

## **The Integration of Foreign Students in the Portuguese School of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education: the case of a school grouping in the municipality of Viseu**

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## **The Integration of Foreign Students in the Portuguese School of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education: the case of a school grouping in the municipality of Viseu**

**ABSTRACT** The present study aims to understand whether the foreign students who have different nationalities but the Portuguese are integrated into the school of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education. With this purpose, a descriptive and phenomenological research was conducted, making use of documental analysis, as well as semi-structured interviews and sociometric tests. These two data collecting tools were applied to students attending from the 1st to the 4th school years, in three 1st Cycle of Basic Education schools, within a school grouping in Viseu. The data obtained through the interviews allow us to conclude that foreign students, in general, feel integrated both in the school and in the class they belong to. However, the analysis of the results of the sociometric tests reveals other data, allowing us to conclude that one of the students is neither integrated in the school, nor in the class he is part of.

**Keywords:** integration, foreign students, school/class, 1st Cycle of Basic Education, educational action

### **Introduction**

In Portugal broad migration flows can be observed, which have been intensifying in recent years (Rocha, 2006). But due to the changes that have been occurring in society over the past decades, Portugal, a traditionally emigration country, has also become a country of immigration. It has been sought by people not only coming from the former Portuguese colonies, but also from the Eastern European countries, particularly from Ukraine, Moldova and Romania (Pereira, 2004).

When they arrive in a new country, immigrants face difficulties, such as: a new language, a new culture and a new society. Consequently, their children are also going to face difficulties in their integration. The term 'integration' is normally used to describe and characterize the entry, the socialization and the participation of immigrants in a host society (Rodrigues, 2009).

Papademetriou (2003) states that "integration is the process through which, over time, newcomers and hosts form an integral whole" (p. 3); Penninx (2003), however, defines it as the process of acceptance of immigrants by the host society, as individuals and as groups. In an intercultural perspective, Peres (2011) defines integration as a process by means of which individuals or minority groups get together and share the same social structures, developing mutual respect for each other's personal and cultural identities.

Thus, it can be claimed that integration is an acceptance, interaction and adaptation process, which involves immigrants, their descendants and the members of the host society, who receive and welcome them, accepting their differences. As Batelaan refers (2003), "although we are different we need to share the feeling of belonging to a wider community based on mutual respect and a shared belief that 'dialogue' is indispensable" (p. 3).

The educational community, namely teachers, are therefore requested to pay increased attention due to the cultural diversity and to the need to foster mutual knowledge and the acceptance of students from different origins, in response to the demands of an education for coexistence, for learning to live

together (Delors, 1996), so that foreign students can more easily adapt to school, to teaching and to the country where they live.

So that a full integration of foreign students in school/class can be achieved, the process of socialization is also fundamental, in order to turn individuals into society members (Alves, 2004). This process is an essential means of interaction between society and the individual (Silva, 2010), being accomplished through various social agents, among which family should be highlighted (Delors, 1996). Besides family, school can also be considered a precious space of learning interrelations and varied socializations, which plays an important role in the shaping of the process of personal identity (Silva, 2010), a process that unfolds from an early age.

Therefore, we focused our research [1] on the following question: "Are foreign students integrated in the Portuguese school of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education?"

Some guiding objectives for the empirical study were then defined:

- Understand if the foreign students feel integrated both in the school and in the classes of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education within a school grouping in Viseu;
- Characterize the existent relationship between the foreign students and their classmates;
- Identify the main difficulties felt by the students concerning their class integration;
- Characterize the existent relationship between the foreign students and the class teacher.

## **Methodology**

### *Study design*

Since we mostly intend to focus on the comprehensive and interpretative aspects, rather than on the explanatory ones, it was decided to conduct a descriptive research, which has the natural environment as a direct source (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994).

This study is more oriented towards the understanding of the phenomena from the participants' point of view (in this case the students who attend the 1st Cycle of Basic Education school), than towards its explanation in terms of causality (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989).

It is worth emphasizing the fact that a variety of data collecting techniques was used (documental research, semi-structured interviews and the sociometric test), aiming at the data triangulation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This allows us to validate the information, insofar as it approaches the subject of study by means of different tools, enabling greater confidence in the results.

### *Sample context and characterization*

The context chosen to conduct this empirical study was a school grouping in the municipality of Viseu, which includes four schools of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education. Among these, three schools are attended by 17 students whose parents have different nationalities but the Portuguese. From this group, 12 students who don't have the Portuguese nationality were selected. All students speak Portuguese, are

living with their parents in Portugal for at least three years, and their families have low economic resources.

