Gaudí were foreign-born (24.8 %), most of them Latin-American students. By 2007-2008, this ratio had slightly increased to reach 26.7%. Besides working-class native and immigrant students, Gaudí school has an important presence of pupils with hearing impairments, as it is specialized in hearing disability education.

The newcomer students at the school have a similar profile to those in the neighboring El Raval area, with large groups from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Philippines. Latin-American students, however, make up a much larger group as they amount to the three largest national groups put together. Ecuadorians are the largest nationality of Spanish-speaking students at the school, and since 2006 have become one of the largest national groups in the school.

Table 26. Number and nationality of newcomer students in Gaudí's reception program.

School year	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Nr. of newcomer students	10	Nc	12	20	27	24
Majority nationalities	Pakistani Bangladeshi Phillippine	Nc	Pakistani Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi Pakistani Ecuadorian	Ecuadorian Phillippine Pakistani	Pakistani Phillippine Ecuadorian

Source: School's administration.

The teaching faculty at Gaudí does not particularly advocate for immigrant students. *Jordi*, the principal, does not manage reception issues in the school. *Joan*, the director of studies and second in command, is responsible for that. There is also a teacher appointed as 'coordinator of integration' but apparently she is not very active.²⁴⁹ *Joan* takes on her role to a large extent. The director of studies is a mindful and pragmatic man who believes that his school can fulfill a relevant function of social mobility to its mostly working-class student body. The school has one official reception mentor, *Roser*, who is an extremely committed teacher who works her fingers to the bone. She was temporarily replaced by *Neus*, a young interim teacher with a background in special education²⁵⁰ and speech therapy, a tenderfoot in the field of reception. From 2006 onwards, the school appointed a teacher of the regular staff, *Laila*, to support *Roser*

²⁴⁹ According to her colleagues, "she doesn't know how to coordinate or anything" (interview with surrogate reception mentor, *Neus*).

²⁵⁰ Special education refers to education for children with physical or psychological disadvantages.

in the reception classroom. *Laila*, who normally teaches social sciences, volunteered for the reception classroom, where she works giving extra hours from her free time (non-paid).²⁵¹

Equity can be identified as the main value guiding Gaudí school's pedagogical approach. This means understanding that pupils with special educational disadvantages deserve positive discrimination. However, before immigrant students started arriving the school had already other forms of 'diversity' that required special treatment, such as deaf students and working-class students. Particularly talented working-class students are an explicit objective for the school (what they call '*diversity from above*'), and special treatment is required to encourage their upward social mobility. Informants from Gaudí school understood that a group of students with these characteristics 'needed to be protected', that is, it must not be mixed with less-talented students but kept in a homogeneous class, in order to encourage these students to reach the *Bachillerato* (preparation for university admission). Tracking is defended as a suitable instrument for this purpose. Schools must find a balance in how they support the various categories of pupils requiring special treatment in order to avoid that some forms of 'diversity' ("those who are doing worse") receive all the attention, leaving others aside.²⁵²

a. Student Enrolment

In general terms, Gaudí school and Tapies school apply similar practices of enrolment. Immigrant pupils are assigned to Gaudí by the municipal commission of enrolment on the basis of their place of residence, order of arrival, and the availability of places in the school. The commission can assign a student to Gaudí only if the school has a vacancy in both the reception classroom and in regular classes. As we saw in the section on the Tapies school, non-availability of places in the regular class is sufficient reason to reject a newcomer student sent by the commission. However, educational authorities consider that the non-availability of places in the reception unit alone is not enough argument to reject a student. Gaudí school has been overwhelmed by newcomer students who exceed the actual vacancies in the reception classroom. Like Tapies school, Gaudí has had to deal with this under the same external constraints, that is, with the rigid allocation of human resources for reception suffering a one year time-lag. Schools have to wait from when newcomer pupils are counted (in June) to when a corresponding number of teachers is assigned (the next school year).

To solve the reception unit's overbooking, practitioners at Gaudí have applied coping strategies much like those in the Tapies school. On the one hand, when regular classes are full, they have used an *external* strategy, that is, new pupils have been dismissed and sent back to the commission. On the other, when a reception unit gets overpopulated, they apply an *internal* distributive strategy which consists of transferring some pupils sooner to regular classes (see section on Transfer, pp. 142-143).

