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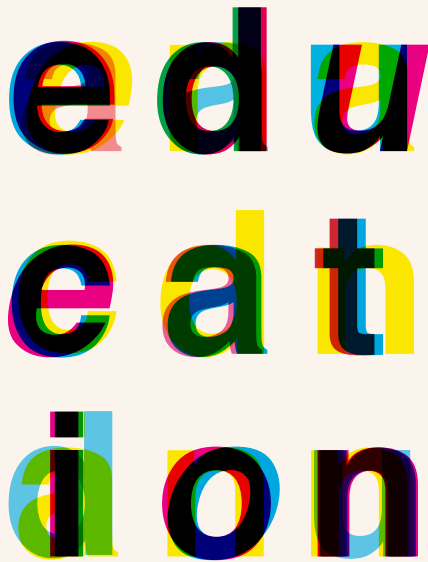
**más+menos**

student magazine  
spring 2010

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student magazine  
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[studyinfo@ciee.org](mailto:studyinfo@ciee.org)

Printing : ESCANDÓN S.L.  
 © cíee study center in seville. 2009  
 Depósito Legal: CA-411-2010  
 ISSN 1885-5490

## editor's note

Óscar Ceballos

Pocas cosas preocupan y definen tanto a una sociedad como el modelo de su sistema educativo. Mientras los organismos públicos se afanan por proporcionar una educación de calidad que esté al alcance de todos, múltiples instituciones privadas se integran en la complementación del sistema por vocación, tradición o simple negocio. La cuestión es crucial ya que afecta tanto a las familias que han de decidir cómo y dónde educar a sus hijos como a los jóvenes que tratan de orientar su futuro profesional, y con él sus posibilidades de éxito social y personal. Y al ser ésta una cuestión en la que también están volcadas las expectativas de progreso y bienestar de la sociedad, la educación se nos representa como una responsabilidad compartida por todos.

Así, la escuela, los centros de formación profesional y la universidad no sólo no están al margen del debate social y político sino que forman parte consustancial del mismo. En España muchos piensan que dicho debate se encuentra excesivamente politizado y que la educación es escenario de confrontación entre defensores de modelos de sociedad distintos. No en vano, entre 1990 y 2006, se han promulgado, modificado o derogado hasta 5 leyes orgánicas de educación distintas, en función de los cambios de signo político habidos en el país. De hecho, mientras trabajábamos en esta revista, el Ministro de Educación del actual gobierno socialista, Ángel Gabilondo, ha presentado un nuevo Pacto Social y Político por la Educación, con la intención de integrar a todos los sectores implicados en la solución consensuada de los muchos problemas a los que el sistema educativo se halla enfrentado. Todo parece indicar que esta vez tampoco se conseguirá.

De lo que no cabe duda es de que, sin ser uno de los países con mayor nivel de inversión educativa de su entorno, en España (y en Andalucía) se dedica hoy día gran cantidad de recursos humanos y materiales a la constante mejora del sistema educativo. Como nos resumía el abogado José María Fernández, colaborador imprescindible para la realización de éste número de más+menos, en los últimos 30 años se ha extendido en España la escolarización obligatoria desde los 3 hasta los 16 años, se ha aumentado so-

bremamente el esfuerzo presupuestario en instalaciones, condiciones del profesorado y equipamiento y, muy especialmente, se ha avanzado notablemente en la sistematización y dotación de recursos para atender a los estudiantes que en otro tiempo, por disfuncionalidad, discapacidad o marginalización familiar o social, quedaban excluidos.

Los artículos de esta revista son el reflejo del alto grado de profesionalización de la educación en España, así como de los muchos ámbitos en los que se trabaja para intentar garantizar la igualdad de oportunidades de unos ciudadanos cada vez mejor formados y con más posibilidades de proyectarse: la escuela primaria y secundaria ante los retos de la integración y de la educación en valores cívicos y morales, la universidad en el ámbito europeo, la alfabetización de adultos como condición para la inclusión social e incluso (estamos en Andalucía) la enseñanza de la tauromaquia. También hemos escrito sobre la experiencia de aprendizaje recíproco de algunos de los 300 participantes del programa Teach in Andalusia de CIEE.

Queda por decir lo último y más importante. La educación es ante todo definida por las personas que con tanta pasión como conocimiento se dedican a ella profesionalmente. Si en todas las tareas humanas hay dignidad, en esta aún más. Yo mismo apenas guardo memoria del sistema educativo que encontré al ir por primera vez a la escuela, pero siempre recordaré a José Manuel Rodríguez, José María Caro o Almudena Ruiz, entre tantos profesores excepcionales como tuve la suerte de disfrutar durante aquellos años esenciales. Igual que ellos, los profesores que protagonizan este número de la revista, estarán seguramente en la memoria de sus estudiantes por muchos años: Victoria Sesé, María José Fernández, Ana Moya, Addelaziz Oudidi, Carmen Checa, Nieves Lobato, María José Luque, Eduardo Barrera, M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles Rodríguez, Margarita Cuadra, Juan Manuel Rodríguez, Antonio Murillo, José Bernalte, Teresa Velasco, Manuel Campuzano, Miguel Serrano y Antonio Ruiz. Gracias también por el tiempo que en las últimas semanas nos han dedicado a nosotros.

## Beyond the classroom walls



Victoria Sesé in 1967, with her first class

Various teachers invite us to witness their personal philosophies and their relationships with children as they work toward a cause that no lesson plan or paycheck could cover.

**I**n 1967, the trip from Ciudad Real to the province of Cadiz was long. From Ciudad Real to Valdepeñas by bus and Valdepeñas to Cadiz by train. Later, from Cadiz to Medina Sidonia and a little bit longer in the bus. In total, 13 or 14 hours. Upon arriving at the small village, the first thing I did was look for living accommodations. By word of mouth, everyone knew that the new teacher had arrived, and the next day all 40 of the girls were in the school. How did I feel on my first day of class? To be honest, I don't remember absolutely anything from that first day. All of my memories are of the general experience, but for sure I was very happy."

In 1967 Francisco Franco was still alive, nobody had a computer in his or her classroom and Victoria Sesé was beginning a 37-year career as a teacher. She never really wanted to be back inside the walls of a school; bad memories of struggling with math at the board or of teachers pinching her inundated her head, but there she was. She never shed her thirst to learn from childhood, and for those 37 years she got the chance to spread that love and fire, imparting it to new waves of children, class after class, and in return she developed a genuine connection with the kids. Her memories aren't sugarcoated, they're pure; she is just as likely to look back on a troublesome, aggressive 7-year-old with a bad habit of cursing as the yearly rite of passage that sent the kids from one grade to the next.

No matter the circumstances, Victoria always felt that inside the classroom those kids were her own. "The classroom is a place reserved for the student and the teacher... You have to find what really moves them, you have to figure out what matters to each child and give them to choice to follow it." Looking back through the open scrapbooks, nostalgic photographs and vivid memories, many faces come to mind, all of which have carved a spot in her experiences as a teacher, and though her location often changed, one thing she noted as never vacillating was the simple fact that "If you truly try, you will achieve."

The first grade classroom of Ana Moya reflects a similar connection, though now the teacher is going on 31 years of experience leading a class with art on the walls, math on the board and computers along the windows. Greeted by curious smiles and an eagerness to show off any English they had, I was also allowed to be the honorary teacher for a few minutes. I don't know how they do it — not just the teachers who always have the eyes of the children intent on their every move, but the kids who see it all with such a clean slate, ready to learn more, and the relationship forged between the two. After all, my favorite part of school was always recess. But when I asked one girl in the class, whose mom was helping out as the class

**By word of mouth, everyone knew that the new teacher had arrived, and the next day all 40 of the girls were in the school. How did I feel on my first day of class? To be honest, I don't remember absolutely anything from that first day.**

assistant for the week, she simply replied, "I love school, I like learning and reading."

Years after teaching her first classes to rows of dolls set up to listen to her childhood lectures, what has kept her going is "the natural manner and freshness that children have. Kids are already filled with all sorts of knowledge, you just have to expand it." Like Victoria, Ana has *lived* the changes to the classroom. While "before, what was outside the classroom wasn't integrated into the class," the classroom still has a unique identity as the place "where they can express themselves so that they feel that their lives are important. I've dedicated my life to making good people."