The chosen students were interviewed and then a sociometric test was performed in all the nine classes they attended (school year 2012/13). Considering the participants involved, 9 are male and 3 female, aged 7-12 (see Table I). In terms of nationalities, there are 5 Romanian students, 4 Chinese, 2 Ukrainian and 1 Bulgarian.

Table I – Distribution of the foreign students by sex and age

#### *Research techniques and tools*

In order to collect the data we started by resorting to the documental research, focusing on the School Grouping Curricular Project, the School Grouping Educational Project and the Class Plans.

The semi-structured interview then followed, based on a sufficiently open group of questions, which were being asked as the conversation progressed, thus allowing for more interaction and favouring spontaneous responses (Pardal & Lopes, 2011).

To help conducting the interviews, a guide subdivided into four blocks was developed: the first block, regarding the legitimacy of the interview and the assurance of data confidentiality; the second block, concerning the characterization of the study participants; the third block, intending to obtain information on the students' perception of their relationship with their classmates; and, finally, the fourth block, centred on the students' perception of their relationship with the class teacher. For the systematization and analysis of the obtained data, content analysis was accomplished (Bardin, 2004).

Subsequently, a sociometric test was conducted in the classes attended by foreign students, so as to complement and validate the information provided. This is an important tool to fully capture the interactions among the students and the situation of insertion vs isolation felt by one student in the class. According to Estrela (2008), this test allows us to easily capture the spontaneous relationships in small groups, also highlighting the position of each individual within the group, concerning those relationships.

In simple terms, the sociometric test consists of asking each member of a group to indicate the people he would like to be associated with in various situations (Northway & Weld, n.d.). In this study, we presented the students with three situations, within which each student would have to make three choices, according to the following criteria: free outdoor play; activity within the school context (classroom); and activity out of the school context.

For each of the criteria a question was drawn up: *i)* "Who do you like to play with during the break?"; *ii)* "If you had to make a group work in the classroom, which classmate would you choose to work with?"; *iii)* "If you wanted to invite a classmate to go to your birthday party, who would you pick up?".

To analyse the information derived from the sociometric tests, the results were first organised in a sociometric matrix (see Appendix 1) and, from this, the sociometric position index of each foreign student could be determined. This index matches the sum of the nominations received by each student within the three criteria mentioned and may oscillate between zero and twenty or more points. According to Northway and Weld (n.d.), the indices obtained by this form of sociometric test are classified as follows:

- 15 or more – far above probability;
- 10 to 14 – above probability;
- 9 – average or probability;
- 4 to 8 – below probability;
- 3 or less – far below probability.

After the analysis of the sociometric matrix, the data are presented in an individual sociogram, in order to facilitate the presentation of the information included in the sociometric matrix. The individual sociogram is a representation of the social relations of a single child, just as they are revealed in a single sociometric test (Northway & Weld, n.d.). The individual sociogram includes the choices made and received by the foreign student, showing his sociometric position and the position of those he chooses and of those who chose him (see Appendix 2).

### *Procedures*

In order to carry out this study, some entities were contacted, so as to obtain proper authorization for the application of the interviews and of the sociometric tests.

First, the interview guide was sent to the General Directorate of Curricular Innovation and Development, so that its application in a school context could be superiorly authorized. Then, formal authorization was requested to the School Grouping and to the three schools belonging to this School Grouping, by talking to the Director and respective Coordinators, so that, this way, it could be possible to get into contact with the class teachers.

After being properly accepted by the school institutions, an authorization request to parents and guardians was made, for the students involved to be allowed to answer the interview and the sociometric test.

Only after getting permission to apply the tools, did we approach the teachers of the several classes and the respective students. The interviews were conducted individually in the classroom, so that students didn't feel embarrassed. At the beginning of the interview it was explained to the students that the questions were aimed at a research work and that their answers would be kept confidential. The researcher always put the students at ease, but most of them proved to be embarrassed and gave short answers, not going into details. The students showed themselves receptive, but were not fluent.

As far as the sociometric test is concerned, there was a prior knowledge of the class features, namely the students' age, their socio-economic background and their interests as a class. The presentation and gathering of the answers to the test were done by the researcher, so that the students could really understand that the test was designed for a research work, having thus no connection with any form of assessment on the part of the teachers.

### **Presentation and data analysis**

Firstly, the data related to the documental research are presented (School Grouping Curricular Project, School Grouping Educational Project and Class Plans in general); then the interviewed students'

answers, following the order of the questions in the interview guide and, finally, the data concerning the sociometric tests. All the students' names mentioned are fictitious.

#### *Data concerning the documental research*

In the analysis of the Curricular Project and the Educational Project of the school grouping studied, reference was made to a foreign students' integration project, mentioning the 2007-2010 time period, which had as its main objective to gradually integrate those students into the regular curriculum, so they could achieve academic success at the end of each school year (School Grouping Curricular Project X, 2007 to 2010).

