IMCAP

IMPROVING MIGRANT CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

CAPACITY-BUILDING BOOKLET FOR TEACHERS

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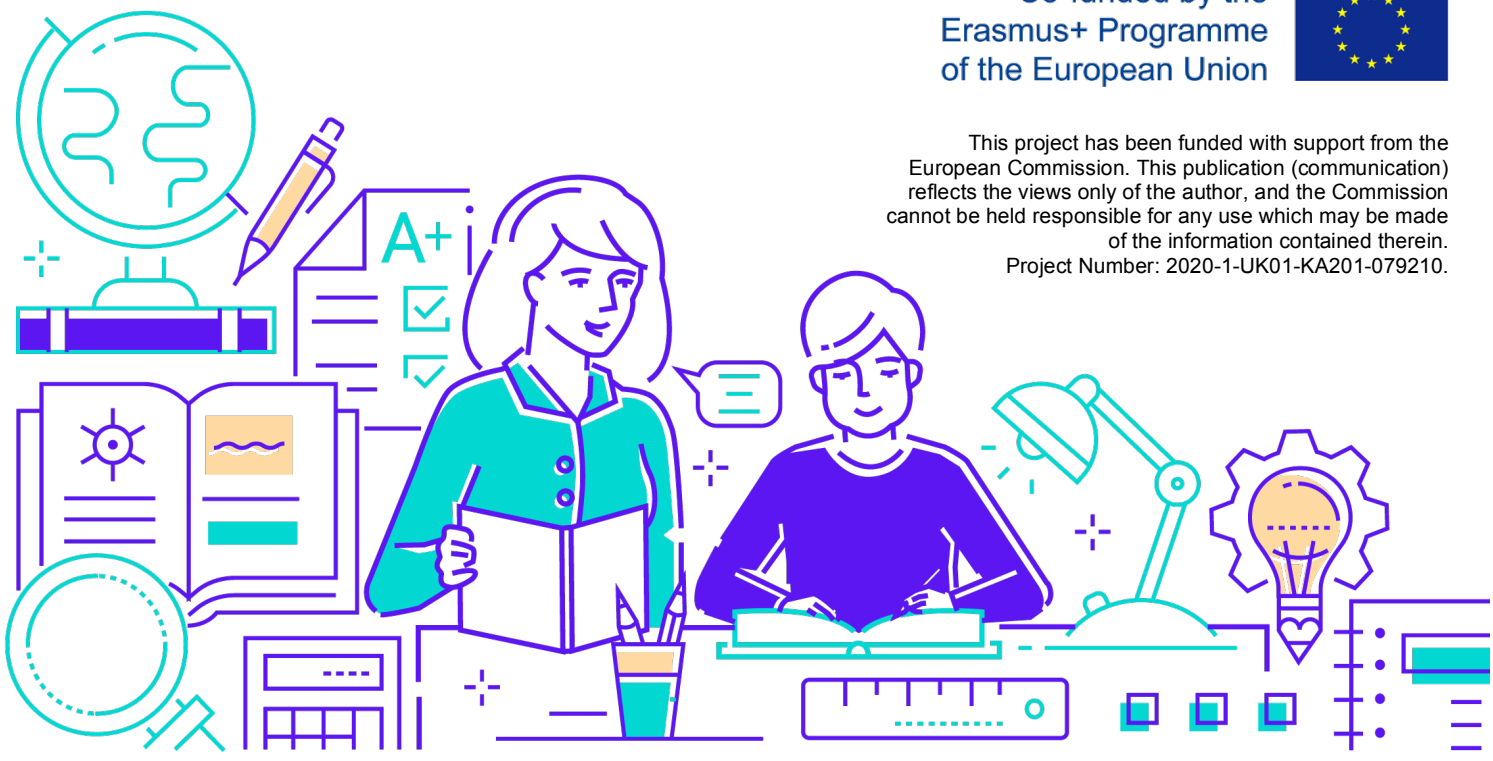

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Introduction

According to the 2015 OECD study "Review of Migrant Education," there is a huge gap between migrant and native students in terms of academic performance. Moreover, the difference is more visible among first-generation immigrant students. The study shows that 51% of first-generation immigrant students failed to reach baseline levels of academic proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science in 2015, compared to 28% of students without an immigrant background. In the long term, these differences cause discrepancies among society and negatively affect the economy and prosperity at large. The transition into a new country can be challenging for adults; however, this situation must be even harder for children who have had to leave their home and move to a country where they can't speak the language, or who feel like outcasts because they don't have the same culture as their classmates.

The goal of the project Improving Migrants Children's Academic Performance (IMCAP) is to narrow the educational achievement gap between migrant and non-migrant peers by targeting key stakeholders and assisting them with tools; a cultural handbook, a capacity-building booklet, and an online networking platform. The focus of the project can be summarised into three objectives. First, it aims to prepare teachers of school-age children to work in a culturally diverse classroom and actively engage parents of different backgrounds in the education process. Next, it aims to enable immigrant parents to engage more in the school system of the host country, and finally, IMCAP's last objective is to create a set of tools that will facilitate the academic success of children of immigrant parents through the adults around them. In turn, this will improve teachers' ability to deliver the necessary support to migrant students and the parents' ability to play an active role in their child's education.

In terms of national research methodology, each partner conducted desk research on the context of multicultural classrooms and learning environments in their country. Besides statistical data, this research also includes information gathered from stakeholders on best practices for approaching and communicating with migrant children and their parents. Our target group was migrant children between the ages of 11-16 years old. All four partners

conducted research based on a series of questions surrounding the topic. These questions focused on the demographics of migrants and their children in the partners countries, the languages they speak, when they entered the school system, the impact they have on the classroom and their schoolmates, the issues they and the school face, and available language support. The research also touched on the topic of academic issues and the national policies in place to ensure the success of these children (or lack thereof), and the collaboration between parents of these children and the school.

The second part of the desk research included a summary of national best practices on practical activities that teachers can implement to support the multicultural student population as well as positively engage their parents in the learning process. These were collected through Stakeholder Engagement Meetings (SEMs) which sought to gain insight from members of the target group (primary or secondary school teachers and staff dealing with migrant children in the classroom). The SEMs with staff were again conducted using guided questions that were the same across all interviews. The topics of these questions involved asking about their experiences with success and failures of migrant children, advice that they would give to a teacher just starting out in such environment, examples of classroom activities to engage all children, or the overall reaction of native children towards migrant classmates. There were also questions aimed at migrant parents and the teachers' experiences with interacting with them, also asking what should be considered when communicating with them. While all partners had the same set of questions available, they were free to ask additional questions, depending on the flow of the interview, in order to get the clearest possible overall picture.

The changing face of classrooms across Europe

In 1977, the Council of the European Union adopted a Directive which was aimed at the education of children of migrant workers, and it initiated a series of actions towards establishing support measures for children with a migrant background. These actions focused on the integration of migrant pupils through the provision of equitable education and training systems, the prevention of school failure and the improvement of educational achievements of learners with a migrant background (Janta & Harte, 2016).