Some of the students enrolled in the Gaudí reception classroom are not recently arrived in the country, but have attended primary education for some years. If the school considers that they are not prepared for entering obligatory secondary education (ESO) they are redirected to the reception classroom. This is mostly the case of illiterate students or students who had had little schooling in their home country. Neus, the substitute teacher explains that many students are illiterate and that this lengthens the reception trajectory: "what happens is that almost all of them arrive to primary [education] without any previous schooling and... teachers have to teach them how to read and write".²⁵³

²⁵¹ This situation appeared several times in the fieldwork. For instance, in a school of the broader sample informants reported that "here (at this school) there are people working more hours to do reception. Me, for instance: I was doing more hours last year" (Interview to a mathematics teacher from a school of the big sample).

²⁵² Interview with director of studies, 27-5-2008.

²⁵³ Field notes from Gaudí, p. 3.

b. Clustering in classes

In Gaudí school, four subsequent models of organization for reception teaching have been applied, each of them implying a different arrangement of students in classes. In the first two years reception instruction was weakly organized and had an improvised character.

We started in quite a rudimentary way. We started taking newcomers into a classroom, in any classroom available, and I would give them some ‘reinforcement’ [i.e. additional lessons in Catalan language] (Interview with mentor at Gaudí).

In the second year (2004-2005), during the absence of the official mentor, the interim teacher developed an arrangement whereby students were clustered in classes by age (12-13 year olds and 14-16 year olds) and by mother tongue (Romance vs. non-Romance languages).²⁵⁴ The disadvantage of the resulting structure of four homogeneous groups was that the students only received 7 hours of reception teaching per week due to the limited working hours of the interim teacher. They spent the rest of the day in randomly arranged mainstream classes in which they hardly participated. The reception teacher would prepare exercises for the newcomer students to work on during their regular classes.²⁵⁵ The following excerpt shows that regular teachers did not adapt their lessons to newcomer students, and considered it the sole responsibility of the reception mentor:

12.00 Coffee break in the staff room. The English teacher speaks with the reception mentor about a newly arrived newcomer student. He doesn't understand English.

Reception mentor: Let him do Catalan. I would give him homework. With very simple grammar structures and vocabulary with drawings. They can do that alone.

English teacher: [Okay] Will you tell him?

Mentor: I already did. If he forgets [the homework] at home tell him “Go to *News*'s classroom”. I always tell them: “if you go to [regular] class and they do things that you don't understand, just take out my homework and start working on Catalan”. But I don't know if they understand me (Field diary at Gaudí, p. 5).

In the 2005-2006 school year, *Roser*, the official reception teacher, returned and organized reception on an individual basis. Each student had his or her own timetable adapted to personal needs and capabilities. There was a particular room designated as reception classroom and students would come and go throughout the whole day. Some students joined in regular classes for mathematics but not for social sciences, others joined in only for gymnastics and art, etc. As a result the same group of students was never in the classroom together, and some received a given lesson twice while others did not receive it at all. *Roser*, the mentor teacher, made a titanic effort to adapt the reception scheme to the individual needs of students but in the end she concluded that “it has been maddening, and I will never do something like that again” (Interview to reception mentor at Gaudí).

The lack of involvement demonstrated by regular teachers at Gaudí school has made it impossible to adapt the timetable of lessons to newcomer pupils. Given this situation, the reception scheme became a personal initiative of the reception mentor, for which she took responsibility in the absence of support from other teachers. *Roser* justifies this option as the best way to maximize what students get out of their training:

²⁵⁴ Field diary from Gaudí, p.1.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

I believe that the results are... (good) because I have worked myself into the ground. Well, I did this year, but I am not going to do it again. Because I am going to... they would have to lock me in [a psychiatric hospital]! It cannot be. I have done it because I feel very bad about the fact that the children are sitting there [in the regular classes], without listening, for hours, and hours, and hours (Interview with mentor at Gaudí).