Yet beyond the school walls the detailed process is always underway in bettering the

system through bodies such as the Teachers Training Centers (CEPs) regulated by the Junta de Andalucía. We visited the one located in Alcalá de Guadaira. To summarize the many things they do, they work "toward everyone having the same voice." The center, directed by Francisca Olías Ferrera, employs the work of 14 advisors in various areas, many of whom are former teachers now applying their expertise in the area of administration. In her opinion, their main challenge and role is to keep up with a society that "changes faster than the school." They actually have to teach the teachers how to use newer equipment, an endeavor entitled "TIC 2.0," for Technologies of Information and Communication.

While this project aims to supply every child in fifth grade and above with a computer, Carmen Checa Rodríguez, the elementary school advisor, also works toward an education where children genuinely take something away with them. With eight years of teaching and four years as an advisor in the CEP, she and her colleagues create new strategies to make sure every child feels included, "adapting the curricula to the children's needs." With a "special attention toward diversity," she has seen the growth of programs like Peer Mediators, where fellow students help intervene to solve or prevent problems. Through this and other efforts, the aim is to teach more than just math and history, but rather to focus on teaching them how to listen, start a conversation, be assertive, resolve problems and lead "to better coexistence" and equality between all students, no matter their gender or background.

However, these processes must be continued in the classroom and at home, because "if a family isn't behind a child, they won't develop a habit of reading from a young age." For this, they are widening a program with a mini booklet entitled *Reading to Grow: A Guide for a Family Committed to Reading* (*Leer para crecer: guía para una familia comprometida con la lectura*), because "sometimes, it's hard for the teacher to know how to get the family involved, but we aim



to create mechanisms that interest them and the child,” Carmen explains. “Truly educating and forming good students isn’t obligatory... There are outlines and some boundaries for what a teacher can do and must teach, but within them there is all sorts of freedom for the teachers.”

While there are many factors that go into an education, at CEP they are working towards combining life outside the classroom with the school day inside, combining years of experience caring directly for the kids with new strategies to make sure they get the most out of it.

As the Head of Studies and a physical education teacher at the Pedro Garfias Elementary School, María José Fernández joins the role of administrator with a personal connection with the kids. “As teachers, we dedicate more time into our work to show them how they have to behave as people, more than just presenting them with knowledge and facts... These are the years that a child is truly formed; the foundation is here in elementary school.” The final of three daughters and the recipient of her father’s name, she was always a “tomboy,” getting dirty, being a kid, playing sports. She considers herself lucky to have found something that genuinely moves her, for “when you truly like

your work, people notice. You transmit it to the kids, the families, everyone around you.”

After visiting the class myself, I can testify to the incredible atmosphere she maintains, where “the main objective is to learn by playing.” “I love our teacher, she lets us run around,” simple but effective words from Pablo, an aspiring 7-year-old soccer player. You can see that the teacher becomes like her students, full of energy. More than that, you can see it on the kids’ faces, the genuine feeling of joy, freedom and the right to just be a kid, because “physical education shows them how real life is, they enjoy it without worrying about making mistakes.” That is their free time to run, to make friends and, coincidentally, to take pictures with my camera. “Parents don’t have to give their kids any presents, they just have to play with them... If you invest in children, the future will be better.” As each individual child passed by me through the door at the bell, I could see why graduation is her most gratifying part of the job.

Juan Martín Garrudo, Juanma to his students, also works in this elementary school and considers himself a “first grade teacher, the technician and the handyman.” Just like the others, he too has seen the effect that the family

plays on education, since “a child is the reflection of what he has in his house.” In his case, he has had a first-hand experience of a difficult child who tried to hit him after he corrected the student. He says with a rising smile that there is always “the one kid who is determined to make my job harder, the one who takes it upon himself to imitate me or pull his pants down.” No matter the situation, he has always operated under the simple, age-old principle: “respect others, and you will be respected.”

Everyone has been there before — the teachers they will always remember and those that they wish they could forget. Of course, there has to be an end, even if what you learned inside stays with you. “On my last day of class, we did a theatric representation called *My class is multicolored*. As I was very sad to retire, I didn’t tell the kids, but when they asked me if I would keep being their teacher, I told them no.” Even now, years after teaching, Victoria holds on tightly to parent letters she received, one signed simply by the parents, Carlos and Elena, of two students that she taught. “Yet more than just being a great and marvelous teacher in school, above all you taught them how to be better people.” ●●●

María José Fernández’s Physical education class, with Georgiana looking at the camera / photo: Tyler Bello



## Morality goes to school

In Spain, the subject Education for Citizenship and the Human Rights occupies the blurry line between teaching the Constitution and what some critics consider left-wing indoctrination.

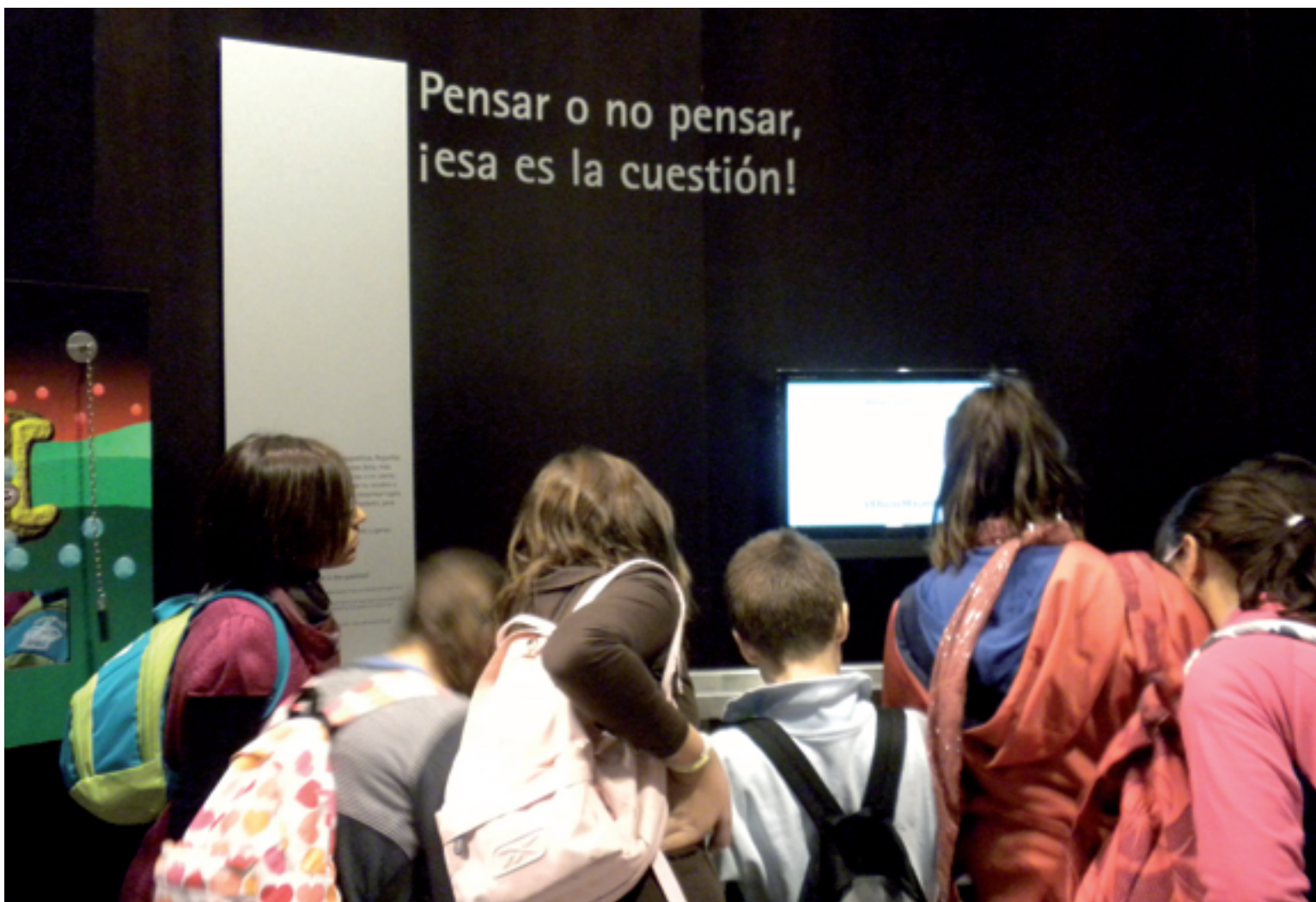


photo: Kirsten Hansen

The main corridor of Pedro Garfias in Seville overflows with the decorative staples of an elementary school – artwork from preschoolers: noodles and rice glued to finger-painted paper plates. Poems from the third year students, one titled “Andalucía es bonita” – “Andalusia is Pretty” – written in rainbow block letters. A crayon-colored map of the region hangs on the opposite wall, each province identified by its coat of arms. A photo of the Giralda covers half of Seville.