Classrooms in Europe are becoming increasingly diverse in regard to language, ethnicity, and cultural and religious backgrounds. Europe has had an increase in immigrant populations and an increased number of language learners from a variety of backgrounds have contributed to such diversity. New immigrants are a special case of learner as they come to school with educational and linguistic gaps. Data shows that migrant children under the age of 15 represent approximately five per cent of the European Union (EU) population. There are also large variations in the distribution of the migrant child population that exist across the states of the EU. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that each EU state has a different experience in terms of migration and that there is no one-size-fits-all policy measure or initiative to accommodate children with a migrant background into the classroom (Janta & Harte, 2016). There is also research that supports the notion that migrant students tend to perform better in the countries that have a highly selective migration policy. The culture and education students had acquired before migrating have an impact on the students' achievement at school; the performance of migrant students is even more strongly related to the characteristics of the school systems in their host country.

While most European countries have seen an increase in migrant children's presence in their classrooms, all have dealt differently with this transition. Projects such as IMCAP offer an opportunity to provide an in-depth description of the process each partner country uses to positively engage migrant students and parents as well as share effective ideas and procedures.

Recognition and Understanding of the Multicultural Classroom

United Kingdom

According to the UK's Office of National Statistics (ONS), pupil numbers have fluctuated over the last 16 years, with births being the main driver of changes rather than the recent international migration of children; however, it does point out that international migration does affect the number of births, and that children born to non-UK born mothers have increased over the last 20 years. The ONS also provides demographics data about the cultural and ethnic makeup of the country. According to their 2020 quarterly report, 6.2 million foreign nationals were living in the country which is 9% of the total population. Of those 6.2 million foreign nationals, 3.7 million of them came from countries within the EU. Around 35% of people living in the UK who were born abroad live in the capital city. Similarly, around 37% of people living in London were born outside the UK, compared with 14% for the UK as a whole. Of all the nations and regions of the UK, the North East had the lowest proportion of its population born abroad (5.8%), followed by Wales (6.5%), Northern Ireland (7.0%), and Scotland (9.3%).

Within the scope of this project, the term 'migrant children' will also include the children of migrants. Around 28% of children under 18 in the UK have at least one parent who was not born there, and an estimated 14% of UK-born children have two parents who were born abroad. The top three countries of origin for foreign-born nationals were India (9%), Poland (9%), and Pakistan (6%). After these countries come Romania and the Republic of Ireland. Of the foreign-born population, women represent a small majority with 52% of them being women. Age-wise, of the children (under 18) living in the UK, 6% of them (896,000) were born abroad. Half of those children came from the EU. The non-EU children came from India (17%) as well as the Middle East and North Africa and Central Asia (17%).

According to the 2011 ONS census, the most spoken foreign language in the UK was Polish with over 564,000 speakers. Next in line were three languages from South Asia: Punjabi, Urdu, and Bengali, coming from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh respectively. Together these languages comprised of more than 763,000 speakers living in the UK. Finally, the fifth most spoken migrant language was Arabic, with nearly 160,000 speakers.

According to Peter Jenson's 2015 publication Immigrants in the Classroom and Effects on Native Children, the mixing of migrant children in the classroom could, in some cases, have no detrimental effect on the educational outcomes of native children, although he concluded that if the numbers were below a certain threshold, they would have no effect. The article stated that in a number of countries, examination scores of native children suffered no adverse effect when migrant children were in the same classroom. In the case of the United States for example, he stated that increased immigration actually had positive net effect on the high school completion rate of native children, albeit small.

However, Jensen also said that there were disadvantages to having migrant children in schools. Research demonstrated that in most countries, a sizable migrant population the classroom led to lower test scores of native children, leading to higher dropout rates from high school and lower chances of passing exams. He also mentioned what he called 'Native flight' whereby the presence of many immigrant children caused native students to be withdrawn from school by parents seeking schools with fewer immigrant children. Jenson also claimed that native children tended to experience more bullying in classrooms where there are more immigrant children in the same classroom.

According to the 2013 Home Office report 'Social and Public Service Impacts of International Migration at the Local Level,' migrants were considered to have a similar impact on schools as non-migrant children. The report states that while there may be negative effects such as extra costs incurred in migrant education in schools such as language support, there were also benefits such as the positive effects on school and pupil performance. The report states that some school's local authorities (LAs) noted that systems established to improve migrant children's attainment were a driver for wider improvement benefiting the wider student body. One important note relating to migrant children was that their turnover rate, or 'churn', tends to have negative effects on the classroom. It can be disruptive to the classroom environment when a student leaves or enters the class in the middle of the school year, which also makes their educational progress hard to track. This mobility issue tends to be the case with the children of low-skilled workers and asylum seekers who are more likely to need to move during the process of gaining their status.

Churn is more disruptive in areas which are not familiar with dealing with migrant children, such as rural parts of Eastern England; however, areas like London and Birmingham have more familiarity and thus an easier time dealing with the issues that arise as a result. In Manzoni and Rolfe's 2019 study, teachers felt that high rates churn negatively impacted both students and teachers, citing difficulties in creating long-term relationships as one of the struggles. A high population of migrant children in a particular area can also have an effect on native-born children's chances of gaining a place in their desired school; high birth rates among some migrant populations and the arrival of more and more migrant children may be the cause of less primary school places being available.

The 2019 report How Schools are Integrating New Migrant Pupils and their Families gathered data on the topic from British schools. The schools surveyed noted that there were a number of 'challenges' when integrating pupils who very little command of the English language and were unfamiliar with the culture of school life. There were also additional problems when dealing with children whose schooling had been disrupted because of living in conflict zones. Sally Weale (The Guardian, 2018) explains in her article 'Refugee Children Face Long Delays accessing education in UK' there are long delays for the children of asylum seekers and migrants accessing education once cleared for settlement in the UK. Weale explains that this is because schools are reluctant to offer places due to fears poor attainment by the migrant pupils will lower General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results and affect the school's position in the league tables.

As mentioned above, it is especially difficult for schools who are unaccustomed to migrant children and the changes which result from their presence in the classroom. It is even more difficult to manage a large number of newcomers. The needs of these pupils come with additional demands for the schools, leading to higher costs of education provision. These students may need support such as translation and interpreting services, numeracy and literacy of young children who have not received formal education, understanding cultural differences by staff and lack of records and assessments (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019).

Many schools assert that high numbers of non-English speaking students could lead to reduced performance for all students due to the pressure put on schools and local authorities.

Because of the tendency of migrant children to move and chance schools, this puts additional financial pressure on the school. As the funding is calculated at the beginning of the school year, i.e. the autumn term, adding more students throughout the year stretches the budget thin. Support staff and liaising with other services incurs extra costs for which the school may have not been prepared, not to mention the issues that arise with meeting the students' linguistic needs.

In the UK, linguistic support for migrant children is usually delivered under the formal term of 'English as an additional language' (EAL). This is an additional service provided by both state and private schools via a range of job roles which include EAL teachers, bilingual support staff or EAL coordinators. Typically, migrant students fall under one of three categories: newly arrived in the country; refugees, asylum seekers or economic migrants; from established ethnic communities born in the UK. This is relevant because it affects the level of funding a school might receive to deliver EAL (Hutchinson, 2018). For example, if a student is listed as 'newly arrived', which means within the previous three years, the school is eligible for EAL funding, which it may spend on outsourced services or on in-house EAL provision. However, not all schools are located within areas termed as having an EAL factor. This is especially the case for rural schools, where, paradoxically, the number of migrant children is on the increase (NALDIC, 2013).