Finally, since 2006-2007 *Roser* has implemented a new approach. Newcomer students are clustered in two groups according to their advancement in Catalan. In fact, this means that Romance language-speaking students are placed in the higher track while non-Romance-language-speaking students are channelled into the lower track. Also, as we will see in the section that discusses transfers, Romance language speaking students tend to be transferred earlier to regular classes. However, differential treatment in clustering and transfer responds ultimately to performance in Catalan language, thus Spanish-speaking students may also be placed in the lower track.

Gaudí school streams students in their fourth year into three tracks, that is, real tracks for all subjects, and not 'flexible' ones. For younger students, the school applies flexible tracking, as classes mix students with disparate levels and they are tracked only for some subjects. In particular, flexible tracking is applied to Catalan, Spanish, English, and mathematics. Students with better academic performance are gathered in group A in hopes of orienting them towards the academic track of post-obligatory secondary education (*Bachillerato*). Students with poor academic performance are gathered in group C, in which the aim is to help them pass obligatory secondary education. Finally, group B gathers all those students that are expected to continue their studies after completing ESO but in the vocational track (*Ciclos Formativos*). Informants report that newcomers normally go to group C.²⁵⁶

Tracking has been anathematized for decades, and there is ideological pressure from the administration and from peers not to cluster pupils according to their level of academic achievement. Nevertheless, flexible groupings are nothing if not a tracking strategy based on students' skills. Gaudí school has also reinstalled a fixed streaming system for the last year of ESO, based on the idea that students have distinct abilities. Informants believe that not recognizing this (that people do have distinct abilities) is detrimental to students' academic progress, because it leads to error of making classes with mixed levels. Such mixed classes, informants believe, hinder the progress of both the highest and the lowest achievers:

Question: Why did you stop having tracks?

Answer: Well, you know, teaching is like the sea. As the joke goes: "Well, [now that you saw it] what did you think about the sea? That it is a bit indecisive because you don't know if it comes or goes." Well, teaching is a little bit like that. The discourse comes from one side, that 'we are all equal/ the same'. Well, yes, we are all equal but *not all of us have the same skills and abilities*. There was a time, some years ago, when saying *that* was politically incorrect (Interview with the director of studies at Gaudí).

c. Curriculum and methodology

Over time, the Gaudí school made substantial changes in the curriculum offered to newcomer pupils in the reception classroom. In 2004-2005 newcomer students received only Catalan, with the exception of some specific vocabulary related to mathematics, social sciences and natural sciences. In 2008-2009 students were divided into two clusters and the advanced cluster received content lessons in the three subjects just mentioned rather than only vocabulary.

²⁵⁶ Interview with director of studies.

Table 27. Schedule of newcomers pupils at Gaudí School, 2008-2009

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8-9		Social Science Group B			Social Science Group A
9-10	Social Science Group A		Catalan Group B		Social Science Group B
10-11	Catalan Group A	Catalan Group B/ Society Group A	Catalan Group A/ Mathematics Group B		Social Science Group A/ Catalan Group B
11-11:30	Break				
11:30-12:30	Catalan Group B	Catalan Group B	Catalan Group B/ Mathematics Group A	Catalan Group A	Catalan Group B
12:30-13:30	Social Science Group A + Catalan (ind. attention)	Catalan Group A		Catalan Group B	Catalan (ind. attention)
13:30-14:30	Lunch				
15-16	Social Science Group B	Catalan Group A		Catalan Group B	
16-17		Catalan Group B			

Teaching Catalan to newcomers at Gaudí follows an ‘in context’ interactive teaching scheme.²⁵⁷ Mentors explained that they pretty much adapt to what happens in each situation and improvise from then on. For instance, in one of the first lessons that I observed the students were asked on the spot to prepare questions to interview me. Teachers consider the first step in learning is to feel ‘the need’ to learn and ‘to be motivated’. Hence, each time a student asks a question the teacher takes advantage of the opportunity to introduce new contents, vocabulary, grammatical structures, etc. “The pupil wants to know something and you take advantage of that need to give an explanation, because he is receptive”.²⁵⁸

