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Edited by
Mateja Sedmak
Fernando Hernández-Hernández
Juana M. Sancho-Gil
Barbara Gornik

Migrant Children's Integration and Education in Europe

Approaches, Methodologies and Policies

universidad

Octaedro

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Chapter 1

Child Migrants 'Integrating': What Do We Know So Far?

Shoba Arun

Gavin Bailey

Aleksandra Szymczyk

Introduction

Mobility always involves change and upheaval: in general, child migrants will experience a greater upheaval than those whose context changes little, and their choices are also more constrained than those of adults. Integration is not an either/or process, nor is it necessarily specific to any domain, but is instead a complex pathway through life. In the lives of child migrants, integration is experienced simultaneously in education, health, local community and other domains, shaped by accompanying family or lack of family, community structures, and racist and anti-migrant currents of politics and culture. This chapter[1] reconsiders the 'integration' of child migrants by outlining the barriers and the contexts in which education occurs, and, hence, what young people might want to 'integrate' into. Extending the language of 'anchoring' (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2018) to a rock-climbing analogy, the chapter conceptualises stability and change as built upon each person's 'anchors' and 'holds'. It is based on a literature review undertaken as part of the Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) project, the objective of which is to stimulate the inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children by adopting a child-centred approach to migrant children's integration. The chapter focuses on edu-

1 The chapter is published with the financial support of the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation program under grant agreement No 822664.

cational contexts, mainly schools, including the processes that connect the experiences of migrants to educational attainment, and looks at the role of integration in schools in generating positive outcomes for societal integration, while maintaining a child-centred perspective (see Uyan-Semerci and Erdoğan 2017; Lawrence, Kaplan and Collard 2018; Luangrath 2016; Malmsten 2014; Sedmak and Medarić 2017; Sedmak, Sauer and Gornik 2018).

First, the chapter outlines some of the key issues in migrant child integration literature and discusses the main questions and developments in integration research, turning to recent approaches of social anchoring. Next, we explore barriers to integration, related to racism, conflict and institutional and structural issues, followed by a discussion of school-based interventions. Further, the case of asylum seekers and unaccompanied child migrants as particularly vulnerable groups is discussed, with particular focus on addressing how policy is key to migrant child wellbeing. We address educational contexts, mainly schools, including the processes that connect the experiences of migrants to educational attainment, and look at the role that integration in schools can play in generating positive outcomes. Finally, we discuss the policy and practice that operate in the school system, involving teachers, parents and migrant children, and ask how 'integration' can be conceptualised by putting children and young people at its centre.

Methodology

The chapter is based on a desk-based literature review, borrowing from the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) method, with rigorous decisions on exclusion and inclusion of literature through a team-based approach to search, decision-making and analysis. The focus was to provide a review of child-focused integration of migrants in educational settings.

The searches were limited to papers published since 2015. The research team conducted a literature search using a set of search terms included in a Boolean statement in order to capture variations on terminology. The searches were:

- (migrant or migration or refugee) AND (child or children) AND (integration or education or learning or wellbeing or inclusion or empowerment),
- (migrant or migration or refugee) AND (child or children) AND (stigma or racism or inequality or populism or intolerance or discrimination or bias).

These searches were made in Google Scholar and Proquest databases, and in the languages of the six partners, generating a number of bibliography files. The files generated were then imported into EPPI Reviewer (https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk), an online system designed for systematic reviews and REAs. Once duplicate papers were removed, this system contained details of 3,953 reports, books and academic papers. After the team removed papers with little relevance, 962 of the papers were included for a second sift, finally leaving 419 papers that were read in greater detail for this paper.