Where linguistic support is not provided, whether because of geographical disadvantage or a lack of funding, students EAL provision will be an arbitrary, informal affair carried out by well-meaning subject teachers without EAL qualifications. (Evans, Schneider, Arnot, Fisher, Forbes, Liu, & Welply, 2020). The other plight awaiting the migrant student could be to be simply allocated to the lowest sets for each subject. Consequently, a pupil with high mathematic ability may find themselves in a class with students of much lower ability. Ultimately, any migrant pupil is at the mercy of location, school budgets, and shifting government policies and a lack of EAL provision can lead to the full range of social and academic problems associated with marginalisation, notably the lack of academic language needed to pass exams (Evans et al., 2020).

In order to establish a relationship with migrant parents, Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) reported that many UK schools are using 'parent ambassadors' who are support staff specifically designated to be a bridge between the school's students and their parents. They are often used particularly to improve relationships between migrant families and the school. Their job is to ensure that the parents understand the UK school system and to provide support wherever necessary. In a high-concentration immigration area, parent ambassadors will often have a similar cultural background. They may even run English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for the parents. Other responsibilities may include organising social events to strengthen relationships, addressing specific needs within families, and sometimes acting as interpreters during parent-teacher meetings.

The same report also found that some schools with migrant-heavy populations provide their informative materials into multiple languages. They also provide welcome packs in all languages spoken by newcomers. This is viewed as a key practice in order to effectively transmit to parents the most important information about their child. Translation will typically be done by a bilingual staff member; however, if a school does not have staff members who can translate, they are able to hire translators. This can be done for both written and face-to-face meetings.

Some of the more common challenges faced by these children result from schools' insufficient capacity to accommodate them; these school-based factors include, but are not limited to, age of school entry, the ability of the school to track the student's progress, the school's financial capacity, language policies, school quality, rigor, cultural and religious diversity and openness to it. The inability of schools to meet the needs of these children in terms of resources and staff can have a highly negative effect on their educational attainment. The children may face language barriers, psychological issues, unfamiliarity with the curriculum and limited catchup classes as a result. Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) also thoroughly investigate the challenges faced by migrant children.

The first and most obvious one is simply learning English; especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are not accustomed to the necessary amount of study it takes to learn a language, learning English can be a huge challenge to overcome. Children who do

not learn the language have troubles not only keeping up with schoolwork, but also integrating with their peers. Schools need sufficient linguistic support to ensure these students can learn as quickly as possible.

Migrant students, on top of having linguistic challenges, may have special needs and emotional challenges as well. Depending on their background, they may have experienced trauma and have psychological issues as a result. Even if they have not experienced trauma, going to a new school often brings out anxiety in native children, so for migrant children there is an added layer of stress that comes with being completely unfamiliar with one's surroundings.

The issue of churn has already been touched upon in the frame of its impact upon the classroom, but a student who is moving around from school to school experiences his or her own challenges in this respect. A lack of familiarity with the new school and its policies can cause a plethora of issues for the student not only academically, but socially as well. Stress and anxiety act as barriers to learning, so schools must be prepared to offer mental health interventions where necessary. Being unfamiliar with one's surroundings also means having to adapt to a new health and education system.

To newcomers, some features of the UK school system will be completely different and therefore not always understood by students and parents. The UK school system's enrolment system is likely to present a challenge to those who are unfamiliar with the process, for example. This unfamiliarity with the way the system is run can lead to parents not being aware of their child's progress or lack thereof, falsely believing they are doing fine when in reality they are struggling. The spirit of collaboration between UK schools and parents might not always be expected either; parents of children attending UK schools are expected to help with homework, for example. Unfamiliarity with such expectations and the school system in general can lead to a child falling behind.

It may go without saying, but migrant children are often at a high level of disadvantage. Their parents may be low-skilled workers doing long hours or sometimes unemployed and looking for work, so they are often at a socioeconomic disadvantage. In the case of parents working

long hours, the child may have to take on the role of 'parent' to their younger family members, leaving little time to complete school work. On top of this, they may face issues of discrimination and exclusion if they are not part of a community with many people of a similar background. This can lead to students feeling isolated and depressed, creating emotional barriers to learning.

There have been a range of policies intending to provide support to migrant children in their families put into place in the UK for decades, though sometimes indirectly. Some of the government-funded programmes that have benefitted migrant children and their families, whether directly or indirectly include: The Sure Start local programmes, which were designed to provide services for parents and their children under five years of age in the most deprived areas of the country. The programme was not specifically designed for migrant families, but many would have benefitted due to their disproportionate concentration in low-income areas; the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant (EMAG) awarded schools funding based on the number of children with EAL and from ethnic minority groups. It was designed to support these disadvantaged groups in order to tackle the issue of academic underachievement among them and the New Arrivals Excellence Programme (NAEP), which is a guidance, advice, and training programme designed to teach schools how to accommodate and successfully integrate new students arriving from abroad.

In 2011, the NAEP funding was drastically reduced and the EMAG grant was overtaken by another funding allocation, the Direct Schools Grant (DSG). This change noticeably shifted support away from new international arrivals. Staff working in EMAG schools thus lost out on training and CPD opportunities for working with these children, and schools were no longer given specific funds to support EAL students. Thus, it can be said that the UK lacks specific national policies which ensure the success of migrant children (Hutchinson, 2018).

One striking gap that was highlighted in the 2017 UNICEF report was the sheer amount of time asylum seekers or refugee children spent on gaining access to education. While the target for all regions of the UK was 20- school days, not one UK region managed to achieve that. The longest delays recorded were for children attempting to win a place at secondary schools or further education colleges. Remarkably, roughly a quarter of such applicants were

forced to wait three months or more. One of the reasons cited for this include online application procedures that turn out to be overly complex for family members whose native language is not English. The school system also struggles to deal with in-year arrivals and the dwindling number of specialist teams for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASCs) available has created further pressures on the quality of intake.

Some individual schools whose focus is on achieving high academic results have shown a regular reluctance to admit pupils onto upper secondary courses because of concerns about overall results being negatively impacted. There is also the unfortunate bureaucratic hiccup of schools having to apply to the secretary of state to admit pupils instead of directly contacting the local authority.

General gaps in the UK for migrant children seeking education span a range of financial, cultural, and systemic factors which need to be addressed to foster better integration performance. In 2011 the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) identified some gaps for policy makers to consider. These were the need for the diversity of migrant entrants to the school system to be treated as culturally unique and not lumped together in a nebulous category of 'migrant', a lack of English language support and SEN attention, a lack of proper information about the UK school system for migrant families, lack of school initiatives aimed at helping new migrant children make friends, lack of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions for teachers, insufficient interest in creating mentoring schemes (which have been proved to help with integration), insufficient early stage career advice, and schools' lack of funds for providing EAL or additional support classes.

Slovakia

Migrants make up 2.67% of the Slovak population. Their numbers are continually rising – in June 2020 there were 15 522 more migrants living here, than year prior, which is a 12% increase. In regard to the demographic, 48.9% of those are women. Majority of them are in the 20–64-year-old range (59.2%), over 65-year-olds make up 26.4% and 14.4% are children and young adults, up to nineteen years old. The highest percentages come from surrounding countries, mainly Ukraine (27.1%), Czech Republic (8%), Hungary (6.2%), Poland (4.1%),

Serbia, and Austria. They make up almost half of the total count of migrants. The next category are people that come from southern and eastern European countries (i.e. Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, and Serbia), which make up 21.4% of all migrants in Slovakia. Migrants from Asian countries (Vietnam, China, the Republic of Korea and Thailand), who in the past were a dynamically developing group of foreigners in Slovakia, have slowed down their growth. At the moment they make up 7.6% of all foreigners in Slovakia, reaching a population 11,133 people. It is worth noting that almost 40% of migrants come from EU countries and thus they are technically migrants, we don't usually view them as such. (Medzinárodná migrácia pre migráciu, 2020; International Migrant Stock 2019: Country Profile).