On the second floor of the school, 11- and 12-year-olds attend an Education for Citizenship and the Human Rights class mandated by the Spanish government alongside their normal courses. At this age they’re expected to move

beyond rainbow-embellished poems to develop their individual roles as citizens.

Antonio Murillo Segovia teaches the citizenship course at Pedro Garfias and defines its goal simply: that each student learns to be a “good person.” “Math is good, learning a foreign language is good, English is good,” Murillo says. “But the important thing is that students be good people. That they act as citizens.”

Murillo’s curriculum hinges on three pillars: interpersonal and societal relationships, life in the community and living in society. “Citizenship” isn’t restricted to voting, democracy or politics. Students study the innate differences between men and women, cultural diversity and religious tolerance, among other topics.

One Monday in April, Murillo’s students respond to the week’s top headline from Toledo – a 14-year-old girl accused of murdering her 13-year-old classmate. Murillo projects a newspaper article on a screen in front of the room, and the discussion segues into how students can resolve conflict and avoid such extremes.

Although Murillo defines its principles concisely, the true goal of the course is hazy for many Spaniards. *Educación para la ciudadanía y los derechos humanos*, better known for its shortened name, Education for Citizenship, has been at the center of controversy since its introduction in 2007 by president José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. The class came to Spain following a 2002 recommendation by the



Council of Europe that all member countries create a course in democratic citizenship that corresponds with the Council's primary task of "promoting a free, tolerant and just society," according to the recommendation.

Students are required to take the course in elementary school and again in high school at all public, state-subsidized and private institutions. The values outlined in the curriculum have stirred opposition from parents, educators and, above all, Catholic schools and church affiliates.

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party – the current governing body in Spain – created the course, and some opponents consider it a blatant form of socialist indoctrination in the nation's schools.

Juan Manuel Rodríguez, the diocesan delegate for education in Seville, says the Catholic Church's main concern is protecting parents' rights to form their children's moral upbringing. "What the church wants is for Education for Citizenship to respect the rights and beliefs of parents," Rodríguez explains. "Not to teach Christian morality to all students."

Rodríguez, who also teaches Catholicism at a public high school in Carmona, thinks a more general ethics class that avoids socially controversial topics would better serve the majority of students. "The problem is when one group wants to impose their morality on everyone else," he argues. "We need to be respectful of everyone and not utilize education as an arm of confrontation."

Critics are quick to highlight course content that contradicts Catholic beliefs, which many students learn at school alongside the citizenship course. At Pedro Garfias, a public school, about half of the students are enrolled in a Catholic religion class, an optional course in all state-funded schools.

On the opposite end of Seville, students flood the exit of the Claret school at 5:30 p.m. clad in blue polo uniforms. Unlike Pedro Garfias' finger-painted paper plates, the entranceway boasts a portrait of San Antonio María Claret, a 19th century apostolic missionary and the founder of the school.

Antonio Ruiz Lozano teaches math at Claret and all of his four children attend the state-subsidized Catholic school, considered one of the 100 best private schools in Spain by *El Mundo's* yearly review. Before teaching at Claret, Ruiz worked as a missionary in Paraguay and Portugal with the Congregación de la Sagrada Familia.

Given his Catholic foundation, public education was never an option for Ruiz's children. "For a parent with certain religious convictions it becomes impossible to opt for public education, because it doesn't offer a religious education," Ruiz says. "Legally, they have to offer it. But public schools don't create a respectful climate towards this option. And it shouldn't be like that."

By law, Claret students must complete Education for Citizenship. But parental opposi-

tion inevitably accompanies this requirement at a semi-private school with a clear Catholic mission. "The instructor teaching the citizenship class to my children is someone I know personally, and I know he isn't saying anything against what I believe," Ruiz explains. "He may not think exactly the same as me, but he teaches the course in agreement with the educational project of the school."

Antonio Murillo also notes that the citizenship course varies immensely based on each instructor's interpretation of the material. Murillo, like Ruiz, is a practicing Catholic, but doesn't see the course as contradictory to religious education.

Education for Citizenship addresses same-sex marriage, which is legal in Spain and opposes the rigid Christian interpretation of marriage as a heterosexual union. "I teach that the law in Spain allows marriage between men and men, women and women, men and women," Murillo describes. "If the law changes tomorrow, I'll teach something else, even though as a Christian I believe that the ideal marriage is between a man and a woman."

## **"Citizenship" isn't restricted to voting, democracy or politics. Students study the innate differences between men and women, cultural diversity and religious tolerance, among other topics.**

Christians for Socialism, a group founded by members of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, released a declaration of support for the course in 2007. The group argues that Education for Citizenship doesn't threaten Catholic parents' right to create a religious upbringing for their children.

"We understand that bishops can't deny the right of the educational system and of the state to carry out an active role through an ethical-civic course, like Education for Citizenship," the group stated. "[The course] is based on our society's shared values, a good part of which were contributed historically and at present by Catholicism itself."

Despite insistence from supporters that the course doesn't aim to mold students' values, some scholars have argued otherwise through comparative studies between Spain and other countries.

Bianca Thoillez, a graduate in pedagogy and faculty member at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, compared Education for Citizenship with a government class taught in Anchorage, Alaska, in a 2008 study. Thoillez found that unlike the government class in Alaska, which focuses primarily on the structure of the state and history of democracy, Education for Citizenship includes "moral and emotional formation." And to

Thoillez, the issues addressed in the Anchorage class are more relevant to citizenship than the moral undertone present in Spain's curriculum.

"The troublesome aspect of the course in Spain isn't the 'sensitive' subjects that it addresses," Thoillez says. "But that to make space for these subjects, the course neglects topics that are truly important for civic education."

Non-Catholics have been equally vocal in their dissent to the course. Some parents, regardless of religious conviction – or lack thereof – think the course does little to enrich their children's education.

Miguel Castillón, a graphic designer in Seville raised with a Catholic upbringing, sent both of his children to the private, non-state-subsidized Colegio Alemán (German School) in Seville. Like Claret, the Colegio Alemán is among *El Mundo's* top 100 private schools in the nation. Unlike Claret, its educational mission is secular.

Castillón's youngest son told his father simply that the course was "nonsense." Castillón's own critique of the class isn't rooted in Catholicism. He is a self-described atheist and chose a secular school for his children to avoid putting his sons through Catholic education. "The course is an attempt to teach etiquette, and you don't learn etiquette studying throughout the school year," Castillón says. "You learn it through your parents, your neighbors, your peers, from people in general."

Basque philosopher Fernando Savater has also criticized the citizenship class from a liberal, non-Catholic standpoint in several editorials and interviews. Savater, however, contends that parents serving as the sole instructors of morality is a "monstrous" proposition.

"Institutional education has not only the right but the obligation to teach shared values and morals," Savater said in a 2006 editorial for *El País*. "Not to kill moral pluralism, but precisely to allow a framework for coexistence."

Parents groups have challenged Education for Citizenship in the Spanish court system, and in January 2009 the Supreme Court voted against allowing parents a petition for conscience objection of their children's participation. In March, the Alliance Defense Fund filed a lawsuit on behalf of over 300 Spanish parents in the European Court of Human Rights against Education for Citizenship for what the Fund considers "anti-Christian education."

Although Education for Citizenship has an abundance of critics on all ends of the debate, a conclusive remedy to the controversy is likely far off. Murillo, who teaches citizenship to his 11- and 12-year-old students, also recognizes the space and even the necessity for change within the course. "The course could be better, yes," he says. "But the politics issue is the same everywhere. If one party imposes the course, the other won't be in complete agreement." ●●●



El Vacie / photo: Falín M. Galbán

## “Are there poor kids in your country?”

Thirty-eight percent of students in Andalusia fail out of school, surpassing the national average of 30.8 percent and very far away from the 14.9 percent average of the European Union. With extensive poverty and social marginalization at the root of the problem, this is a severe reality faced by children from El Vacie, Seville’s shantytown.