This project was created to meet the integration needs of a large number of students coming mainly from Eastern European countries and from China and it is based on two fundamental pillars: teaching and learning of Portuguese as a non-maternal language, according to what is stated in the Dispatch 7, 2006, 6th February, and the students' social and affective integration (School Grouping Curricular Project X, 2007 to 2010).

Concerning the Class Plans, these are the responsibility of the class teacher, who makes them every school year. When these plans were requested in order to extract any necessary information to complete the data of the sociometric test, some teachers refused to supply the document. Thus, prior knowledge of the class features was compromised and, as far as the data related to the sociometric tests are concerned, there are classes on which more detailed information can be presented, whereas there are other classes on which the obtained information is more reduced, allowing us only to refer the number of students in class, their age and their socio-economic background. These data will be presented when the description of the sociometric data is provided.

#### *Data concerning the interviews*

- *How do you feel in this class?*

Based on the data from the interviews to the 12 foreign students, one can realise that the majority claims they feel good in their class and only one student replied that he felt 'more or less'.

- *Which word would you pick up to characterise what you feel?*

The most used word to characterise what they feel was 'happiness', mentioned by 9 students. However, 2 students report that they feel 'ashamed' and another one says he feels 'afraid'.

- *Do you have many friends in your class?*

When asked if they have many friends in their class, from the 12 students interviewed, 10 replied they have many friends in the class, while 2 students answered negatively.

- *Do you have friends at school who are not in your class?*

Now extending the scope of the question, we tried to know if they also have friends outside their class, but within the school. Only one student refers he doesn't have friends outside his class and, in the

previous question, he also answered he had no friends in class. The rest of the students replied they had friends at school, outside their class.

- *And what nationality are they?*

Regarding the nationality of their friends, most of the foreign students' friends (10) are of Portuguese nationality; however, 2 students answered that their friends are of Chinese nationality and a student did not answer, because he has no friends, neither in nor out of the class.

- *How is the relationship with your classmates?*

The majority of the foreign students (10) defines the relationship with their classmates as a good one, a student defines it as being bad and another one claims that it is 'more or less'.

- *Choose a few words to characterise this relationship.*

Having in mind that most of the students interviewed have a good relationship with their classmates, it is important to characterise what they feel through words. As it can be observed in Figure 1, the word that the interviewed students most often chose was 'friendship' (9), followed by the words 'help' (8) and 'respect' (7). Less mentioned are the words 'trust' (3), 'sharing' (2) 'acceptance' (1) and 'union' (1). No student referred the words 'anger', 'shame' and 'boredom'.

Figure 1 – Words that characterise the relationship foreign students have with their classmates

- *Are you well accepted by your classmates?*

About knowing if they are well accepted by their classmates, most of the foreign students interviewed (10) answered affirmatively; however, there is a student who answered negatively and another one replied that sometimes he wasn't.

- *Why do you think you are (are not) well accepted?*

When asked to explain why they considered themselves to be well accepted (or not) by their classmates, most of the students interviewed (10) did not know what to answer; only one student replied "I do not know" and another one said "Sometimes they say they are not my friends, but I am their friend".

The student who answered "I do not know", had already claimed in the previous question that he was not well accepted by his classmates, but he felt good in class anyway; the student who answered "Sometimes they say they are not my friends, but I am their friend", had also answered in the previous question that he, sometimes, was not well accepted by his classmates, but he felt good in his class.

- *What difficulties do you have concerning the relationship with your classmates? Can you give an example of a difficulty you have had?*

Regarding the possible difficulties that these foreign students might feel in the relationship with their classmates, only 2 students identified a difficulty each, the difficulties being 'playing' ("I do not know how to play their games") and 'talking'. One student did not answer this question because he had already previously answered he had no friends in class and was not well accepted by them.

- *How is your relationship with your teacher?*

When asked about the relationship they have with their teacher, most of the students interviewed (11) defined this relationship as a good one; only one student said it was 'more or less'.

- *Choose a few words to characterise this relationship.*

Most of the students interviewed characterised this relationship using the word 'help' (12), closely followed by the word 'friendship' (11). With a much smaller number of choices, appear the words 'respect'(3), 'trust' (1) and 'acceptance' (1), indicating that there are aspects of the relationship that need to be improved (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Words that characterise the relationship foreign students have with their teacher

#### *Data concerning the sociometric tests*

- *Foreign student in 1st C class*

1st C class consists of 18 students, 11 males and 7 females, aged 5-8. Among these 18 students, there is one whose parents have a Romanian nationality.