Integration and adaptation: some key issues

In trying to conceptualise integration, it is customary to draw on Stubbs' (1996: 36) definition, whereby 'integration refers to the attempt to facilitate a sharing of resources – economic and social, an equalizing of rights – political and territorial, and the development of cultural exchanges and new cultural forms, between forced migrants and all other members of a society'. Here, the integration thesis relates more to successful psychological growth (Copelj *et al.* 2017), identity formation (Mooren, Bala and Sleijpen 2019) and psychosocial adaptation (Haenni Hoti *et al.* 2017) to integration – that is, the engagement with the new culture at the same time as maintaining the old (O'Toole Thommessen and Todd 2018). Thus, a positive ethnic identity (Ayón, Ojeda and Ruano 2018) and cultural pride become the basis for a dual cultural identity (Ragnarsdóttir and Kulbrandstand 2018) or hybrid identity (Calderón and Butler-Kisber 2019). Despite its analytical rigour, both theoretically and empirically, the term 'identity' has been regarded as both overused and fuzzy (Hall 1996) due to its subjectivity and the nature of self-identification. Parents may aim to hold on to and preserve the 'old ways' (see Bowie, Wojnar and Isaak 2017). Further, some authors (and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and, to some extent, states do see 'family cultural and language capital' (Moskal and Sime 2016) as something to be supported. On the other side of the equation, there is positive encouragement to gain some new elements of cultural identity, including language acquisition and the assumed 'values' of the new society (see Casey 2016). The concept of social anchoring (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2018) is used here as a theoretical lens through which to analyse experiences of migrant children in educational contexts by including the structural contexts/factors of the host environment and/or cultural characteristics of migrants that

both determine agency and provide psychosocial resources for providing footholds. The concept of anchoring in migration studies was developed by Grzymala-Kazlowska (2016), drawing on the metaphor employed by Bauman (1997) and Castells (1997) to describe the stabilisation of individuals and identities, both psychologically and sociologically. This allows for the incorporation of human agency, including emotional aspects of establishing footholds and, on the other hand, acknowledging inequalities and structural constraints that shape their experiences of stability and security. Despite its shortcomings as a construct, 'individual identity … seems to play a crucial role psychosocial functioning of immigrants' and is included in the theory examining the role of 'life footholds for adaptation and integration', but should be treated as 'a certain sphere of problems, rather than a well-defined concept' (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2016: 1125). 'Social anchoring' is possible in various sites (geographical, cultural, social and virtual) and migrant integration, identity and community involve a process of gaining new anchors and perhaps letting go of others (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2018). As Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) suggest, schools are the key sites for welcoming migrants and their families, helping them to develop 'footholds' through schooling and other support measures.

The concept of anchoring moves further from discussion on embeddedness. Granovetter's (1985) notion of 'embeddedness' has been influential among migration scholars, although it has been described as a vague and 'fuzzy' concept (Hess 2004). This allows for recognising the role of race relations and racism as well as incorporating migration histories. This chapter tries to advance an understanding of migrant integration that goes beyond simplistic assumptions of integration (Grzymala- Kazlowska and Phillimore 2017). Here, settlement and adaptation are better understood in terms of making life relatively stable rather than putting down roots in a particular country (see Grzymala-Kazlowska 2018). Such trajectories and experiences of developing footholds also acknowledge simultaneity (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) and multidimensionality (including social, cultural, cognitive, emotional, material, spiritual and institutional anchors) as drawn out by Grzymala-Kazlowska (2018). For the purposes of this chapter, the term 'social anchoring' is useful in the discussion on migrant integration through processes of adaptation based on the acquisition of cultural competences and acceptance of the fundamental institutions of the host country, while (often) maintaining their own ethnic identity. The next section explores some of the barriers to child integration, highlighting structural, material and ideological barriers, both individual and institutional, leading to discrimination and conflict within educational contexts.