“Are there poor kids in your country?” Nicolás\*, age 10, asks after explaining his daily routine. He wakes up at 8 a.m., catches the bus, eats breakfast at school and then goes to class all on his own. “I go to language class and also am learning [multiplication] tables of between four and seven,” he explains. “After school I go to the workshops: carpentry, brick-laying, plumbing and painting.” Nicolas is known by his teachers for being hardworking, very independent and for having an exceptional sense of motivation and concentration. However, he doesn’t like anything about living in El Vacie.

The shantytown of El Vacie is home to nearly 200 children who are integrated into various schools throughout Seville. But irregular attendance and problematic living environments outside of school commonly lead to an especially unfortunate occurrence: *fracaso escolar*, failing out of school. As defined by *Entorno Social*, an independent publication dealing with contemporary social welfare issues, this problem is “the conclusion of a determined stage in school in which qualifications have not been met, which translates into failing to obtain required education.”

As much as 38 percent of students in Andalusia fail out of school, surpassing the national average of 30.8 percent, and very far away from the 14.9 percent average of the European Union. The problem is more extreme in places such as El Vacie, where there are children who “practically finish their schooling after their time at the primary school” explains Nieves Lobato, a comprehensive education teacher at Pedro Garfias. That means abandoning the classrooms when they are just 12 years old or little more, although education is mandatory until age 16.

Nicolás continues: “I live in a shack, but we are in the process of turning it into a house, step by step.” Only two years ago he knew a different life. Nicolás moved from Galicia, in the north of Spain, to El Vacie when his mom married a man who lives here. “I’ve gone to many different schools,” explains Nicolás, but “my favorite of all of them is Pedro Garfias.”

Pedro Garfias is a public primary school located outside of the shantytown in the north of the city. Among the school’s population of approximately 225 students, 12 come from El Vacie. Each of them is considered part of a marginalized group within society, whether they are gypsies (Spanish or Portuguese) or unemployed families. At Pedro Garfias they currently receive the help of a team of committed, specialized teachers. “This school has a long history of attending to socially disadvantaged students,” explains speech therapist María José Luque Oliva. Nicolás is one of the 12 who, according to María José, “will probably find something better someday.” For such a young age, Nicolás already “understands that the way to get out of El Vacie is through hard work.”

There are various NGOs that assist the

**“I live in a shack, but we are in the process of turning it into a house, step by step.”**

children from El Vacie and help María José and Nieves in their work. Fundación Gota de Leche (Drop of Milk Foundation) provides daily breakfast for the children around 8:30 a.m. every morning. Today’s breakfast “was chocolate milk, cereal and also a sandwich that we could bring with us to class,” explains 11-year-old Antonio. Antonio comes from a family of 11 people who all share a house that has no hot water.

Another NGO, Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad (MPDL, Movement for Peace, Disarming, and Liberty), organizes school transportation for the children living in El Vacie and serves as a mediator between the family and the teachers.

Part of what makes overcoming obstacles inside of class difficult is that outside of Pedro Garfias “there is very little continuity of work... They are unable to complete their homework,” states Nieves. What’s more, there have been instances where “one day they bring their

backpack [home] and with some of them, they never return,” describes María José. Progress is more easily made in areas such as math, which comes more naturally to the students than reading or writing, skills that require more practice. “My favorite class is gym,” states Antonio, who is in the process of learning the letters of the alphabet.

There are also outside pressures leading students to the point of failure. “There are girls who get married at age 15... they abandon school at that point. Outside of their context they have the potential to be completely great” students, says María José.

Attendance is also an issue that complicates the problem. The average number of children absent of the total 12 over the past year ranges from three to seven. “Right now we have two students who are regularly absent without justification,” explains Nieves. “One hasn’t come back since February, but the other is in the process of gaining a more normal attendance record.”

Both teachers find the roles of the parents very interesting in their work with the kids from El Vacie. As Nieves shares, they are “familiar with practically all of their families... Many children come from families with nine kids or more, all of whom have attended school here.” Many parents “don’t come to the school often; sometimes we have to meet with them in the streets because it asks too much of them to enter,” she adds. However, Nieves and María José have observed an increase of support from the families of the younger students in comparison to those who are 15 years old, for example. Most parents “think that education of their children is important. They just don’t take advantage of it well,” says María José.

“We have chosen to dedicate our work to this place. We try to improve everything every day.” And the teachers conclude with their main lesson to avoid failing out of the school: the kids need to gain worth and strength through feeling successful. Feeling that they are important. ●●

\* The names of the children interviewed were changed for this article at the request of their teachers.



Daniel Hart

## Teach me, Spain

Throughout Andalusia, more than 300 Americans are busy teaching their language and culture to Spaniards of all ages. For their services they are repaid with new friends, memories and life lessons that won't soon be forgotten.

The sun comes up in the morning and goes down at night, and that is about where it ends. That was Maxime Lanman's response when asked about the similarities she sees between her life in Massachusetts and her life in Utrera, Seville. Maxime, a Spanish literature and biology major from Boston, is one of the many teaching assistants stationed throughout Andalusia in a *Teach in Spain* program. And like others in the project, she is discovering that knowledge and lessons are often found outside

of the classroom, that even teachers can be taught and that learning never stops.

The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) is an organization dedicated to supporting learning and teaching abroad. Often, these two ideas are one and the same. One of their many opportunities is the *Teach in Spain* program, which accepts American or Canadian college graduates in any field or major. While a background of at least four semesters of college-level Spanish is encouraged, those

who don't meet that criteria are still able to join by taking a CIEE sponsored Spanish language course. The real prerequisites for this program are an interest in Spanish language and culture and a desire for adventure.

Upon acceptance to the program, participants go through classes aimed at orienting them in their new surroundings, each class varying in length depending on the participants' backgrounds. If a member studied in Madrid during college, for instance, their class would

photo: Óscar Ceballos



be shorter and less intense than a participant who has never left Wyoming before. After these classes come to an end, the teachers are sent to their destinations in local schools throughout the south of Spain. They will stay there for 8 months receiving a monthly stipend of 700 euro to cover living expenses. And so begins the adventure of a lifetime.

All *Teach in Spain* participants log in classroom hours as teaching assistants. They aid their professors some 12 hours a week by injecting their fluent English language and American culture into the dynamic of the class. Watching a student learn something new is one of the most rewarding aspects of the program. For Kirsten Hansen, an American studies major from just outside of Boston, this moment came quickly. In one of the after school-classes she assists with, Kirsten spent time teaching a young boy how to tell time in English. When the boy's mother arrived, she was greeted by a triumphant shout from her son: "It's 6:10!" The mother's look of surprise and happiness was well founded: her son had never been able to tell time at all before.

Along with their everyday lessons, the young Americans are teaching Spaniards of all ages about their own culture from the United States. Maxime showed some of the American outdoors spirit to her Spanish friends by making a bonfire, complete with roasted marshmallows and campfire stories, though she is quick to point out that the campfire stories didn't go as well as planned.

Kirsten has a friend who teaches in New York City. To improve her students' English levels, as well as open their horizons to new people, she created a pen-pal program. Now the students write letters to each other, seeing how someone their same age thinks and lives halfway across the world. By introducing small slices of *Americana* to the Spaniards, *Teach in Spain* participants actively connect two different cultures and societies.

While their lessons continue in the classroom, so too do the lessons that Andalusia and Spain in general have to offer the young teachers. These lessons can be simple ones, such as how to make a *tinto de verano*, find an apartment, pronounce phrases in Andalusian Spanish (*más o menos* becomes *maomeno*) and how to correctly cheer at *fútbol* games.

Beyond the day-to-day examples, these teachers are learning much larger ideas. For many, this opportunity is their first taste of the real world and living independently. Dorianne Rodriguez, a participant finishing up her *Teach*

*in Spain* commitment in May, is getting a crash course in reality. This is the first time she is living on her own without financial support from her parents. She described *Teach in Spain* as "the perfect transition to life in the real world."

Having studied four years at Boston College

lish could flourish. This promise seemed hard to keep, as she felt a distance growing between herself and her students. She wished she could speak Spanish to them to let them know she understands the difficulties of learning another language. But slowly, her students began to comprehend their lessons.

She has noticed a vast difference from the start of the year. And while they are overcoming their obstacles, Dorianne was given hope that she would overcome hers as well. Her best day of the year came at an International Food Party thrown by her school. While eating and socializing with other members of the school's staff, her students made a point to come over and talk to her in English. She won't forget that day, when her students finally saw her outside of her role as a teacher and embraced her as a friend, laughing and talking at a party. And while their English is far from flawless, Dorianne knows that it has nowhere to go but up.