The class is quite heterogeneous, including students with learning disabilities and very different work rates. Just a few of them manage to conclude the proposed activities within the set time limits and most of them do not obey the rules previously established in the classroom (Class Plan, 2012).

These students come from different socio-economic backgrounds, the majority belonging to a low social level, with many problems, such as: lack of support; lack of rules; dysfunctional families; shortages of various kinds (affective, food, etc.) (Class Plan, 2012).

Once the class was described, the conclusions of the sociometric representation concerning the student of Romanian nationality were drawn, which allowed us to define his sociometric position. Thus, the student named nine classmates, mostly male (6), and was not named by any of them, which means that this student is at a level considered far below probability or average(0), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

- *Foreign student in 2nd A class*

2nd A class is made up of 20 students, 10 being male and 10 female, all aged 7. Among these 20 students, there is one whose parents have a Ukrainian nationality.

This class is quite heterogeneous, but it reveals a fairly good level of understanding and good communication skills. Students demonstrate a special interest in Artistic Education and Expression, Computers, stories, games and constructions (Class Plan, 2012).

These students come from different socio-economic backgrounds, the majority belonging to a middle/low social level; only four students benefit from education allowances (Class Plan, 2012).

According to the data revealed by the sociometric test, the Ukrainian student named less three classmates than the ones who named her (7). So, she named four classmates and was also named by those four, her nominations being mostly female.

In relation to the sociometric position of this student within the class, after summing up all the nominations received considering the three criteria, it can be stated that she is at a level above probability or average (13), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

- *Foreign student in 2nd B class*

2nd B class is composed of 21 students, 18 males and 3 females, aged 7-8. Among these 21 students, there is a child whose parents have a Chinese nationality.

After this brief knowledge of the class, the conclusions of the sociometric representation concerning this student of Chinese nationality were drawn, which allowed us to define his sociometric position. Thus, the student named three classmates, having elected the same classmates for the three criteria; this way, he opted for a classmate for the first three choices, another one for second choices and still another for the third choices. This student was named by two classmates, but there were no reciprocal nominations, his being all male.

The student is at a level considered far below probability or average (2), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld

- *Foreign student in 3rd A class*

3rd A class consists of 17 students, 7 being male and 10 female, aged 8-9. Among these 17 students, there is one whose parents have a Chinese nationality.

This is a relatively homogeneous class, who demonstrates motivation for learning and shows commitment towards the implementation of the various activities. Their main interests are: Artistic Education and Expression, Computers and games (Class Plan, 2012).

Students come from different socio-economic backgrounds and social strata, the majority belonging to a middle/high socio-economic level.

Data from the sociometric representation of the Chinese student in class show that he named four classmates and was also named by four of them, the point being that he only obtained reciprocal nomination on the part of three of the classmates he chose.

This student is at a level below probability or average (6), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

- *Foreign student in 3rd B class*

3rd B class is made up of 14 students, 11 males and 3 females, all aged 8. Among these 14 students, there is a child whose parents have a Chinese nationality.

Students come from different socio-economic backgrounds, the majority belonging to a middle/low socio-economic level.

After this brief knowledge of the class, the conclusions of the sociometric representation concerning this Chinese student were drawn, which allowed us to define his sociometric position. Thus, the student named six classmates and he was named by seven, obtaining reciprocal nomination from only three classmates.

This student is at a level above probability or average (11), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

- *Foreign student in 3rd C class*

3rd C class is composed of 16 students, 11 being male and 5 female, all aged 8, but there is one who is 11. Among these 16 students, there is one whose parents have a Romanian nationality.

The sociometric representation of the student of Romanian nationality allows us to define his sociometric position. Thus, the student named five classmates and was named by eight, having received reciprocal nomination on the part of five classmates, his nominations being male. This student is at a level above probability or average (14), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

- *Foreign students in 3rd D class*

3rd D class consists of 20 students, 11 males and 9 females, aged 8-12. Among these 20 students, there are four whose parents don't have a Portuguese nationality, that is, three students have a Romanian nationality (Eduardo, Igor and Mário) and one student has a Bulgarian nationality (Bruna).

These students come from different socio-economic backgrounds, the majority belonging to a middle/low social level (Class Plan, 2012).

The Romanian student, Eduardo, named six male classmates and was named by four, but he only got reciprocal nomination on the part of two classmates. From these nominations, three were made by foreign classmates, namely Romanian and Bulgarian, and only one was made by a Portuguese classmate.

Eduardo received 6 nominations in all, and he is at a level below probability or average, according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

As far as the other Romanian student is concerned, Igor, he named five more classmates than the ones who named him. He named eight classmates, mostly male (5), but he just received reciprocal nomination on the part of three of them. These nominations were only made by foreign classmates, namely Romanian and Bulgarian.