According to *Joan*, the director of studies, in the first year of the reception training they try to offer students ‘the maximum possible of hours of Catalan language’, while in the second year reception hours are reduced ‘depending on how each student progresses’. The maximum number of hours is usually between 9 and 12 hours of reception teaching per week. As already mentioned, in 2004-2005 students received only 7 hours of reception per week because there was only one person for reception, *Neus*, and she had to divide her working hours among the four clusters of newcomers. Since 2006, newcomer students receive 12 hours of reception per week, out of which 6-8 are Catalan lessons and the rest are divided between mathematics and social sciences. Having two reception mentors allows pupils to be clustered without reducing the number of hours of reception lessons. The Gaudí reception classroom also presently has a trainee who collaborates some days throughout the week and a mathematics teacher from the general staff.

This shows that in 2008-09 the advocates of teaching other contents besides Catalan language have gained support within the school. One of the reception mentors at Gaudí says that the aim of reception should be to teach newcomers the necessary contents in order to achieve their certificate of obligatory secondary education. From this teacher’s point of view, content subjects should be prioritized and newcomers must learn the same subjects as their peers in ordinary education during the reception trajectory. Another implication of this approach is that Catalan language gets a secondary position: language should be taught

²⁵⁷ Interview with reception mentor at Gaudí.

²⁵⁸ Interview with substitute reception mentor at Gaudí.

only to enable newcomer students to learn the other contents. In that sense, if pupils use Spanish instead of Catalan it does not matter as long as they communicate.

When I volunteered to work in the reception unit I asked the team: Do you give me permission to teach social sciences as a *transversal* subject? I asked for permission to experiment. We have to work on other things. What these students need is to pass ESO in the first place. Because they cannot learn Catalan well in the three years that they are here. They will continue learning afterwards (Interview with reception mentor at Gaudí).

Yet, newcomer students attend 18 hours of regular lessons per week, in which non-adapted contents are usually taught. Reception mentors continue providing newcomers with exercises which they can complete during the ordinary lessons. Pragmatic considerations make it difficult to design newcomer-friendly schedules. Besides, regular teachers' ideal is still that of parallel reception, closer to the TAE model than to the LIC. In the words of the director of studies:

Then again, that idea that they [students] have to integrate with the group, to *live the group*... But what kind of *life in the group* can they possibly have when the physics and chemistry teacher is explaining in Catalan some contents that they do not know, in a language that they don't know, and they cannot even communicate with the pupil sitting next to them?!! (Interview with the director of studies at Gaudí school).

Some regular teachers at Gaudí, however, do make an effort to accommodate their lessons to the diverging learning needs of students. This implies diversifying the teaching level for the very same lesson in order to make it more accessible for some, and more demanding for others. To do this, teachers often use the strategy of 'busing'. That is, they keep students busy with individual or group assignments in order to devote time to students who need extra attention. The director of studies, *Joan*, describes his personal strategies for dealing with a very heterogeneous but 'quite good' group of students in fourth year:

I teach Castilian language... in fourth year, and there I have this Pakistani girl, who represents an element of diversity. Also I have a boy from Venezuela with zero prior schooling, so he almost needs to learn to write. And I have 5 deaf students... who make up another aspect of diversity. This means, in a class with 20 pupils: first, I have to reduce the pace so that deaf students can follow because they have an interpreter with them... Then, to work at another level with those who can *pull* much more [take on challenges], because you cannot forget that 'diversity' also includes upward and not only downward diversity. Then, I take advantage of the moments in which I say [to all] "Read this text"... to sit down with the Pakistani girl and explain the present tense to her and say, "Now do this and this exercise..." Therefore, it means imagination and splitting yourself up (Interview to the director of studies at Gaudí school).