Some lessons in life come only after things are put into perspective. This was most certainly the case for Lindsey Ashjian, a San Diego State University alumnus. After spending nearly three months in her host city of Jaén, Lindsey returned home to Fresno, California for a two-week break. She tried to cram as much of what home is into those 14 days, and did more than one would think possible. She ate at her favorite restaurant, spent a weekend at a beach house with her

extended family, got to see her sister play in a volleyball playoff, spent time with her best friends and got to watch her brother get married with her whole family in attendance. That doesn't sound like a taste of home; it sounds like a huge bite of home.

But upon landing in Spain, she came to a very quick realization. Perhaps it was when she dropped something out of her bag and instead of "Oh my gosh," "*Ay Dios mío*" was what left her lips. Or perhaps it came as she demonstrated her mastery of Spanish public transportation. Whenever it was, it was undeniable: Lindsey has two homes. Upon seeing her walking into school, her students ran from a line to greet her with *hello's* and hugs, asking her all about her *other* life. She walked confidently through her *barrio*, passing someone she knew on nearly every corner. She spent Thanksgiving, an American holiday based around family, with her new family, a collection of friends and colleagues. They say that home is where the heart is. By teaching in Spain, Lindsey just proved that it's possible for the heart to be in more than one place at a time. ●●●



Lindsey Ashjian and class / photo: Daniel Hart

supported by her parents, she sees her opportunity to teach and live in Spain as a stepping stone to her next major adventure: a full-time job in the United States. She has to manage her money now, pay bills, cook and clean, all while teaching seven different English classes. Balancing her personal and professional life has been difficult at times, but rewarding nonetheless. And though she plans to return to the

**Dorianne Rodriguez is getting a crash course in reality. This is the first time she is living on her own without financial support from her parents. She described *Teach in Spain* as "the perfect transition to life in the real world."**

states, she is open to the idea of returning to a country she has called *home* for the last eight months. "I have to leave to know if this is the right place."

Dorianne's class struggled at the start of the year, barely comprehending any of the basic material laid forth for them. They were slow to participate and even slower to attempt to talk in English. While her students struggled, so too did their teacher. Dorianne is a native Puerto Rican who speaks Spanish fluently. As part of her contract with *Teach in Spain*, she promised to not speak Spanish so that her students' Eng-



Kristen Fackler

## The others

Many people immigrate each year hoping to improve their economic situation. Getting a good education for their children is an added bonus. But in Andalusia's schools, immigrant students are faced with challenges, both academic and social.

The room is dark. There is conversation and laughter. A baby giggles. All of a sudden the curtains open onstage and the crowd grows silent. Twenty children stand in rows, singing about trees and making tree-like movements. They pause often and look at one another to remember the steps. Two walk to the front, one holding the Chinese flag. The other speaks,

taking deep breaths. "My dad is from Valladolid and my mom is from Seville and I am Chinese. Some kids call me 'China,' but it is what I am. The professor says they aren't as smart or pretty as I am." The crowd claps enthusiastically. "Long live China" she shouts, and the other kids cheer. The two girls hug before running back to their rows.

This is a scene from the play *My Class is Multicolor*, put on by second graders from the school Pedro Garfias in June 2008. It was written and directed by teacher Victoria Sesé Hontanilla. The rest of the play continues in the same manner, spotlighting students from Nigeria, Romania and Colombia, each brief

Eduardo Rico and Daniel González at IES Ramón Carande / photo: Tyler Bello





monologue ending by wishing a long life to a particular country.

With 675,180 registered foreigners as of March 2010, Andalusia is the region of Spain with the third-greatest number of immigrants. As of October 2009, in Seville alone there were 11,000 kids from abroad in the school system, primarily of Moroccan and South American origin.

Pedro Garfias Elementary and Primary

School is home to some of these immigrant students. It is located in a diverse neighborhood, Las Golondrinas, in the district of Macarena.

"There are a large percentage of immigrant families. It has a lot of fame for this, but the neighborhood is very mixed," says Abdelaaziz Oudidi, the intercultural mediator of the school. Abdelaaziz moved from Morocco to Spain in 1991 in order to complete his doctorate; afterwards he elected to stay to raise a family.

He estimates that out of the 300 to 400 students, between 30 and 50 come from immigrant families, roughly 10 percent of the school's population. The majority is of Latin American origin, and five or six of them came from Morocco. Their problems are similar to those that any student has when going to a new school, Abdelaaziz says. "Sometimes they do not know the language, but they can learn very quickly since they are so young."

Eduardo Rico Villada, 18, moved with his family from Bogotá to Seville nine months ago. "In Colombia we didn't have a future; we didn't have money," says Eduardo. "There, we also had problems with war. My first day of school was horrible, because I didn't know anyone; I was there alone," a wide-eyed Eduardo remembers. He attends Ramón Carande High School, where 8 percent of students are from other countries.

**"My dad is from Valladolid and my mom is from Seville and I am Chinese. Some kids call me 'China,' but it is what I am. The professor says they aren't as smart or pretty as I am." The crowd claps enthusiastically.**

The classroom is in close proximity to Eduardo's neighborhood, Las Tres Mil Viviendas, located in the south of Seville. "The people that live there always look at my family as something different — like one part and another," says Eduardo. Las Tres Mil Viviendas, in the Polígono Sur sector, is widely known for its gypsy population. Eduardo's experience is ironic, since he feels rejected in a neighborhood that is not itself welcomed by many Sevillians.

Regardless, Eduardo feels that the situation is better in Seville than in Colombia. "Here

school is free, and there is a lot of help for immigrants, for Latinos," he says, though he has not personally utilized this assistance.

Many programs exist in Andalusia to integrate immigrants into society. The autonomous government passed the first Integral Plan for the Immigration in Andalusia in 2002. A second plan was put into action for the years 2006-2009, with a budget of 1,400 million euros. The third

was installed in March 2010 and will continue through 2014; the amount to be used is yet to be determined.

The plan aids immigrants in 11 areas, education being one, with the goal of creating "a social climate of coexistence, respect and tolerance... not only in the educational community but also in the neighborhood."

But this policy has not always improved the social climate, as Eduardo suffers it in Las Tres Mil. "There are people there who think it is fine we live there, but the younger people, many gypsies, always bother me. I am scared, but I can't show them because then they would think I was a stupid man," he says.

A study conducted in January 2010 by professor Antonia Olmos Alcaraz of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Granada shows that there is a "new racism" towards immigrant students in the classroom. They are viewed negatively as "a problem". "Some people think that immigrant students interrupt the normal class," says Abdelaaziz.

"There is not an issue with social exclusion at Pedro Garfias because the students don't yet perceive the differences between each other," the intercultural mediator adds. "However, in social situations, groups are formed in a discriminatory manner. For example, in the park, Latin Americans stand in one group and Africans in another."

For many, this is a way of self-defense. "I don't like that people normally associate with others like themselves... But, for example, I came here as a new Latino, and if there weren't other Latinos in my school, I wouldn't know what to do," Eduardo says. Though he is friends with some natives of Spain, the majority of his friends come from Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Argentina.

"Life here has improved for me," Eduardo comments, "but for other friends, it hasn't. They continue fighting with the gypsies and Spaniards. They want us to be afraid and to run, but I am Latino and I am proud."

For the second grade students at Pedro Garfias, there seems to be a simple solution. As the play comes to a close, a group of the students say, "We are all equal on the inside. But if there are problems, we sing a song: 'friends... yes, fighting...no.'" The singing ends. There is applause from the audience as the students take turns hugging each other. ●●●



Playground of CEIP Pedro Garfias / photo: Tyler Bello

Jessica Svec

## Working for ‘*una oportunidad*’

For the past 16 years, the Seville School of Bullfighting has been prepping young students to partake in one of Spain’s oldest traditions. Each pupil spends years of meticulous practice with the hope that one day he or she will be given the opportunity to enter the elite of professional *toreros*.

“**T**orero: *Quiero una oportunidad*” reads the front of Pedro Enrique Calvo Molina’s sweatshirt. Molina, 19, is one of the 21 students at the Seville School of Bullfighting who aspires to one day look into the eyes of a 600 kg *toro* bravo and perform one of Spain’s oldest and best known traditions.

Along with two other fellow classmates, Molina woke up early this morning to begin his daily training routine. All three students sport workout clothes and a good attitude. Their day is already in full swing at 11 a.m. with several hours of exercising and practicing technique with their teacher at Parque del Alamillo. The morning, cool and with spots of rain, has little effect on the spirits of the young bullfighters in training.