Igor is at a level below probability or average (4), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld, just as the majority (6) of the classmates named by him.

The third Romanian student, Mário, named five classmates and was named by four, getting reciprocal nomination from only three of them. These nominations were made by two foreign classmates, namely Romanian and Bulgarian, and only one was made by a Portuguese classmate. This student named both males and females, but the predominance was on males.

Mário is at a level below probability or average (6), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

The Bulgarian student, Bruna, named seven classmates and she was named by five, thus obtaining reciprocity from those five classmates. From those nominations, two were made by foreign classmates, namely Romanian. This student named both males and females, but predominantly males.

Bruna is at a level below probability or average (8), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld, just as most (4) of the classmates named by her.

- *Foreign student in 4th B class*

4th B class is made up of 23 students, 14 being male and 9 female, aged 8-10. Among these 23 students, there is one whose parents have a Ukrainian nationality.

The class is quite heterogeneous, not only in terms of age, but also concerning their learning rates. However, it is a very motivated class, always feeling curious about learning, although some of the students have difficulties accompanying the rest of their classmates.

Data from the sociometric test of this Ukrainian student reveal that she named five female classmates, and was named by three of them, existing reciprocal nominations on the part of only two classmates.

This student is at a level below probability or average (6), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

- *Foreign student in 4th C class*

4th C class is composed of 15 students, 10 males and 5 females, aged 9-11. Among these 15 students, there is one whose parents have a Chinese nationality.

This class has different learning and working rates, diverse behaviours and different motivations. Most students show little interest, and the students who are willing to learn, have many difficulties in acquiring and understanding (Class Plan, 2012).

These students come from a middle/low social class, where most households are unstructured and have few resources at home (Class Plan, 2012).

Sociometric representation data of the Chinese student in class indicate that the student named five classmates, mostly male (4), and was named by seven, receiving reciprocal nomination from only three classmates. After summing up all the nominations received, it can be stated that this student is at a level above probability or average (13), according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld.

A joint analysis of the data from the individual sociograms allows us to check the distribution of the foreign students by the various levels, according to the classification of Northway and Weld (n.d.) (see Table II).

Table II – Distribution of the foreign students by levels, according to the classification of Northway and Weld

The analysis of Table II allows us to check that two-thirds of foreign students are at a level below probability or average (6 students), or far below probability or average (2 students). Only one-third of these (4 students) is above probability or average.

The analysis of these results suggests that 4 students are integrated into their class. The remaining 8 students seem not to be fully integrated into the class they belong to, judging by the results of the sociometric test.

### **Data discussion**

Having in mind the data presented, the analysis of the interview allows us to claim that, in general, foreign students consider themselves to be integrated into the 1st Cycle of Basic Education classes, since they refer they feel good in the class they belong to (just one student says that he only feels 'more or less'). Nevertheless, the analysis of most of the respective sociograms does not corroborate this situation. It was found that: two foreign students are far below probability or average; six are below probability or average; and only four are above probability or average (Northway & Weld, n.d.).

Based on the analysis of the data from the interviews, most of the foreign students questioned claim that they feel good in their class, defining what they feel by means of the word 'happiness'. In spite of that, there is a student who says he feels 'more or less'; two other students employ the word 'shame' and another one uses the term 'fear'.

When asked if they have many friends in class, most students said yes, but it is important to highlight that two students said no. Once the data of the respective sociometric tests were analysed, it was found that one of the students who answered negatively was not in fact chosen by any classmate, which means he is far below probability or average in terms of sociometric position.

In relation to the other student who replied he did not have many friends in class, the analysis of the sociogram allowed us to conclude that he was above probability or average, which means he was chosen by a large part of his classmates. This result contrasts with the feeling the student expressed during the interview.

As for the remaining ten foreign students who consider they have many friends in class, most of that cannot be confirmed, judging by the analysis of the respective sociograms. Based on them, it can be verified that a student is far below probability or average; six are below probability or average; and only three are above probability or average.

It is important to highlight the fact that one of the classes being studied had four foreign students who, in spite of choosing classmates from other nationalities but the Portuguese, also chose Portuguese students; however, considering the nominations on the part of their classmates, which are the most relevant for the conclusion of this study, it can be verified that one of the foreign students was only named by foreign classmates and two students only got one nomination from the Portuguese classmates. Thus, it is possible to conclude that these students are not recognized as friends by their classmates of Portuguese nationality.