Nevertheless, the current attitude of ordinary teachers in Gaudí school is not very pro-newcomer. Teachers are reluctant to have these pupils in their classes. Teachers of the ESO ordinary lessons feel 'frustration', 'anxiety' and 'impotence' before a situation which they can hardly manage. In their view, the LIC principle of maximizing newcomers' participation in regular lessons is unrealistic: "You end up having a set of furniture that you cannot [properly] treat and with whom you cannot work".²⁵⁹ Since a teacher's duty is to tell the students 'what to do', for teachers it is 'a torment' "to have a poor guy there without you being able to tell him what to do".²⁶⁰ During a meeting observed during the fieldwork, teachers' reluctance to let newcomer students attend their lessons was made explicit in a very civilized way. Some teachers demanded that these pupils remain more hours per day in the reception unit:

²⁵⁹ Interview with director of studies at Gaudí.

²⁶⁰ Interview with director of studies at Gaudí.

Director of studies (to the reception mentor): Part of the faculty has asked whether newcomer students can spend more hours in the reception classroom. Particularly, the teachers of subjects X and Y. Well, that is fixed and cannot be [what they demand]. But the teachers ask for them to have additional Catalan homework (for newcomer students) which they can do during their normal classes, and for these to be corrected [the exercises].

(Interim) Reception mentor: Well, [to correct] is not necessary. I correct the exercises afterwards (Meeting of the “Diversity Commission” in Gaudí school).

In such a situation, it seems that a generalized practice among regular teachers is to teach their classes in Castilian instead of in Catalan - the instruction language by law - in order to communicate better with newcomer pupils. Several informants described the pervasiveness of this practice and their observations are supported by other evidence. All classes observed during the fieldwork did proceed in Catalan, as dictated by law. However, what I did observe in several occasions was that teachers gave explanations in Spanish to Latin American students during the reception lessons.

Also, according to a survey conducted by the LIC-agent in the school, regular students report to speak mostly Spanish at school, regardless of their language at home (Catalan or Castilian). In their free time, students normally speak Spanish with other students. As for communicating with teachers, they massively answered that they speak “in the language that the teacher speaks to them”.²⁶¹

d. Schedule-making

As we have seen, Gaudí school organized reception in four different ways, with consequences in the sort of schedules adopted for newcomers. After a first period of improvisation, a scheme of four clusters with their corresponding schedules was set. Afterwards, the school applied a system of individualized schedules, and finally, a system of fixed schedules for students clustered in two groups. The first three alternatives respond to a situation in which the whole responsibility for reception was put on the shoulders of the reception teacher allocated by the Department of Education. Other teachers did not assume any direct tasks in reception education nor did the management team actively support reception goals. This reflects a pragmatic attitude of doing *whatever is possible with the available resources and within the given constraints*. The reception teacher was the only one teaching reception classes as well as adapting teaching materials and assignments for other subjects.

Gaudí school was also adapting the rules from above with respect to the number of weekly reception hours that newcomer students had to receive. According to the LIC agent of the area, schools are encouraged to offer 16 hours of reception per week.²⁶²

Once again, the personal attitude of the principal or the management team seems to have had a crucial influence on how the program developed. Since schedule-making is a very delicate activity that involves diverse and often conflicting interests,²⁶³ the principal plays a referee role. The resulting schedule is the product of a negotiation process between departments and teachers with unequal levels of power, and therefore tends to reflect the structure of power within the teachers’ team. For instance, those who have been working as civil servants for more years have preference (*desiderata*) to choose (certain subjects, days,

²⁶¹ Field diary from Gaudí, p.4. This study was carried out in all high schools in Barcelona. Unfortunately, the precise results of this survey were internal and confidential. I was only briefly informed about the findings for Gaudí school.

²⁶² However, as we have seen, this is a soft rule reflected in mere recommendations, which sometimes contradict each other (see chapter 4: 63).