Their morning routine consists of laps around the lush, green park. The sounds of birds chirping and the gentle hum of human activity play as a backtrack. Their warm-up ends in a dead sprint, and anyone can see these kids take their studies seriously. The playful jokes and spurts of laughter come to a dignified end when they set up with their capes, *muletas*, and swords to practice the technique, or the dance of bullfighting.

“Bullfighting is both physical and mental,” says Manuel Campuzano, 39, one of the three teachers at the Seville School of Bullfighting. “And the two are very important.”

Heavily entwined in the Spanish culture, the desire to participate in bullfighting comes from a passion within. It is not for fame or fortune; those are secondary. It is, they say, because there is an overwhelming desire to walk into a *Plaza de Toros* and perform.

Campuzano, a seasoned bullfighter, has been teaching the art of bullfighting for 16 years now and began his own studies when he was only 8 years old. There is a long white scar across his tanned knee, a tribute to the dangerous dance with death each bullfighter takes when stepping into the ring. The proud Spanish teacher claims he didn’t choose to be a bullfighter, he was born one.

Bullfighting can be traced back to the crowning of Spanish king Alfonso VIII in 711 A.D. It is said that the very first bullfight occurred in his honor. While the excitement and thrill of

bullfighting attracts crowds in many places around the world, including France, Portugal, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Venezuela, it is difficult to picture Spain without associating the colorful costumes of the *toreros* waving a crimson cloth at a mountain of a beast, tempting death at each carefully planned move.

Every year, it is estimated that one million people sit holding their breath in one of Spain’s many famous bullrings to witness a *matador* gamble with fate. One million people pack the stands to see if this time, man or beast will be triumphant.

Seville is the home of the famous La Maestranza, built in 1758. The brightly painted white and yellow *Plaza* attracts some of the best bullfighters of Spain and America and can hold close to 12,500 spectators. Each spring the streets surrounding the enormous bullring are packed with people eager to witness each precise and calculated step the bullfighters have spent their lives training for.

The school of bullfighting in Seville opened October 20, 1994. Since then, approximately 300 students have walked through its doors. At present, there are no female students though there is usually a five to ten percentage of girls enrolled in the school too. The minimum age of enrollment is 14 years old, and while the average age of graduation is 20, a particularly gifted student may graduate at 16.

“Bullfighting is an art, a profession,” says Miguel Serrano Falcón, president of the bullfighting school. “It is just like being a painter, writer or any other type of artist.”

The budding artists, or bullfighters, have actual sit-down classes three times a week for two hours. The rest of their time is spent in the fields with hands-on training and strength building, striving towards the perfect technique.

However, having this perfect technique doesn’t always ensure fame, fortune and success in the world of bullfighting. A bullfighter



Pupils of the Bullfighting School of Valencia / photo: Enrique Amat

must be given the opportunity to show off his or her skill. The professional world of a *matador* is elite. One must be asked to participate in each event.

Before becoming a full-fledged *matador*, young fighters are called *novilleros*. They only are allowed to fight *novillos* (young bulls under four years old) and haven’t been officially initiated into the community of recognized bullfighters. The ceremony in which a *novillero* graduates to a *matador* is called an *alternativa*. He receives this title from a veteran bullfighter acting as his *padrino*, godfather. This is a public initiation bullfight, a right-of-passage ritual that every young bullfighter dreams of.

“It is very difficult to be a successful *torero*,” says Serrano. Since 1994, the president of the school has watched 300 kids grow as people and as bullfighters. He speculates that only 3 percent have made it big as professionals. Among the select few are active *matadores* Salvador Cortés and 20-year-old Daniel Luque. Others become *banderilleros*, or assistants to their peers who have been given the opportunity of a lifetime. Either way, Serrano takes immense pride and joy in his young students as they progress through a cycle that connects them to a special part of the Spanish culture. In the end, there is something more important than becoming a famous *torero*. “I get to watch children become men,” he says with a smile. ●●●



## The Erasmus experience

Present, former and future students of the European Union grant program talk about the highs and lows of studying abroad in Europe, as 180,000 people do every year in 4,000 universities of 31 countries.



Alicia Sánchez Flores  
photo: Emily Eckhous

Brian Foody stops to think for a moment and scratches his head. He smiles and says profoundly, “You realize on a human level we’re the same, and we can get close to people even if they are from different environments and backgrounds.”

Foody, 20, from Castleconnor, Ireland, reflects on his experience studying in Copenhagen, Denmark. He explains via Skype he is studying at the Copenhagen Business School through the Erasmus program. He is one of 180,000 students in Europe who choose to study in another European country through Erasmus each year.

The European Union founded this grant program in 1987 and named it after theologian Desiderius Erasmus from Rotterdam. Erasmus is also an acronym for European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students.

Desiderius Erasmus, the program’s inspiration, lived from 1465 to 1536 and studied and traveled across Europe in places including Paris and Cambridge. The EU named the program after him to reflect the importance of learning inside and outside of the classroom, similar to his studies.

Nearly 2 million students have participated in the Erasmus program since its foundation. The large annual budget of over 440 million euros helps students subsidize part of their study abroad program in more than 4,000 universities of 31 countries.

“You get a grant from the EU,” Foody says. He explains he put the grant towards traveling to Copenhagen and finding a place to live. “I had to organize my own accommodation and transport.”

One of the essential pillars of the Erasmus program is to give students an opportunity to live independently, similar to Foody’s experience in Copenhagen. They are responsible for finding their own housing and making sure their credits transfer back to their universities at home.

“I had to organize my own subjects and make sure they corresponded to my subjects at home so my grades could be transferred. Those two things were pretty tricky,” Foody says.

Lucía Cubel, 24, from Seville, Spain, is studying in Rome through the Erasmus program

as well. Like Foody, she mentions she also had to find an apartment and pick her classes independently.

Both Foody and Cubel had to take care of their international documentation on their own as well. “I had to do all the administrative work to stay in Italy. Here it’s called *Codice Fiscale*, similar to the Spanish Social Security ID,” Cubel says.

Administrative work can be difficult for students on the Erasmus program, and consequently can hinder their experiences. Foody tells a story about classmates stranded in Paris with nowhere to live. They could not attend their classes at the university because they did not have an apartment.

He adds, “I think the program should enforce rules to ensure accommodations be looked after. Here in Copenhagen it’s no problem because they are really well-organized, but I’d say a lot of other universities can screw you over.”

**“I had to organize my own subjects and make sure they corresponded to my subjects at home so my grades could be transferred. Those two things were pretty tricky.”**

Similar situations can create conflict for Erasmus students. Grappling with complete independence in another country can result in failures and incompleteness of a program. However, there are businesses seeking to help Erasmus students find apartments, enroll in classes, manage their course load and adjust to everyday life abroad.

Beatrice Clemson works for the business AM Transnational, located in the Bami neighborhood of Seville, which helps international students get comfortable when they first arrive in town. “We help students organize their stays in Seville by searching for apartments, choosing classes at the universities, tutoring for homework assignments and organizing cultural activities,” Clemson says.

Foody says adaptation can be difficult. “At first it’s exciting when you arrive in a new country with new people to meet, and you get caught up in the experience because it’s new and exciting and fresh. Then later on, things start to slow down a bit and you start to get used to life. You can get a bit lonely.”

Loneliness and insecurity are common feelings among students studying abroad independently. Oliver Schlien, now 34 years old, shares a similar outlook to Foody on his yearlong Erasmus study abroad experience in Seville in 1999. He explains adapting to a new culture and learning to speak a new language can be difficult at times. He adds that one of the disadvantages of his experience was that “there was little contact among Erasmus students and Spanish students.”

In spite of the difficulties of living independently in a foreign country, Schlien says the Erasmus program is life changing. “The microcosm of Erasmus with people from all over Europe is a rich atmosphere and I can only recommend it.”

Not everyone is lucky enough to have positive Erasmus experiences like Foody, Cubel and Schlien.

Alicia Sánchez Flores, 21, from Seville, jumped through hoops to secure a spot to study in the United Kingdom next year. “Erasmus gave me a grant to study in Sheffield, in England. There were five spots available in the program. I was the last person of five people grades-wise, and Sheffield was my first choice of five destinations. I was preparing my papers for a month or so thinking I was going to Sheffield when my coordinator called me on the phone and told me that there was a mistake and there were only four spots available, not five,” Sánchez Flores says.