Sociometric tests give many indications about the social structure of groups and the social relations that exist among children (Northway & Weld, n.d.). Thus, this test allows us to identify the isolated students, the more popular ones, those who are friends and those who are not, as well as the closed groups. Based on the indications from this test, it can be verified that one of the students is isolated and that there are closed groups, because students mostly choose classmates of the same sex and only one foreign student named classmates of the opposite sex (male) in larger number.

When asked whether they had friends at school, but outside their class, students said yes, but it is important to mention a student (he says he has no friends in class) who answered he also does not have any friends at school. It is a student from 1st C class, who has no friends, neither in class nor out of it; hence, it can be concluded that this student is neither integrated into class nor at school.

As most students answered they had friends at school, it is important to know their nationalities, so that it can be discovered if they have friends of Portuguese nationality. Thus, it was checked that only one student has no friends of Portuguese nationality at school, but outside his class. There was a student who did not answer this question, as he has no friends at school.

Most foreign students consider the relationship with their classmates as good, defining it by essentially using the words 'friendship', 'help' and 'respect'. Less chosen are the words 'trust', 'sharing', 'acceptance' and 'union'. It should be highlighted that no student mentioned the terms, 'anger', 'shame' and 'boredom'.

In relation to the chosen words, it is curious to verify that the most pronounced ones are 'friendship', 'help' and 'respect'. However, the terms 'trust', 'sharing', 'acceptance' and 'union' are far less often referred. The word 'acceptance' is mentioned just once, which can denote some lack of acceptance on the part of Portuguese students towards their foreign classmates.

Although the majority of the students questioned consider the relationship with their classmates as being good, it is important to highlight a student who claimed that his relationship is bad, without using any term to characterise it.

As far as the relationship with their classmates is concerned, only two students identified a difficulty each, the difficulties being 'play' and 'play and talk'; as sole example it was reported "I do not know how to play their games".

These difficulties may be the result of several factors. One of these is the low economic status of the students' families, which may restrict the access to the opportunities offered by society (Portes, 1995). Other factors may be the result of a new language and a new culture and society that these students face when they arrive in a new country. According to Milagre & Trigo-Santos (2001), language appears as the main source of learning difficulties for students of minorities, either for not mastering Portuguese, as they have another language as their mother tongue, or for having difficulties mostly concerning its improper usage or pronunciation.

Although most students consider they are well accepted by their classmates, it should be pointed out that two students refer the opposite. And, when asked about the reason why they were not well accepted, one answered "I do not know" and the other replied "Sometimes they say they are not my friends, but I am their friend".

It is fundamental that foreign students are accepted by their classmates because, for these students to be fully integrated, the process of socialization is essential; through it individuals become society members (Alves, 2004). It is a very important means of interaction between society and the individual, in terms of which society shapes the individual's personality and constrains his behaviour (Silva, 2010).

Regarding the students' relationship with the class teacher, the majority defined it as being good, essentially illustrating it through the words 'help' and 'friendship'. Less chosen are the words 'respect', 'trust' and 'acceptance'. But the fact that one student replied that his relationship with the class teacher was just 'more or less' should be noticed.

In the case of class teachers, data show that there is a friendly and cooperative relationship between the class teacher and the students, denoted by the words 'help' and 'friendship'. However, the small number of references to the terms 'respect', 'trust' and 'acceptance' reveals that there still are aspects of the teacher-student relationship that should be improved, taking into account the current school reality, where groups of different backgrounds and cultures coexist. All this suggests that the teacher must be attentive to the specificity of foreign students in class, trying to achieve full integration and assuring equality of educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their ethnic origin, social background, gender or other (Cardoso, 1996).

## **Conclusion**

With the present work, we tried to understand whether foreign students are integrated in the Portuguese school of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education, based on a study carried out in a school grouping and supported by a variety of data collecting techniques (documental analysis, interview and sociometric test).

The documental analysis revealed that there is no project or initiative within the school grouping to be implemented at this level, despite the existence of a fairly reasonable number of students coming from other countries. Students, in general, show a positive perspective in the interviews, referring that they feel good, happy and accepted in the class they belong to. However, the results of the sociometric tests suggest a less positive reality, since we could realise that the majority of foreign students does not seem to be fully integrated in class; only four students are above probability or average, according to the classification set by the indices of Northway and Weld (n.d.).

In one of the cases, there is even a student who is in a situation of total lack of integration, both in his class and at school. In the interview he assumes he has no friends and the individual sociogram shows that he was not chosen by any classmate. This student requires assistance and monitoring by technicians, since he feels alone because he has no friends, either in class or at school.

Safeguarding the idea that this contextualised study does not allow conclusions capable of being generalized to other school groupings around the country, we believe that the results obtained indicate that there is still a significant effort to be made at the educational level, so that the identity and the

presence of foreign students in the Portuguese school are valued and they feel effectively integrated in the school/class and in the community in general.