²⁶³ Schedule-making can also be conflictive; in order to avoid conflicts many schools in the last years have chosen to outsource the definition of the annual schedule (“Nowadays there are some guys in Seville who are earning their weight in gold by making school schedules”. Mentor at Dalí).

times) over those who arrived later, and those without a definitive civil servant status (interim faculty) are the least influential in the decision-making process. If the management team plays a neutral role or is not openly and pro-actively 'pro-immigrant', then the reception teacher has little influence against the powerful interests of the larger school departments. This seems to have been the case at Gaudí school in the first three reception schemes adopted. But also the management team (or principal) may decide to support certain interests which would otherwise be too weak and hence be overlooked by the more powerful parties in the decision-making process. The shift to a reception model with two fixed schedules and with broader participation by teachers other than the reception mentor signals that reception has gotten more support within the school, possibly even from the management team.

e. Evaluation and transfer

Practices of evaluation and transfer of students at Gaudí school resemble considerably those at Tapies school. The enrolment commission, a special commission appointed within the school, makes decisions about transfer. The role of the newcomers' mentor is decisive: she pre-selects those students that are prepared to be transferred; moreover, decisions are based on the mentor's report about the student. Transfer decisions deal with individual cases and take place at any moment. Informants emphasize that there can be applied no general rules for transfer as "Each student is unique so you can't generalize".²⁶⁴ According to them, the decision to transfer a pupil follows the natural process of adaptation of newcomer students and responds to their assessment of how ready a given pupil is. In reality, however, other elements play a role when it comes to practice. Although criteria for transfer (such as student's mother language or age) are indeed applied with flexibility, practitioners' belief in the uniqueness of each decision reflects their *illusio* (Bourdieu 1998), as the insiders of the reception field, making them confuse ideal ways of working with the real strategies applied in their day-to-day practice. As Lipsky (1980) found, reception practitioners must deal with students on a mass basis which makes them develop coping techniques to recognize and to process categories of cases accordingly.

Since spaces are limited in the reception classroom, teachers are confronted with the decision of who stays and who transfers. Transfers in the short-term are dictated by pragmatic reasons and not by pure professional judgment on the individual capacities of students. *Roser* describes that in making these decisions, compromises also have to be made, often a matter of choosing the 'lesser evil'. Sometimes pragmatic compromises lead to non-optimal solutions in some individual cases, but the logic of this strategy seeks to maximize the benefits for the collective:

In second year [of reception] we try to gradually reduce reception hours, among other things, as a matter of classroom management. We must free up hours and have free hours so that more pupils can continue arriving, pupils who need all the hours (Interview to the director of studies of Gaudí).

Just like in Tapies school, in the face of the growing demand reception practitioners make discretionary decisions about the transfer of students, decisions concerning who, when, and to which group they will be transferred. The reception mentor at Gaudí, *Roser*, uses the transfer of newcomer pupils as an *internal strategy* to control demand. In the case of Gaudí School, Latin-American students are transferred sooner than speakers of non-Romance languages while older students are kept longer than younger ones. Practitioners justify these practices citing the 'educational needs' and 'skills' of pupils, which necessarily imply the subjective diagnosis of the teacher. Regardless of the accuracy of this professional judgment, differential treatment in transfer serves as a strategy to cope with the large number of newcomer students that the school receives. The next piece of interview explicitly conveys the decision-making process of the mentor in selecting which categories of pupils need longer or shorter periods of reception training:

²⁶⁴ Interview with mentor of reception at Gaudí school.

This year, for example, I will tell you what we did. Since we had overbooking, because I cannot have 27 pupils, that is nonsense. So, what did I do? (...) Well, we decided that the children from the first cycle (first and second year) who were Spanish-speaking, they would stay in their [ordinary] class, and they would continue having Catalan [there], and (...) they would gradually learn, the way it used to be done. And I kept the older guys, from third or fourth year, who don't have chances, and Catalan is very difficult for them (...) So, I gave priority to these boys (Interview to mentor of Gaudí School).

Another element involved in the decision is the transfer destination. As I already mentioned, since 2008 Gaudí school has had three tracks for students in fourth year. However, Gaudí tries to keep groups A and C small in order to increase the opportunities of both the weakest and the strongest pupils. This policy has the unwanted consequence of concentrating newcomers in group B:

The problem is that with the '*drop by drop*' [constant arrival of newcomers] all the newcomers arriving later in the year end up in group B. Because we try to protect C so that it is very small, and also we try to protect A, to save '*upward diversity*' (Director of studies, Gaudí school).