Migrant children have a positive impact on their classmates and the atmosphere in the school in general. The inclusion of foreigners in their classroom makes the native children more open to friendships that might not have evolved otherwise. Kids view migrant children as something foreign, especially if they have a different complexion, different facial features or speak a different language. Including them in the learning process shows their classmates that they are normal people, just like them, and even though they might be a little different on the outside, they are also students that want to learn. Thanks to migrant students, native children can learn about different cultures and learn to coexist with different customs and ways of life. In terms of the effect on the entire school, these kinds of institutions are viewed by the public as more inclusive, tolerant, and open-minded (Daneková & Ondrigová, 2018).

When taking on and accepting migrant children into a school, there are a couple of factors that should be considered. For example, children in the first four years of elementary school (our elementary school has grades 1. to 9.) are a lot more curious and accepting than the older kids. One thing that could happen is that the older children will not accept a new migrant student into their circle and will cast him or her out. This can make fitting in extremely hard. The teacher should be extra cautious and watch the entire classroom to evaluate if they need to interfere and try to help the new student (Daneková & Ondrigová, 2018).

The school is not officially required to get an interpreter while talking to the parents, however most schools do if the parents don't speak Slovak. This could be a professional, one of the

staff members, or even one of the students who happens to speak the same language. But other than that, there is no other person acting as a liaison between schools and migrant families. As is mentioned, Slovak education and everything that goes into it is highly underfinanced. Migrant children would be far better off if they could have a teacher's assistant in class with them to explain and go over the curriculum so the student could somewhat keep up with the class, bud unfortunately they are not eligible for this kind of assistance so there is no extra support given to these families (Daneková & Ondrigová, 2018).

Teaching these children has proven to be as challenging as teaching children with disabilities, or those that have special needs. But while the special needs kids have a right to use the support measures designed for them (for example, a teacher's assistant or specific methods and forms of education), the migrant children do not have this luxury. Slovak as a language is not taught in schools as a foreign language and additional language courses are assessed as having poor quality. So, while they should be getting extra hours of Slovak language instruction as the law states, these lectures are often non-existent or insufficient. The state does not provide enough funding for these kinds of classes, and migrant students are often left at the mercy of a teacher who may or may not decide to help them in their free time. Teachers also lack methodologies or alternative educational options for these children, as well as any professional support in this topic, and while nowadays there are theoretical methodology books and scripts available, teachers lack the instructions on how to apply them to real life teaching. This means that the letter of the law is fulfilled; children are provided with education under the same conditions as Slovak citizens, but as previously mentioned, true equality in access to education is not achieved.

Unfortunately, it all comes down to the teacher or school and their attitude. Published research has reported cases where the teacher allowed the young student to teach her classmates the subjects she excelled at while letting her work at a slower pace on the subjects in which she was not as apt (like the Slovak language). This student went on to continue all the way up to finish high school. On the other hand, there are also cases where the teacher was more old-fashioned and very strict with rules. She did not allow a migrant student to work at the pace that he needed and demanded that he follow the curriculum of the class.

After a while he became apathetic because he did not see the point in trying anymore (Hlinčíková & Mesežnikov, 2016).

Another point that is left up to interpretation is how to grade migrants and foreigners that do not fluently speak the language that the classes are taught in. The assessment these children is regulated by a methodological guideline which generally lays down rules for the assessment of a student after transferring to a school with a different language of instruction. The methodical instruction, in this case the law, does not allow the student to not be classified due to his insufficient knowledge of the language, meaning he or she must receive a mark or grade. During the first two evaluation periods (which usually means two semesters, or rather one school year), the student should be evaluated “at least with that grade that corresponds to the grade of the language on their last certificate." Then in the next two evaluation periods, the language assessment "shall apply milder criteria” – however, it is not defined what exactly that means. In the first two years after the transfer, the student is generally assessed on the level of his or her factual knowledge and not his/her level of “linguistic correctness", which falls under the Methodological instruction no. 22/2011, Art. 11. (Drál’ et all, 2011).

The biggest gap in the country’s approach to educating migrant children is the practical application of laws. There are a few existing Erasmus+ projects on this subject that cover methodical approaches and deliver manuals. The Ministry of Education has also provided guidelines in the past. However, while we do know, according to the laws in place, that teachers should undergo requalifications regularly, migrant children should have access to Slovak language courses, etc., there is no one to actually reinforce this in real life. For years teachers have called for individual plans and different conditions for these students, yet nothing changes (Drál’ et all, 2011).

Cyprus

As stated in the latest data by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and the Republic of Cyprus Asylum Service, about 16% of the island’s total population are international migrants (i.e., 191,900 in 2019, predominantly originating from the United Kingdom, Greece, Georgia, the Russian Federation, and Sri Lanka). Their mobility is mainly related to professional purposes.

Concurrently, 8.5% (ibid.) of international migrants (i.e., 16,200 in 2019) are identified as asylum seekers and have been offered subsidiary protection or have been given a recognised refugee status. As reported by the Asylum Service, during the past five years, the majority of asylum seekers and refugees come from Northern Africa and Western Asia and are citizens of Syria, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Egypt. Most of European and Third Countries' migrants and asylum seekers arrive in Cyprus speaking their national languages and use English as a lingua franca. Social and professional integration becomes an even more challenging process for people with poorer linguistic skills.

Over the past few years, the number of students with a migrant background in the Republic of Cyprus has increased considerably (about 15% of the total student population), a fact that can be attributed to the refugee crisis. In secondary education, the percentage of migrant students in 2014-2015 was almost 12.5% and it rose to 17% in 2018-2019. The percentages are slightly higher for preschool and primary school and follow the same curve. As reported in the data of the Statistical Service, most migrant students enter first grade education (primary school). Students with a migrant background can form two different groups: children of foreign officials and representatives (e.g., EU and/or non-EU/TCN expats, diplomats, international organisations' representatives, etc.) and children with refugee and/or asylum background.

The first and most obvious challenge they must face is the language barrier. Not understanding the language of the host country affects not only their everyday interaction but also their socialisation. Unable to properly express themselves, migrant children tend to be more introvert and lack in confidence. Social exclusion by peers at school is often one of the linguistic barrier's most common outcomes. In general, weak linguistic skills are the main reason of academic failure, given that all school subjects are taught and examined in Greek (EC, 2019). Ethnicity, religious views, and culture are generally listed as social discrimination and/or social exclusion factors.

In addition to the language barrier breakage, the school also has to face the social discrimination challenge. As reported by contemporary research, Cypriot adolescents tend to manifest rather negative and, occasionally, harmful behaviours towards their non-Cypriot

classmates. The results of a recent investigation on the relation between bullying and ethnic diversity (NIKOLAOU, 2019) show that 7 out of 10 students have witnessed some form of discrimination towards non-Cypriot students by their native classmates in school and approximately 5 out 10 vice versa (ibid.: 7). An older study (ZEMBYLAS, 2010: 8) on Cypriot adolescents' "xenophobic" (sic) attitudes correlates the negative perception and marginalisation of migrant students and the "enemy" (sic) stereotype towards Turkish-Cypriot and Turkish students. The Code of Conduct against Racism and a Guide to the Management and Recording of Racist Incident (MoEC, 2016: 7) has been established by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2008, along with the peace culture promotion and the intercultural education implementation.