She explains she had to argue with the International Relations department of her university to find a spot in a different program in the United Kingdom. However, Erasmus could not place her in her second choice program in Cardiff, Wales.

“I had to go to the International Relations department, the director of the university, everyone. There were two spots in Cardiff, and if there were three I could have been accepted.



However, one of the students who were accepted to Cardiff had worse grades than me. But they don't care about that. If you think about this, it's really unfair, because I have better grades than them, I should have priority."

At least, in the end, Erasmus placed her in the Liverpool program for next year. Erasmus also recently accepted Sánchez Flores to the Cardiff program, but she has already begun to prepare her documents for Liverpool. She is looking forward to studying in the United Kingdom but is frustrated with the program for not having accommodated her wants and needs more rapidly. "I think some people think Eras-

mus is a perfect experience, but I think Erasmus has two faces in this context," she complains.

Sánchez Flores insists Erasmus should have given her priority treatment for her hard work in school. However, she remains positive and hopes she will enjoy studying English in the United Kingdom. With some uncertainty she adds, "I hope it's a good experience. The people I know that studied abroad through Erasmus have been very happy they did the program, and they said they would repeat."

Despite the obstacles some students face when they apply to an Erasmus grant, past and present participants can assure them they will

have an unforgettable, positive experience, as Cubel explains. "You can meet new people, learn about a new culture and language, grow as a person and value the little things that make you happy."

For some people, Erasmus can be even more than a study abroad program. Schlien explains he met his future wife while he was in Seville. "We were an 'Erasmus couple,' and without the program we probably would not have met." ●●●

Catherine Collins

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## Offering a second chance

Three professors talk about their both rewarding and difficult experience teaching inmates and drug addicts and how to improve the way Spanish prisons re-educate and provide them with skills to integrate back into society.

**T**his work is not obligatory, it's voluntary," says María de los Ángeles Rodríguez Morilla of her job teaching in a rehabilitation center for drug addicts. "Just like those people who teach in prisons, I love my job."

Teresa Velasco, a professor for the inmates in the prison Seville-1, says the same. "Like the other teachers, I'm capable of working elsewhere, but I don't wish to."

The appeal for these two women comes from the human aspect of their jobs. Both Mari Ángeles and Teresa enjoy teaching, but it is the opportunity to truly help people in need of self-reform that motivates them.

As Spanish law dictates that no person may be kept in prison longer than 30 years, regardless of the crime allegedly committed, all inmates will be re-entering society at some point. The purpose of the educative system within jails is to prepare for this re-entry.

Article 25.2 of the Spanish Constitution, approved in 1978, states that "privation of liberty and security measures will focus on re-education and social rehabilitation" of the convicted person.

This re-education very often includes teaching inmates to read and write. Mari Ángeles describes this illiteracy as a problem of marginalization, adding that many adults and older people feel shame at their inability to read and write. The chance to learn such essential skills

while in prison gives inmates a second opportunity to have a new life when they become free.

Teresa has worked as a teacher in Seville-1, a prison of approximately 1,500 inmates, for 19 years. She teaches a class about general culture to two different groups of students every day who range in age from 19 to 60 years old. The students need to apply to be accepted into the

**"You need to be able to separate the human aspect of the job from the professional aspect, although it's often difficult to do so."**

classes, but virtually all of them are, excluding those few in isolation. Inmates are motivated by the possibility to obtain a scholarly certificate, which will help them get a job when they leave prison.

As a worker in the rehabilitation center, Mari Ángeles encounters many drug addicts who have come directly from prison or have been in jail sometime during their lives. The center consists of approximately 60 people, the majority of whom have a cocaine addiction, but the addictions also include alcohol, heroin and various pills. She describes her work as helping

addicts through "physical, mental and spiritual recuperation."

Mari Ángeles, unlike Teresa, works with individuals, and her work is more therapeutic than educative, although it's possible an individual will need help with reading and writing. The center utilizes psychologists and therapies to help addicts abandon drug use. She says that

all the people she encounters in her work, of all ages and socio-economic status, are incredibly grateful for the help they are receiving. Their attitudes are always positive, and they are motivated to help themselves and others.

Teresa agrees, saying that it is essential to educate inmates so that they can successfully integrate themselves in society. "They're able to better themselves, but they don't know how." However, she adds that not all her students are eager about learning. "It depends on the day," she says. "They're not used to doing work; they want immediate benefits." Those who are learning to read and write, though, as well as foreigners who are learning a new language, are very enthusiastic about receiving an education, Teresa explains.

Bringing inmates together in a classroom or individually treating them is not the only way that Spain addresses criminals. The term "re-education" used in the Constitution is meant to imply the availability of a number of activities that will

allow inmates to effectively recuperate. The opportunity to play sports is an example of these, and it is a healthy way to let inmates relieve pent-up emotions as well as learn sportsmanship.

José Bernalte, now a professor of physical education of the University of Seville, was an athletic teacher and coordinator in what is now Seville-1 from 1991 to 1999. His job included planning, organizing and putting into effect all the athletic activities in the prison. The prison provided two soccer fields, each with a track of 400 meters, one for the preventive detention area and one for the sentenced inmates center, as well as a weight room. Inmates were allowed to play soccer, basketball and volleyball.

“Going out onto the field to play sports was a form of liberation for the inmates,” he remembers. “They were able to alleviate their social tensions, both within the prison and with their families.”

He emphasizes that he and the other coordinators worked to give the inmates an athletic education, one that would instill values in them. Among the traits they focused on were respect for one another, responsibility for one’s actions, friendship and respect for the rules.

Additionally, beginning in 1993, José organized a program with the University of Seville that allowed students to come to the prison and play an organized games against a team of inmates five or six times a year. This, he says, gave the prisoners an opportunity to interact with their peers outside of these walls.

“They were able to demonstrate that they could integrate themselves back into society through sports,” he says. The games were also enjoyable and beneficial for the university students, almost all of whom returned a second time to play with the inmates. “It was a good experience for both sides.”

He also helped organized the first half-marathon of Andalusian penitentiaries, started in 1994 and celebrated ever since during the day of Our Lady of the Merciful, patron saint of prisons. The 21 kilometers that participants had to run were achieved by taking 20 laps around the two soccer fields that the prison had combined. “We even brought in official athletic judges to make the event all the more serious,” says José.

Although José, Mari Ángeles and Teresa all work in close contact with convicts, they say that a certain distance needs to be maintained from the people with whom they work. “You need to be able to separate the human aspect of the job from the professional aspect, although it’s often difficult to do so,” explains Mari Ángeles. “You have to be careful,” Teresa says. “It’s hard to avoid because a lot of them are great people, but it’s not a good thing to do.”

When asked about the effectiveness of the prison system, Teresa says that there are serious problems that are difficult to reform, such as the lack of professional psychologists, but that the obstacle also lies within the fact that her students don’t know anything about work. “It’s

hard to know if the problem is the system or the society where my students come from.”