Gaudí practitioners are aware of the result of their decision, and consider it negative for newcomers and other students in group B, but they still defend that the priority needs to go to the other two groups: track C, which they call 'downward diversity', and track A, known as 'upward diversity'. These two groups deserve the most positive discrimination. The first group refers to students with certain social or cultural characteristics that put them in a situation of disadvantage to complete obligatory education (ESO). The second group or 'upward diversity' refers to working-class students who, despite their poor cultural capital, could be able to continue studies in the academic track (*Bachillerato*) with some extra attention. Informants argue that targeting only newcomers, for whom it is most difficult to pass, decreases the upper mobility chances of working-class, native students.²⁶⁵ Being convinced of the justice of their general argument is what helps Gaudí practitioners cope with the emotional stress implied in those compromises that may be detrimental to some newcomer pupils:

Actually, here [at Gaudí] we only have one receiving class. Then, newcomers arrive in November-December and you have to make the *Judgment of Solomon* ['splitting the baby']: that is, [they go to] the reception classroom and the rest of the time to Group B, where they will not understand a word. Morally you have to cope with it (Director of studies, Gaudí school).

Nevertheless, Gaudí bureaucrats admit that newcomer students arriving in third or fourth year are in a paradoxical situation and they tend to deal with them in a lenient way. Due to the rigid age limit that the educational system imposes for finishing obligatory education (16 years old), newcomers arriving at age 14 or 15 do not have enough time to do a reception trajectory of one or two years and subsequently complete their ESO studies. Before turning 16 they must pass both the reception training and the obligatory secondary education, that is, they must demonstrate proficiency in the contents of both Catalan and ESO. Informants from Gaudí school report that they tend to give late newcomers the ESO degree on the basis of 'minimum' standards.²⁶⁶

You cannot throw them out into the street without the ESO diploma. [You must] leave the door open for them. They will get out and start working; but perhaps when they are 18 they'll decide to start studying again. It is a decision of a *social* character, what you make here.

²⁶⁵ These working-class students are often native but of non-Catalan origins, their parents or grandparents being migrants from poorer rural areas such as Andalusia or Extremadura. Thus this kind of reasoning on the part of the practitioners does not necessarily imply choosing between immigrants or native children.

²⁶⁶ In Spanish: "*intentas que saquen la ESO evaluando mínimos*".

The director of studies at Gaudí justifies bending the requirements to pass ESO particularly in the case of highly-skilled newcomers. Students arriving in first cycle (first or second year) are sometimes required to repeat one year in order to increase their chances of learning Catalan as well as the contents of obligatory secondary education.²⁶⁷ They are young enough to ‘miss’ one year in order to improve the final outcome. On the other hand, the strategy for those who are high-talented and who arrive in third or fourth year is to have them pass ESO and they are advised to pursue post-obligatory education in an international school, whenever this is possible. Talking about a Pakistani girl with a good level of English the director of studies at Gaudí said:

You know that if you don’t pass her, her educational career in Spain is over. What you try to do is to get her pass ESO by any means, with extra support, homework, with private lessons,... And once she has passed, then you tell the parents to take her to the British School to study *Bachillerato*. Forget about continuing [to study] in Catalan because she is going to fail!! (Interview with the director of studies at Gaudí school).

4. Other schools that provide reception in Barcelona

In the preceding sections we have described the ways how reception was organized and implemented in the Dalí, Tapies, and Gaudí schools. In this section we will outline the internal variation in the case of Barcelona, as practices in the Dalí, Tapies, and Gaudí schools need to be put in the context of what happens in the rest of schools.

In Barcelona a higher number of schools delivered reception than in Rotterdam. In 2004-2005 only 13 reception (TAE) classrooms delivered reception training in Barcelona but this number used to be higher during the TAE period. Since the beginning of the TAE program in the mid 1990s around 20 TAE classrooms²⁶⁸ were distributed throughout the city of Barcelona. During the LIC period, as schools were allowed to start their own reception classroom, the number of secondary schools delivering reception training increased steadily, reaching 41 in 2005-2006. In order to put into context the schools investigated in this research, a telephonic survey was done in 2007-2008 to a sample of 17 of these schools in the city of Barcelona. This survey set out to outline the dominant reception styles carried out by schools.²⁶⁹

Interviewees from different schools show striking similarities in their reception practices in the registration, in the clustering and in the transfer phases. Clustering practices reveal a widespread preference for organizing newcomer pupils according to their level of Catalan. During their reception trajectory pupils are clustered in groups of level not only within reception hours, but often also in the regular subjects that they follow in the ordinary classroom and once they are transferred. As many schools have organized regular subjects in ‘flexible groupings’ newcomer students are subject to ‘tracked transfer’ to the lower tracks.