## Note

[1] This research work was carried out as part of a dissertation within the Master's degree in Pre-School Education and Teaching of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education of the School of Education in the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu.

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## Appendix 1 – Sociometric Matrix

### 1st C class Sociometric Matrix

	And	Dav	Fran	Gus	Ivo	Joe	Luc	Raf	Rau	Ric	Tia	Bea	Lar	Mar	Mart	Oli	Raq	Ver	N. ° of choices made	No. of selected
And			030	003			001	100	200	300		020	010	002					9	9
Dav	300			111			033			222									9	4
Fran								212		100	020	003	030	301					9	6
Gus							111		222			303	030						9	4
Ivo	100	003					300	030	200		020				002		010	001	9	9
Joe			003				002		001	300	030	110	200				020		9	8
Luc									111		333						222		9	3
Raf			202							101		020	003	310			030		9	6
Rau			203				111										030	322	9	4
Ric	300		030			020	001	200	002			100	010				003		9	9
Tia				003			100	002	030	020				001	010		200	300	9	9
Bea			020					010	001	003	002		200	100	030		300		9	9
Lar							001					100		032			213	320	9	5
Mar								020				111	232				003	300	9	5
Mart	300						001					013	102	020				230	9	6
Oli																			0	0
Raq							022		033			300	101	010				200	9	6
Ver												300	123	012			231		9	4
Totals in each criteria	400	001	233	113	000	010	449	342	446	523	142	754	665	355	021	000	575	632		
Combined totals	4	1	8	5	0	1	17	9	14	10	7	16	17	13	3	0	17	11	153	
No. of those who choose	4	1	6	3	0	1	11	7	9	7	5	11	11	9	3	0	11	7		