To support migrant children's linguistic journey, the Ministry of Education and Culture has implemented intra- and extra-curricular intensive Greek language lessons in collaboration with public schools, adult education centres, and state institutes of further education (MoEC, 2016: 3). Two multilingual reception and information guides have also been published (ibid.: 4) to communicate important details about the Cypriot Education System to both parents and students. Furthermore, there are several online teaching platforms specially designed for children designed under the aegis of the European Union.

According to NEOPHYTOU et. al (2020: 138), a competent, compassionate and culturally-sensitive teacher can play a significant role in migrant children's performance improvement and/or academic achievement. Moreover, the creation of a welcoming school environment and an encouraging classroom climate by embracing and honouring diversity and by reinforcing positive peer relationships can have a profound impact on the students' motivation, perseverance, and accomplishment. The teacher needs to tailor and adapt their teaching material and approaches according to their students' needs. Cultural sensitivity is another important factor, as the teacher should also be able to offer emotional support. In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Culture has organized various workshops and trainings to raise not only the teachers' but also the parents' awareness regarding the migrant students' integration in education. More precisely, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute provides

teachers on a yearly basis with guidelines and intercultural education training in Teaching Greek as a Second Language (ibid.).

Parents involved in their children's education become an additional motivating factor towards the children's academic improvement and achievement. On the contrary, parents not involved in their children's education journey are often a negative role model for students. To safeguard and facilitate the interaction between migrant families and schools, the Ministry of Education and Culture has a provision for liaison workers that, unfortunately, has not yet been officially implemented. Nevertheless, it remains at the school principal and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members' discretion to either assign a liaison person or to establish an intra-school communication network to interact with the migrant parents.

Cyprus has a particular socio-political background. Ad hoc, the island consists of an amalgam of different cultures and Cypriots are quite sensitive towards migration. The government strongly encourages and supports migrants' integration and assimilation in the society by continuous subsidiary actions. Constant improvement is a vital element for the success and sustainability of these actions. As reported by the SIRIUS Programme, Cyprus needs to invest in a new Curriculum and "...focus on the systematic support of the [migrant students'] integration… from kindergarten to secondary education within a broader and holistic context." (ibid. 5). Although differentiation is considered an effective pedagogical method to handle a multicultural classroom, the preponderance of teachers in Cyprus are not familiar with it. NIKOLAOU (2019: 3) highlights the need for induction classes and non-Cypriot teachers to create a more blended school environment.

Spain

The main countries of origin of immigrants in Spain are Morocco, Romania, United Kingdom, Italy and Colombia. These immigrants speak the native language of their countries (in the case of Moroccan immigrants, they speak Arabic and French). All of them would have to learn Spanish as a second language except Colombian immigrants. Immigrants living in autonomous communities where there is a co-official language such as Catalan, Galician or Basque must also learn this language. This means that most of the population of foreign origin is concentrated in four autonomous communities: Catalonia (20%), Madrid (16%),

Andalusia (14%) and Valencia (14%). This shows that 64%, close to three million immigrants live in the most densely populated communities. It also reveals the preference of some profiles of origin and socio-demographic characteristics for areas of greater economic dynamism and of others, such as those of European origin who are retired, for coastal areas.

One fifth of the foreigners living in Spain are under the age of twenty, most of whom are of compulsory school age. More than 30% of this age group was born in Spain. However, there are important limitations to understanding the reality of students of foreign origin who have already been naturalised, since the Ministry of Education statistics, unlike other institutions, do not consider the criterion of the country of birth of the student and parents, but only consider foreign students the ones who do not have Spanish nationality. According to available data, the proportion of students with foreign nationality has increased from 2% in 2000 to 9% in the 2017-2018 academic year. As a result, Spain has gone from having one of the lowest rates to being around the average, given the continuous inflow of foreign students over the last two decades.

Currently, 8.8% of the non-university education system comprises of foreign students. The main continent of origin of these foreign children and young people in Spanish schools is Africa (55%) due to the predominance of North African immigration. South and Central Americans also account for 24% of the total number of foreign students in schools. In this case, with the exception of Brazilian students, the common language facilitates the incorporation of these students into the education system. The rest of the student body is made up of a wide variety of origins: European Union (19.1%), rest of Europe (5%), Asia (10%) and North America (1%). The group of students from the rest of Europe is the most heterogeneous. While Morocco remains the main country of origin, the incorporation of Romanian (now 14% of the students) and Chinese children (5.5%) stands out. It is likely that the decrease in the volume of some nationalities such as Ecuador or Colombia is due more to naturalisation processes than to their departure from the country.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, most foreigners were enrolled in preschool (21.3%), primary (40%), or compulsory secondary education (23.6%) with a very low presence at post-compulsory levels (6.1% in A levels and 8.9% in intermediate vocational training).

Compared to natives, foreign students have a higher proportion in preschool, primary, and secondary education, reflecting the drop in the birth rate among the Spanish population. The greater difficulties of this group in continuing their post-compulsory studies are also reflected in the high proportion of immigrant students enrolled in Initial Vocational Education and Training (10.7%) and Basic Vocational Training (17.1%) which are aimed at students who have not obtained their. Moreover, the presence of immigrant students is higher than that of native students at older ages (17 and 18).

There is a fairly widespread perception that the excessive concentration of students of immigrant origin in certain schools may have negative effects on educational performance, cohesion, and social integration. The concentration of immigrant students in schools does not automatically have adverse effects on student performance or social integration (OECD, PISA, 2015). However, there will be negative outcomes if residential concentration results in enclaves with few possibilities for geographical and socio-economic mobility. Underachievement among immigrant students may also be partly related to the fact that these students are often concentrated in schools that lack adequate and sufficient resources to address the challenges of a diversity of backgrounds in the classroom. The critical link between the concentration of immigrant students in a school and low performance is socio-economic status (Spanish Economic and Social Council, 2019). The learning of immigrant and native students will be hindered if these schools are not equipped with sufficient educational resources or if the concentration of disadvantaged students results in a poorer disciplinary climate.

Another difficulty that schools face are migrant children who arrived in Spain without their parents (Spanish Economic and Social Council, 2019). Unaccompanied foreign minors in Spain are a small percentage of the total number of newly-arrived immigrants, but it must be taken into account that they are a vulnerable group and are subject to reinforced legal protection. The vast majority (97%) are male and come from Africa. The challenges for the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors are the determination of their age, the insufficient number of protection services and their unequal distribution by autonomous communities, the difficulties in offering adequate educational itineraries in these cases, and

the frequent voluntary abandonment of protection services by a considerable number of minors whose whereabouts are unknown.

In their case, the problems of educational integration are exacerbated not only by the lack of parental support, language barriers, lack of information on educational opportunities, support in school activities and homework, and public funding, but also by other psychological factors clearly associated with their condition. In addition, social isolation and, in some cases, greater social exclusion among these minors hinders their educational success to a greater extent. Finally, there may also be bureaucratic problems and delays in their schooling.