Schools also show considerable similarity in their practices concerning inscription and transfer of students. Practitioners apply coping strategies much like those in the Tapies and Gaudí school in order to solve the reception unit’s overbooking: they use an *external* strategy when regular classes are full, that is, new pupils are dismissed and sent back to the city enrolment commission. When a reception unit gets overpopulated

²⁶⁷ Repeating years is quite unusual in the ESO system where it is possible for students to proceed to the next course even when they have failed subjects in the previous year.

²⁶⁸ Estimation of an informant (T. Serra, coordinator of LIC agents in Barcelona).

²⁶⁹ The questionnaire included questions about the year of starting of their reception classroom, number of reception students in their school, pattern of organization of reception, subjects taught in the reception training, number of teachers teaching in the reception classroom, and number of hours per week that newcomer students would receive Catalan.

but they must accept new inscriptions because there are vacant places in regular classes, they apply an *internal* distributive strategy which consists of transferring some newcomer pupils sooner to regular classes.

The survey also indicates that in Barcelona there is considerable variation between schools in the organization of reception and in the teaching goals/methods. As a consequence, these two criteria become the best indicators of different implementation styles in the city. We can measure the type of reception structure by the number of teaching hours that newcomer students spend in the reception classroom and reception goals (teaching just language or including other subjects) by the number of teachers teaching newcomer students.

The interpretation that schools make of the LIC reception program differs thus in the way of organizing that reception, either in a semi-parallel or integrated manner. The findings of the survey indicate that a majority of schools provides an integrated form of reception, that is, newcomer students spend a majority of their school time in ordinary lessons (20-24 hours/ week) and only a few hours in reception classes (6-10 hours/ week). Schools also differ widely in their interpretation of the main goals guiding school reception, expressed by their curriculum including mainly Catalan or other subjects as well. Findings also show that a majority of schools teaches only Catalan language in their reception courses leaving other subjects aside. In fact, even those schools that teach other subjects in the reception classes actually only provide specific vocabulary for those subject areas.

Despite only 4 schools out of 17 present a (semi) parallel mode of organizing the reception, the parallel mode enjoys considerable consensual support among interviewees. Even some that apply semi-integrated structures of reception in their schools evoked in their discourses parallel reception as the most feasible and convenient form of reception for schools and teachers. Further, if we sum to these four schools with parallel reception classrooms those that apply flexible groupings and tracked transfer to newcomer students we can affirm that an ample majority of schools actually receive newcomers through separated structures apart from the native students.

Table 28. Telephonic survey to a sample of secondary schools providing reception in Barcelona

	Number of schools opting for:
a. Reception structure	
(semi) Parallel reception (most class hours in the reception classroom)	4
Integrated reception	13
b. Reception goals	
Language as a tool for socio-economic integration (other subjects besides language)	4
Language as a goal in itself (mainly language teaching)	13

We must keep in mind that we speak about coping practices not directly observed by the researcher but reported by informants. Nevertheless, the survey's findings contrasted with information from LIC agents (who interact directly with many schools) can be taken as a valid overview of reception styles in Barcelona.

The survey served even as a source of hints for new practices of reception not indicated by other informants before (that should be further investigated). A remarkable example is an avoidance strategy reported by one school. This (high) school acknowledged to have a covenant with several primary schools “*so that they send us their pupils*” after primary education; as a consequence already in the beginning of the course they would have all places covered. That way, only very few places would remain free and the number of newcomer students in their reception classroom would remain very low. This suggests an intentional blockade of free places in the school, as to avoid newcomer pupils or to keep the size of the reception classroom to manageable dimensions.