## Appendix 2 – Individual Sociogram

### 1st C class foreign student individual Sociogram

Name: Ivo

School year/Class: 1st C

Date: 13th March 2013

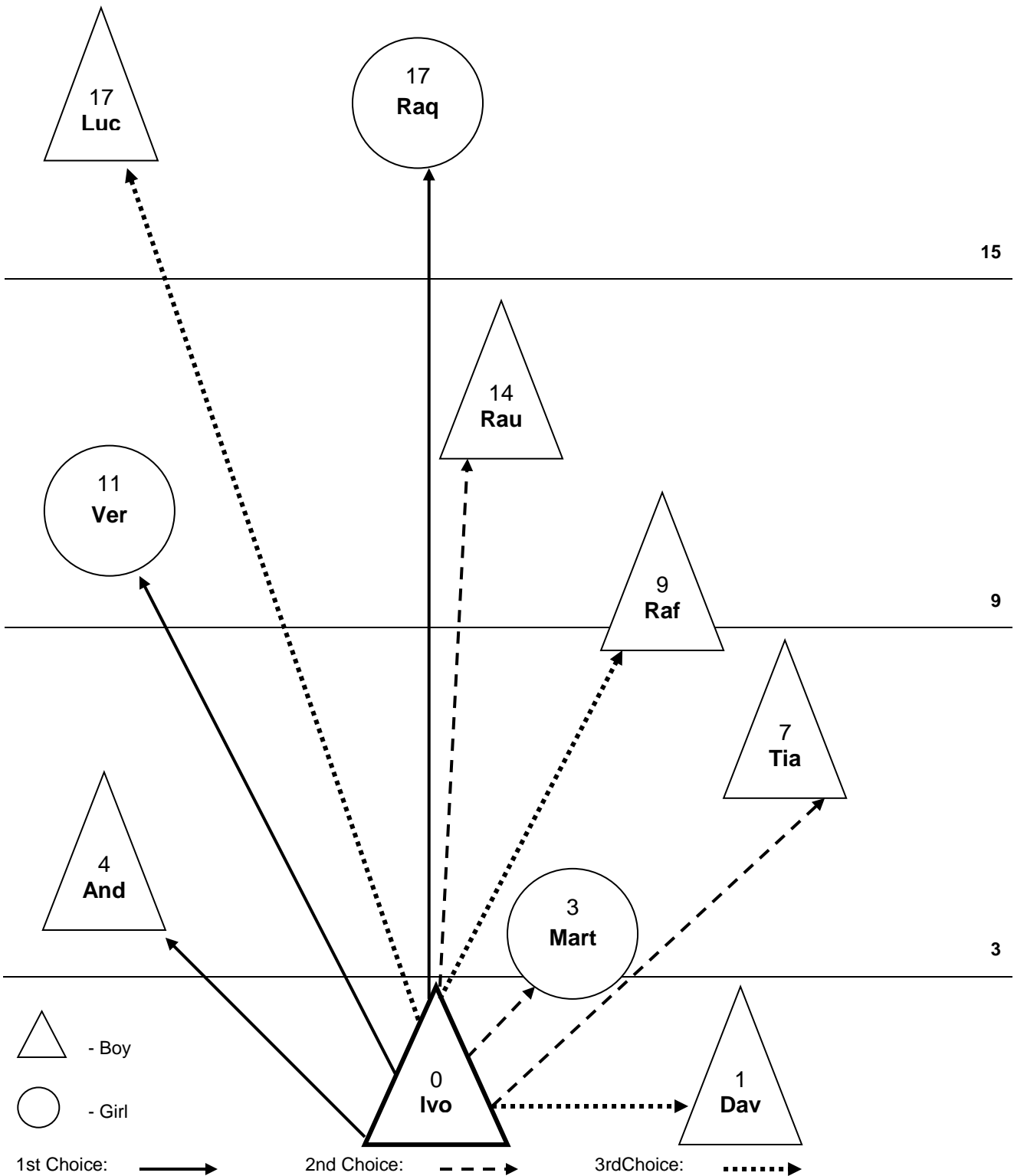


Table I – Distribution of the foreign students by sex and age

Age \ Sex	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	11 years	12 years	Total
Female	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
Male	0	4	1	1	1	2	9
<b>Total</b>	1	4	2	2	1	2	12

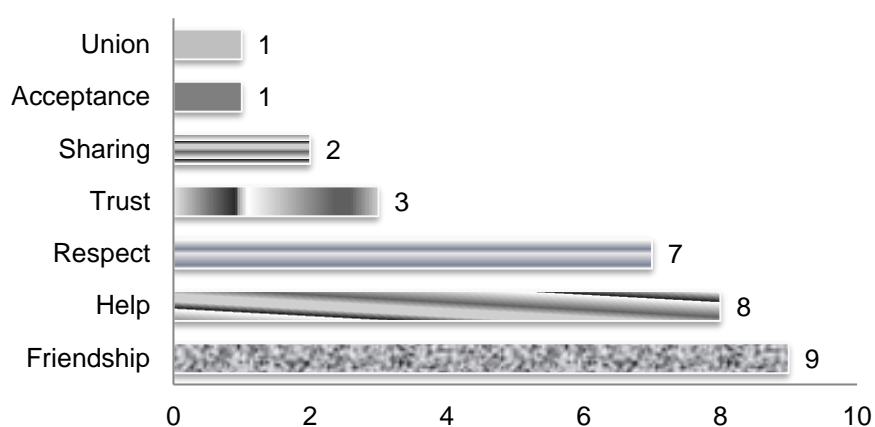


Figure 1 – Words that characterise the relationship foreign students have with their classmates

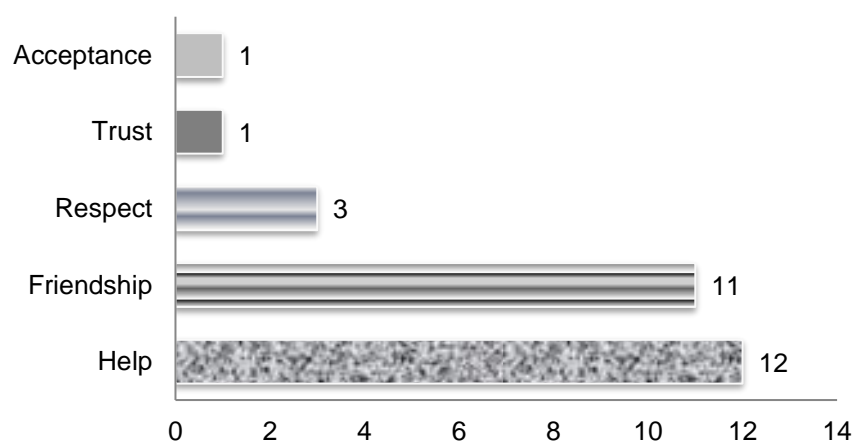


Figure 2 – Words that characterise the relationship foreign students have with their teacher

Table II – Distribution of the foreign students by levels, according to the classification of Northway and Weld

<b>Levels</b>	<b>No. of students/Classes</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Far below probability or average</b>	2 (1st C; 2nd B)	16,7
<b>Below probability or average</b>	6 (3rd A; 3rd D; 4th B)	50,0
<b>Average or probability</b>	–	–
<b>Above probability or average</b>	4 (2nd A; 3rd B; 3rd C; 4th C)	33,3
<b>Far above probability or average</b>	–	–
<b>Total</b>	12	100