Identifying barriers to child integration

Evidence of barriers to integration points to issues of identity, language, community, belonging, trauma and stress for all migrants but especially for lone and asylum-seeking children, and the role of discrimination, hatred and conflict. Further barriers – although not limited to migrant children – include: limited access to high-quality early childhood education and care; concentration in disadvantaged schools (Huddleston and Wolffhardt 2016; Darmody, Byrne and McGinnity 2014); low socioeconomic status (Harte, Herrera and Stepanek 2016); difficulties related to choosing a school (Condon, Hill and Bryson 2018; Trevena, McGhee and Heath 2016); parental influence (Harte, Herrera and Stepanek 2016); 'housing problems […] difficulties accessing social services […] and the parents not having steady employment' (Metu 2014: 94). These are in addition to language barriers and the bias of support to 'the majority culture and [imposition of] it as dominant in teaching' (Milenkova and Hristova 2017). Indeed, any cultural difference can also change teacher expectations (Akifyeva and Alieva 2018), such that children are treated differently. This includes differences in the recognition and regulation of emotions (Kaloyirou 2018), with teachers inadequately trained in competences related to multiculturalism therefore feeling less prepared to deal with migrant children (Aydin, Gundogdu and Akgul 2019; Koelher 2017; Castellanos 2018).

While education itself is a basic human right and, if open to diversity and based on equity principles, becomes a tool to build resilience, social cohesion and trust, migrant children can have difficulties gaining full access. They are often torn between inclusion and exclusion processes around the concept of 'otherness', discrimination and ethnic labelling (Åhlund and Jonsson 2016; Atamturk 2018; Jensen *et al*. 2012; Agirdag, Van Houtte and Van Avermaet 2012). In this review, there were few papers that solely considered the problem of addressing the possible conflict between people arriving in Western countries and host societies. Most of the literature touches on these issues indirectly, usually exploring the patterns of education or social policy in the given country. It is also shown that some, especially Western, countries deny the existence of discrimination practices due to developed equality or diversity policies – instead, discrimination is discussed as the reason and justification for integration policies. Institutional and indirect discrimination is prevalent and not caused merely by 'prejudiced individuals', and although integration and non-discrimination are often part of national narratives, they are not at their fore. A strong ideology that seeks to avoid differences and highlights common values and experiences leads to emphasis on

assimilation and the construction of national identity on racial and religious grounds, excluding those who differ. This contradiction to the officially accepted integrative and inclusive approach could be illustrated by the use of the language (often derogatory to migrants) and integration practices, where migrants are forced to participate in intercultural events to disclose their cultural heritage, also constructed around the otherness (Åhlund and Jonsson 2016; Moskal and Sime 2016).

Both accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children can face barriers to integration that are generated by individual and institutional discrimination. These include some that are not inherent in this particular group, but are barriers generated when certain attributes intersect with other factors, especially socioeconomic position. Here it is also important to note that such barriers are not removed for those who have migrant backgrounds but are born in the new place, or otherwise have citizenship: even where formal rights are supposedly in place, these do not always ensure lack of discrimination. Furthermore, this review notes that discourses of diversity management and multiculturalism (especially where a non-racist or anti-racist policy is part of a country's or organisation's self-image) can lead to the hiding of continuing institutional racism.

As a consequence, underachievement, poor school performance or dropout among migrant or minority children is connected to three main issues: the socioeconomic status of the family, interschool relations and the structure and ideology of the educational system. All those factors mediate the conflict that may arise between peers and students and teachers or, more generally, the local community. In particular, the experience of ethnic discrimination has detrimental consequences in these dimensions, affecting the child's self-esteem, psychological resilience, depressive symptoms or feelings of futility (van Dijk *et al.* 2011; Agirdag *et al.* 2012; D'hondt *et al.* 2016). Furthermore, other inequalities that correlate with ethnicity can create unequal outcomes. The socioeconomic status of migrant children is often categorised as one of the major sources of underprivilege and discrimination. Poor children are frequently excluded and marginalised, restricted from participating in activities and deprived of fundamental economic, social, cultural and political rights (Forbes and Sime 2016; Medarić and Žakelj 2014). These affect mainly minorities with a long-term history of social exclusion, such as the Roma (Sime, Fasseta and McClung 2018; Vrăbiescu 2016) and asylum seekers and refugees (Tösten, Toprak and Kayan 2017).