All foreigners under the age of 18 have the right to education under the same conditions as Spaniards, including access to free and compulsory basic education. The Regional School Councils in every autonomous community are responsible for studying issues of particular relevance to the education system, which includes family participation in schools. They must provide all the necessary resources such as language support teachers and mediators to act as a liaison between schools and families. There are also non-governmental organisations and social groups that collaborate with schools to facilitate the inclusion of students and families (González Falcón, 2007).

The academic issues that migrant children face in Spain are related to lower academic performance and school dropout (Spanish Economic and Social Council). The difference between foreign and native students, both in terms of educational attainment and performance, are unfavourable toward foreign students. The percentage of foreign students who drop out of the school system without obtaining their GCSE is 27.9%, compared to 6.3% of Spanish students. This is the highest level of school failure in the European Union. On the other hand, the high proportion of young foreigners who neither work nor receive training in Spain and the wide gap with natives in Spain (15.9%) are also noteworthy. Foreign students are underrepresented at all post-compulsory levels, which is related to the higher level of school failure, mainly among first generation immigrants. However, the performance of second-generation (Spanish-born) students is less distant from that of Spanish students.

The different educational administrations must guarantee the schooling of students who join the Spanish educational system. To this end, different educational measures are currently implemented. The best-known are the linguistic reception classrooms managed by the different autonomous communities. They have implemented various educational policies to facilitate the integration of immigrant students into the educational system and to correct the initial inequalities of students of immigrant origin. In general terms, the measures implemented can be classified into four different blocks: reception measures, attention to linguistic and cultural diversity, attention to families, and teacher training (Spanish Economic and Social Council, 2019).

In general, schools in all the autonomous communities develop **reception programmes**, in some cases integrated in to the Diversity Attention Plan. Most of them are intended as reception programmes aimed especially at immigrant students. Furthermore, most of the autonomous communities have professionals specially designed to facilitate the reception of immigrant students. These are teachers who provide support in reception classrooms, intercultural mediators, or interpreters who serve as a link between immigrant students, their families and schools.

With regard to **linguistic and cultural diversity**, all the autonomous communities prioritise the teaching of the Spanish language and, where appropriate, the language of the autonomous community. As a general rule, the specific actions aimed at achieving this objective are of a transitory nature and are carried out by teachers specially dedicated to this task. Most communities have 'language proficiency reception classrooms' or 'language support classrooms' as specific measures for the linguistic and cultural care of immigrant students. Some communities have established programmes for the learning and development of the mother tongue and culture. Most autonomous communities allocate special resources, both human and material, to developing specific measures for the linguistic and cultural care of immigrant pupils. It is also common for many schools to organise days or activities to promote knowledge of different cultures. It is important that attention to diversity is applied on an individualised basis, according to the specific educational needs of the foreign students in the school, which must be correctly analysed and monitored.

Information is provided to families in the local schooling commissions by means of guides prepared for this purpose or in meetings held at the school itself. Some autonomous communities have set up a service of interpreters or cultural mediators to provide **attention to the families of immigrant students**. All the autonomous communities have increased the offer of training actions related to intercultural education, aimed at both initial and in-service teacher training.

In most cases, the **teacher training plans** of the different autonomous communities include intercultural education among their priority objectives. Training is carried out through different modalities, differentiated according to the level or tasks that teachers carry out in the school (in-school training, courses, seminars, working groups, postgraduate courses, etc.). Likewise, the teachers' centres in the different autonomous communities provide support or advice to teachers in schools with immigrant students. Most of the autonomous communities organise conferences or meetings on intercultural education, and some communities have established courses on intercultural education aimed specifically at management teams.

Despite this, neither in Spain nor in the autonomous communities is there a standardised effort to monitor and evaluate such policies. The absence of a curricular design means that in the current reception classrooms there is considerable diversity in terms of the target group, the linguistic objectives, the hours spent in the classroom, the training profile of the teaching staff, the teaching methodology, and even in the determination of the minimum level of language instruction in order to follow classes in other curricular areas. There is also a progressive reduction of educational resources imposed by the limitations of the public budget. An example is the reduction in the number of language teachers and the difficulty in maintaining the intercultural mediation projects.

Best Practices and Practical Activities for Engaging Migrant Children

The multicultural classroom is not an abstraction or a fixed entity. Multiculturalism is fluid and the role of the teacher needs to be both reactive and proactive in the sense of adapting to changing circumstances and demographics. Today, there is an ever-increasing diversity of cultural backgrounds in schools across Europe; thus, a multicultural education must be approached in diverse ways and according to the needs of each particular classroom. The idea of a multicultural classroom is one of promoting tolerance and understanding by all in the classroom, and within this acceptance of tolerance and understanding the welcoming of beliefs of those new to the country.

United Kingdom

To discover some of the best practices currently being employed in the UK, three Stakeholder Engagement Meetings (SEMs) were conducted with teachers from three different schools in the south of England who currently teach migrant children in primary and secondary state-funded schools. All participants received the questions ahead of time and consented to their answers being recorded and used for the purposes of writing this booklet. The best practices in this booklet have been compiled as a result of both the SEMs and the desk research that has been carried out.

Best Practice Findings

1. *Use the school's available resources and support*

One of the most important steps to take when welcoming migrant children into the classroom is seeking out any resources that can help support the students. This includes not only EAL teachers, but also multilingual staff and translation services. Having support within the school could be the biggest indicator of a student's success. Some schools have "special education needs" department for this type of, who would assess the requirement and then approach the council to request the necessary resources. Unfortunately, it is not always the case that a teacher can get the support they need, even in area with a high concentration of migrants. In this case, it is recommended that the teacher support the student as much as possible with 1:1

tutoring where possible, scaffolding, differentiation, and interventions. Overall, it is recommended that teachers working in multicultural classrooms with complex needs approach their school or local authority to get informed about the available resources that can support their students' learning journeys.

2. *Make migrant students feel safe, comfortable, and cared-for*

Anxiety and other mental health issues can be a barrier to learning. It is therefore highly important for the students to feel comfortable in the classroom, and one way to do this is to keep a consistent routine. One teacher pointed out that these students may have a chaotic life at home and could be feeling mass amounts of anxiety while adjusting to their new school. One suggestion for keeping a routine is standing outside the classroom every day and greeting each student, making them feel seen right away. The teacher also highlighted the importance of not drawing attention to migrant students too much in front of their peers, but rather treating them equally and as a 'school family.'

3. *Establish good relationships between migrant students, yourself, and native students*

For migrant students, being a newcomer in a new country and school could easily lead to feelings of ostracization and isolation, which can be detrimental to the young mind. It is important for teachers to foster a positive and welcoming atmosphere in the classroom where these students can bond with the teacher and other students. According to Benediktsson and Ragnarsdottir (2019), migrant students are more receptive to "culturally responsive" teachers, those who encourage the students to use their cultural and personal experiences as part of the learning process. One activity to open up the potential of positive relationships in the classroom is a 'Morning Meeting,' a 5-minute timeslot every morning where students can share what is on their mind, how they are feeling that day, etc. This sort of sharing can become the foundation for bonding between students.