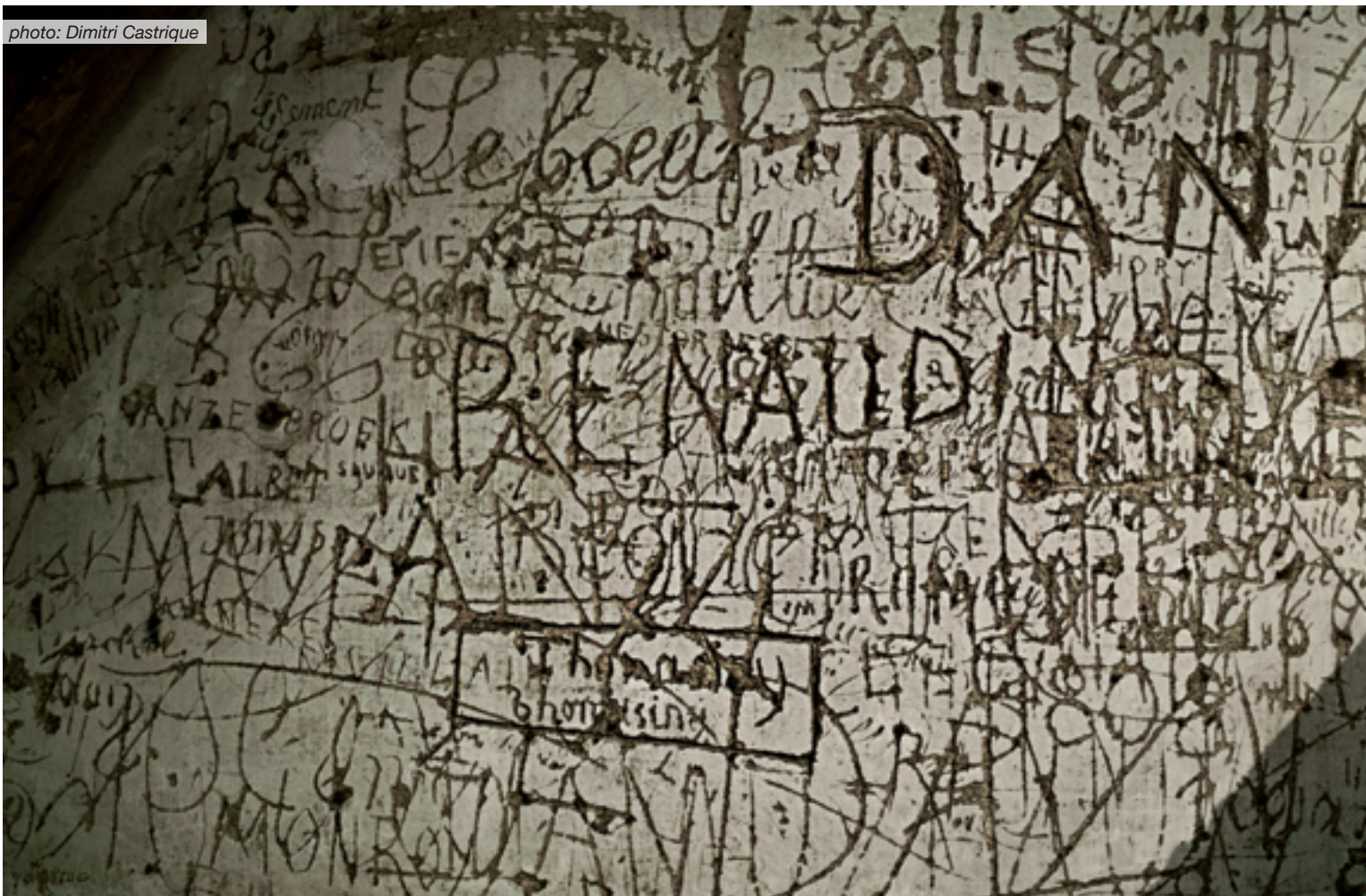
Meanwhile, José calls for a more intensive education within the prison. He says that the current opportunities to learn to read and write are adequate and that the teachers are excellent. However, he emphasizes that it is not effective enough, as there is still a good amount of illiteracy. “A person should be obligated to learn to read and write before they leave prison,” he recommends. “This should be an essential requirement so that they can adapt to reality when they leave.” He states that such a requirement would very much motivate inmates to become literate.

In addition to this intensified education, he insists that problems with drugs and violence can be eliminated by focusing on the youth of society and giving them more emotional and psychological attention.

The physical education professor credits society with a significant effect on the problems that lead to incarceration. He says that so many children grow up in households that lack affection and this inevitably leads adolescents to lose their way. Isolation during childhood, José stresses, quickly pushes them to drug usage and violence.

“If we don’t teach our children how to love it’s going to be difficult to find ourselves in a society that isn’t violent,” he says. “There’s a lack of love in our society, a true lack of love.” ●●●

photo: Dimitri Castrique





# One system, two results



Eduardo Barrera,  
director of CEIP Andalucía  
photo: Shae Rueckert

The story of two schools: one in an important commercial district of Seville, the other in a place where many fear to tread, and how each is coping with the challenges and rewards of its given situation.

Despite the legal promise of free, yet compulsory education from ages 6 to 16, the experience itself is not the same amongst the schools of Andalusia, a region that encompasses approximately 20 percent of the student population of Spain. The *Colegio Concertado Portaceli* (*concertado* means that a private school belongs to the public network and becomes free of charge as it is supported by public funds) and the *Colegio de Educación Infantil y Primaria Andalucía* (CEIP, or School of Early Childhood and Primary Education) are two distinct models produced by the same system. Portaceli is a school rooted in tradition with strong ties to both the community and the Jesuit faith, while Andalucía is an ever-changing school that resides to the south of Seville in the Polígono Sur, an area wrought with drugs, violence and the marginalization of many of its citizens.

Directors Margarita Cuadra of Portaceli and Eduardo Barrera of Andalucía share their insight of what makes their schools what they are.

## STUDENTS, COMMUNITY, FAMILY

The Portaceli school, with 3,200 students, is in the neighborhood of Nervión, an important commercial district with several popular sites such as the Seville Soccer Club's stadium. Its tidy streets and bustling city feel stand in sharp contrast to the littered sidewalks and graffiti-stained walls of the Polígono Sur, the home of the 269 students of the school Andalucía. Located at the southern outskirts of Seville, this neighborhood, also known as Las Tres Mil Viviendas, is known for illicit drug traffic, crime and illiteracy, problems that, in different degrees and in the most deteriorated streets, inflict 90 percent of the students' parents.

In Nervión, the parents cannot seem to get enough. "Alumni bring their children here in order to receive an education that they want to return to them," says director Margarita Cuadra.

Whereas the Portaceli is a point of pride for families, there was a time in the Polígono Sur when parents looked upon Andalucía school with disdain. Education was once viewed as completely unnecessary by many in this inner city where few to no children continued school

beyond the obligatory age of 16. The gypsy community, almost 90 percent of the student population in some parts of the quarter, rebelled against teachers who they believed could not identify with them or their children. The director, Eduardo Barrera, explains one incident in which he and other staff members were met with insults from upset parents. Although this was a onetime occurrence, the actions were a demonstration of the resistance the parents felt toward instructors whom they did not know and into whom they were entrusting their children. "Why was there fear? There was fear because there wasn't a relationship," says Barrera. In a way, the moment when the doors of the school closed in the morning signified the shutting out of the families.

## FUNDS AND ACTIVITIES

The autonomous government of the *Junta de Andalucía*, overseer of education in the region, is both a source of funds and a source of dispute about "what is best for the school." Barrera admits that the relationship with the Ministry of Education is better than with the regional educational department or *Consejería*.

The *Colegio Portaceli* receives additional funding from the Loyola Foundation, a collaboration of four schools in Andalusia that stresses the teaching of the Jesuits of the *Compañía de Jesús*. "It gives a sense of unity and solidity" that strengthens both the school and its image, its director explains.

But the Andalucía, being a public school, has no other official source to turn to and as a result funds are sought from other places. The savings bank Cajasol, for example, acted as a sponsor by providing money to put together a library.

For Portaceli, the list of activities is long and includes, among others, embroidery, storytelling, dance, rhythmic gymnastics, computer science, English, painting and theater. There are also specific opportunities to cater to the religious aspects of the school, such as the groups of faith.

The story is much different in the Polígono Sur, where the idea of traveling outside of the neighborhood, outside the familiar, was cause for alarm not too long ago. Barrera explains

that just as the people of Seville were afraid to venture into the Polígono Sur, so were its people scared to travel to the rest of Seville. In order to overcome this fear it was important to stress that "when the students go outside the neighborhood, it is to learn," says the director.

Now, more activities are becoming common ground in the school such as a basketball team and flamenco music, which is very important for the community's cultural identity. Recently, students even traveled to a science fair in Madrid, something that would have been impossible in the past. Ultimately, this achievement can be seen as a demonstration of the trust that the families now have in the school.

## TRANSFORMATION

The current situation in Portaceli seems to be that of maintaining its status. The school is currently seen as one of the best in Seville, but there is still room for change. Cuadra talks for example of the bureaucratic nature of the system and how at times things as simple as documents not being turned in on time can make problems bigger than they should be.

For Barrera, the opportunity to change is one of his favorite parts of his position. The transformation of the last seven years is due especially to the "Learning Community" project, which stresses communication and conversation as a means to progress. "To educate the children it is necessary to educate the teachers, the community and the society," says Barrera. By finding out what the community wants, the school is better able to suit their needs and, in the end, gain their trust.

The dreams that the Andalucía school's community has expressed and have become a reality make up the leaves of the tree that stands in the lobby. The mentality has changed: Parents now share coffee with the teachers instead of rejecting them, and students are thinking more of their academic careers as opposed to leaving classrooms behind as soon as possible. The director defines the transformation in another way: "Before, no one thought of going to a university; but today, our boys and girls intend to study there." ●●●