4. *Find out as much as possible about the child's background so you can monitor their progress*

Section 1 of this booklet has delved into a major issue surrounding migrant children: churn. When a student often moves from school to school, it makes their educational background very difficult to track. Sometimes this is out of the realm of possibility, like in the case of

some refugee children who would not have recent school records. However, sometimes with a bit of effort, the teacher can track what sort of educational background a student has. The interviewees recommend that teachers make an attempt to find out about the child's educational history wherever possible. Sometimes a student will have just moved up a grade level within the same school, so it is worth approaching their teacher from the year before to discover any particular needs the student may have. Sometimes the student will have transferred from another school, in which case it is recommended to reach out to the school and get any information they have on the student's educational background. Some schools actually require teachers to keep stringent records on students with EAL; this official record can be very helpful for when a child is moving through the system.

5. *Regularly use visual cues and other EAL teaching techniques in your teaching*

One teacher, who has an EAL teacher readily available for support, recommends employing EAL teaching techniques even in the general classroom. She uses common strategies such as using as many visuals as possible when teaching. This includes visual cues, like the 'toilet signal' so students can non-verbally ask to use the toilet. She also provides all students, not only those with EAL, with sentence frames that they can use to express themselves properly when speaking and writing.

6. *Implement classroom activities that are designed to promote and embrace diversity*

Much research has gone into discovering the best methods to foster and support diversity in the classroom. For example, Howlett and Young's 2019 study on building a classroom library based on multicultural principles supports the practice of integrating multicultural teaching content into the curriculum and provides different approaches for doing so. Similarly, Peterson's 2019 study on preparing student teachers to work in a multicultural classroom also asserts that this practice can positively engage students from all backgrounds and encourage an open and accepting environment for all cultures.

An activity recommended by one of the interviewees was to use books with diverse themes as teaching material. The content of these books would include themes such as accepting all religions, sharing cultural diversity, and so on. She asserted that this way, students are able to

identify themselves within the stories and also realize that their lives might be very different from the child sitting next to them.

Another recommended activity is to assign projects based on cultural traditions, which can be incorporated into a History lesson, for example. Not all students celebrate the same traditions, and she finds that the students are always excited to share with their peers and learn about all the different traditions of the class.

7. *Educate yourself on how to best support these students*

The final recommendation for engaging migrant students in the UK classroom is simply to educate yourself as much as possible on the available resources and methods of teaching this particular group. One of the teachers mentioned receiving specific training on 'EAL guidance' during her teacher training and also being offered CPD sessions, seminars, and refresher courses on the topic. She recalled some of the useful tips given by the guidance material, such as using collaborative activities, using visuals with learners with EAL, scaffolding writing, scaffolding speaking, marking and feedback, and grading your language. Recommended guidance material from this teacher comes from the Bell Foundation, which is a charity working to overcome exclusion through language education.

Clearly, special attention must be paid on how to comfortably integrate and include migrant children in UK classrooms. During the interviews, the teachers were asked to give advice to a new teacher in a multicultural classroom. The first one offered the all-encompassing advice to "be positive about the child as much as possible, give them some time, have visuals to hand, consider trying to access a translator, remember to be culturally aware, and ask colleagues for advice." Second recommended that you "know your children" in order to adapt lessons and best prepare teaching materials. Finally, the third teacher reminded us of the importance of cultural awareness when interacting with these children, such as not making eye contact being a sign of respect in some cultures, and disrespect in others.

Slovakia

In order to gather best practices from Slovakia, three teachers and one educator who looks after the kids in the after-school programme were contacted. All four of them work at primary schools and were very happy to express their opinions on the topic since they too believe it is important to discuss the situation of migrant children and their integration in Slovak schools. They provided their varied perspectives on the matter.

Best Practice Findings

1. *Make them feel safe and welcome*

By talking to the teachers, we have identified this as the key element. Older children (ages 11-16), our target group, especially have a tendency to be cruel and ignorant and the teacher should make an effort to help them fit into the collective. Explaining to the class beforehand that they will have a new student and that they might look a little different, and might speak a little differently, but they are there to learn and that it would be great if the class could make them feel welcome, could also be helpful.

2. *Games and activities*

One great way to integrate migrant kids is to engage them in a game. By this we mean playing different kinds of collective sports or different fun activities where the class has to work together. The more fun you can make it, the more successful it has the chance to be. Other activities might include encouraging the new student make a presentation about their home country and culture, followed by a discussion where native children can in return talk about Slovak culture and customs.

3. *Buddy system*

Having a buddy system that switches every week or month is also an option. If there is a particular subject (Maths, or Biology, etc.) that the foreign student excels at, let them teach or explain that subject to the rest of the class. And vice versa, let the native students explain the subjects in which they excel. This builds trust and respect between the students and creates a better environment.

4. *Help them learn the language*

The biggest challenge that migrant children and students face is learning to speak Slovak fluently. Having translation cards with pictures in both languages on hand can help reduce some of the foreign student's anxiety. You can even ask the native children if any of them would be willing to look out for the student (show them the correct translation card if needed etc.) or just translate part of conversation here and there.

While there are certainly a lot of activities and actions that could be taken and implemented as best practices, we have identified the above key ones that we collected from Slovak teachers. The teachers interviewed believe that inclusion among the students and classroom is key and should be addressed as the main objective.

Cyprus

For the collection of best practices, a class teacher (teaching 11-12-year-old students) and a Greek language teacher (teaching 13-18-year-old students) were interviewed. Both teachers are Greek Cypriots with more than 5 years teaching experience in public schools. One of them teaches in classrooms with an average of more than 30% migrant students and the other in classrooms with an average of 10-20% migrant students.

Best Practice Findings

1. *Social integration*

The interviewed teachers described an ideal classroom environment where migrant students are positively welcomed by their native peers, equally treated by their teachers, and offered additional help when needed. Although children with migrant or refugee background sometimes progress and develop their linguistic skills slower than their native peers, they should still be socially integrated. Usually, playing is the lingua franca for children. Interaction with native peers through games during break-time is another socialisation and linguistic skills improvement factor. In the classroom, creating a daily routine (e.g., short discussion before starting the lesson) helps as well.

2. *Collaboration with parents*

Family and culture play significant roles in the children's general wellbeing and academic performance. There are parents who encourage their children and are keen to cooperate with the teacher. Of course, there are also parents who avoid interaction with the teacher. Communication is the key for both migrant students and their parents. During all interactions, it is important to consider their cultural background and, if necessary, opt for a third person that could help them express themselves in case they have linguistic difficulties. That is why regular dialogue and collaboration with the parents can help migrant children settle into their new environment better.

3. *Extra training*

The interviewed teachers suggested that training on cultural diversity teaching and on second / foreign language teaching would help them improve their skills and make them more able to offer support to their students.

4. *Activities*

All activities that promote student similarities, common interests and personal potentials work fine and help the socialisation between national students and migrant children. These can include ice-breaking games, workshops, group working methods, and anything that requires interaction. Students need support to express their personal stories/ideas in order to feel connected to their environment. Activities should be planned throughout year, like concentric circles, involving gradually more people to their lives.

Migrant children just want to be able to feel welcomed. They sometimes need an extra push, but other than that they are just as much part of the classroom, as any other student. Different games and activities encourage communication on both sides. Involving their parents to sort out any possible issues was also found helpful. More information on this will be provided in section 3.

Spain

For the best practices section, two interviews were conducted with two teachers who have experience in both primary and secondary education. The first teacher who was interviewed has 14 years of experience and has worked in a school in El Ejido, a town with a large immigrant population in the province of Almeria in Andalusia. The second teacher interviewed has worked with migrant students in difficult social and economic circumstances in Seville and Madrid. He has worked in compensatory education, which is aimed at students aged 15 and 16 who have problems related to school failure and absenteeism and are at risk of social, economic and family exclusion. These are normally students with low self-esteem, a curricular gap of at least two years, and who reject the academic system, discipline, or school organisation. He is currently working with students who belong to street gangs with all the challenges that entails. Both teachers' insights into the migrant students' situation is very valuable because they have worked with migrant students in very different contexts.

Best Practice Findings

1. *Language*

If the child does not speak the language, learning it should be a priority. The teachers interviewed agreed that before focusing on academic aspects, the children need to feel integrated and have a minimum level of the language, so they are able to follow the other academic subjects. They think more specialists in teaching Spanish as a foreign language and in some cases more hours dedicated to this are needed until the child has the basic skills. An effective way to teach the language in class is by talking about topics that interest all the children in the class: class projects, reading activities, and games are just a few examples. This not only helps migrant students to learn the language but also demonstrates that children of the same age have similar interests. This connection will help the migrant children feel more integrated in their school.

2. *Making students feel more involved*

An interesting activity to do with all the children at school that would especially benefit migrant children is helping other groups. They will feel more involved and integrated this

way. Examples of this are helping people in a nursing home or a centre for disabled people. By helping others, they have a purpose and feel valued. Working on integration is especially important for unaccompanied foreign minors. They need support and motivation to keep studying. In an environment where marginalisation and dropping out of school go together, transmitting self-confidence to the students is the challenge for teaching professionals. Their goal is that students grow personally in an effective environment.

3. *Considering the child's academic level, not only their age*

The school should consider the child's academic level and the last academic year that they attended in their country in order to make a decision regarding the child's class. If they need basic skills in order to reach the appropriate level, many schools have support teachers to help them.

4. *Monitoring attendance*

The first interviewed teachers mentioned that monitoring migrant students' attendance is very important to avoid school failure. This is especially important for unaccompanied foreign minors. They need support and motivation to keep studying and since they do not have a family in Spain, school is essential.

Teachers feel that the four different blocks of measures that are implemented in Spain: reception measures, attention to linguistic and cultural diversity, attention to families and teacher training, do not work effectively in every school. While these measures work to some degree, in order to help migrant children improve their academic performance, the aforementioned aspects should be taken into account and the school system, parents and teachers should work together.

Best Practices and Practical Activities for Engaging Migrant Parents

Based on the desk research that was carried out, it is evident that migrant parents face a large number of challenges when it comes to getting involved in their child's education to ensure their success. These parents may not speak the language or be familiar with the school system, which can lead to difficulties enrolling their children and helping them maintain academic success in school. Migrant parents may also face socioeconomic difficulties, meaning they are working long hours in low-skilled jobs to make ends meet. Another issue is that they might not understand why the teacher wants to talk to them, or the importance of their involvement at all in the child's academic life. It's still important to give them opportunities to come in and talk.

While collating the findings from each partner country's best practices for engaging migrant parents, it became clear that there was significant overlap in the findings. While the research and SEMs demonstrated that different countries approach and work with migrant children differently, it appears that many practices for engaging their parents were more common across the countries in question. Thus, it was decided to present these best practices as one coherent list in order to maintain transparency and simplicity of information.

Best Practice Findings

1. *Make use of any translation or interpretation support available to you*

Most of the teachers interviewed recommended making use of the school's available resources to foster communication not only to support the students, but the parents as well. This may include arranging the use of translators before starting communication with these parents rather than assuming that they speak your language. One of the teachers mentioned using different forms of communication because some parents might feel more comfortable with email than the phone, for example. Some schools have a council that provides translators for meetings when the school cannot provide one. Some of these councils provide advice for teachers on engaging migrant parents and may even provide translations of important school-related information in the most common languages in the local area. In a multicultural

community, it is also possible that members of staff, whether that be other teachers, teaching assistants, or school secretaries, will come from the same linguistic and/or cultural background as the parents in need of support.

2. *Where translation is not possible, use visuals and graded speech to communicate*

As mentioned in the previous section, sometimes this support is not always readily available, especially in low-income areas. Thus, sometimes teachers must reach out to migrant parents and attempt to communicate important information about their child themselves. Communication can sometimes be problematic, i.e. not knowing if the parents really understand what the teacher is saying, so reports that are easy to understand and include visual data helps. One teacher recommended using sentence starters for the parents to provide them the vocabulary with which to express themselves. It was also recommended to use clear, graded speech; this means speaking slowly, clearly emphasising the main points, and avoiding slang or colloquialisms. Speaking in such a manner can increase the amount of information a person without a high level of the target language is able to take in.

3. *Establish a welcoming and accepting atmosphere*

The interviewees also maintained the importance of making the parents feel welcome and that their child's education is in good hands. One suggestion is to show interest in their diverse experiences. For example, you could ask them questions about where they're from or if there is something they want you to know about their child. Really, communication is key. Speaking another language can be difficult, but showing empathy and patience is important. Supporting research suggests holding social events specifically for migrant parents and other family members such as multicultural workshops, coffee hours, sports mentoring, or promoting the school as a community centre where parents can feel welcome and find information on support options and social events (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019; Koehler et al. 2018).

4. *Be aware of cultural differences within particular communities, and share your own*

It was recommended that teachers should always be aware of cultural differences and any issues that may arise as a result. This is a learning process which can be made easier by

having a multilingual and multicultural staff who can provide cultural advice to a teacher dealing with the parents. It is also important to keep in mind that migrant parents may not know enough about the host country's culture to properly engage in their child's education; therefore it is important to not only take an interest in their background, but also offer up as much information as possible about your own.

5. *Explain expectations from the start*

It is important to be clear right from the start and explain to the parents what will be expected from their children. While this might sound intimidating, teachers and principals want the children to succeed, so they should be willing to explain everything and give their time to the students and parents beyond the scope of their duties. Otherwise, the parents could falsely assume that the new school system is similar to their old one and become confused or agitated by the new school's expectations. A lack of communication on this matter can lead to conflict down the line, so addressing expectations straight away is highly recommended.

6. *Encourage extra learning*

The language courses that should be provided to migrant children are usually not enough for them to speak fluently. The teachers suggested encouraging both the parents and the children to attend extra courses. This does not have to be another financial strain on the family; there are different nonprofit organizations that aim to help migrants by providing language classes free of cost. For migrant parents, improving their language skills will enable them to communicate more clearly with the school, which will have a positive impact on both parties and of course, on the children as well.

When coming to a new country, parents of migrant children are usually unsure of how the school system works, if they can trust that the teacher has their best interests in mind, the expected role of the parents, and other worries which can be incredibly intimidating. It is for these reasons why it is crucial for teachers and school staff to try to work with them and ease these insecurities. After all, both the school and the parents have a common goal, and that is academic success for the children.

Conclusion

Overall, the vast research carried out during the writing of this booklet has demonstrated that one major issue for migrant children can be the language barrier; thus a challenge for teachers is making the classroom more inclusive and accepting of students' languages and culture to ease transition into the classroom, making them see the value of their own contribution. It has also concluded that taking steps to bring parents and guardians into their children's education would help enormously. Parents who have be exposed to verity different educational cultures and who may find it increasingly difficult to mitigate their own beliefs to their new lives in their new country of residence, and finally teachers want and require ongoing vocational development and assessment aimed at teaching content, strategies, teaching aids to a diverse student body.

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