More often cited in the literature, and demonstrating the need for integration policy, is the prejudice and discrimination that comes from individuals. Thus, such work considers individual case studies on personal

relations and experiences in a peer-to-peer context (Fangen and Lynnebakke 2014). In this review of literature, we found, however, few papers that directly refer to the problem of interethnic violence and discrimination. It is generally agreed that physical forms of violence are rather rare, although more subtle forms of aggression such as verbal harassment, bullying and rudeness are widespread and common in the school environment. It is also agreed that the attitude of pupils towards their migrant peers is driven by the wider societal context and prevailing media discourse (Medarić and Žakelj 2014; Zavratnik *et al.* 2008). Furthermore, the toleration of violence seems to increase when it becomes acceptable to ignore or dislike those who differ from the norm (Allport 1954; Nussbaum 2012; Young 1990; Žižek 2008). Finally, it was observed that across many immigrant groups, bullying and peer aggression were consistently significantly higher for first-generation immigrant adolescents who did not speak the official language, compared with third-generation and native-born adolescents. This suggests that risks related to violence are greater when an immigrant adolescent speaks a language other than the primary language of the host country (Pottie *et al.* 2015), and the experience of racism is therefore uneven. Further, visible difference in skin colour means that such issues extend to those who are not migrants but have some form of migrant background (Åhlund and Jonsson 2016).

School-based solutions to integration

Solutions proposed in the literature start with support for school attendance from the youngest possible age. Lunga *et al.* (2018) propose a set of policy recommendations for G20 countries related to migrant children's access to school. Jager (2016: 157) claims that '[t]he key is awareness and the commitment to include all children in the preschool education programs […] [in order to] guarantee the right to quality education for all children and that we behave as responsible citizens towards the most vulnerable'.

For linguistic difficulties, Iliescu (2017: 293) proposes that schools take a 'translanguaging' approach, which 'might help teachers find pedagogical tools to maintain and develop these students' linguistic and cultural experience and make them regard it as an asset rather than a hindrance'. Janta and Harte (2016) consider it important to ensure that migrant students learn the language of instruction and maintain a relationship with their mother tongue, as this could be useful to build relationships between educators and parents. Further, Wofford and Tibi

(2018) suggest including not only children but also families in school language learning programmes.

Jensen *et al.* (2012) focus on the importance of not treating bilingual students differently from other students, so that being different does not become a problem *per se*, while Evans and Liu (2018) propose that the education system as a whole should include all languages, as they play a key role in children's development. In addition to this, the Commission of the European Communities (2008) considers that, as far as possible, teachers should speak the immigrants' mother tongue.

Regarding teachers' multicultural skills, Vižintin (2016), and Suárez-Orozco (2017) propose the implementation of intercultural competences to teach social diversity, although Vižintin (2016) considers this to be difficult because students need time to adapt and teachers need continuous training in the field of intercultural education. Wellman and Bey (2015) propose art teaching-training programmes as they enhance sensitivities and foster community by navigating through difference. Atabong and Alemanji (2016) argue that it is important to build and offer anti-racism programmes in and out of schools. Bajaj, Argenal and Canlas (2017) also propose the construction of a pedagogical curriculum oriented to a critical conscience in human rights and inequalities; the creation of the means of reciprocal learning between families or communities and schools; and attention to the material conditions of students' and families' lives.

Quezada, Rodriguez-Valls and Lindsey (2016) propose a resilience curriculum that equips migrant children with the skills needed to overcome challenges, focusing on their strengths rather than disadvantages. Cowie, Myers and Rashid (2017), Thijs and Verkuyten (2014) and Arvola, Lastikka and Reunamo (2017) all claim that peer-support programmes between children and young people are a key tool in facing xenophobia and other forms of exclusion at schools.

Thomas (2017), Fruja Amthor (2017) and Thijs and Verkuyten (2014) highlight the need to introduce migrant children's symbolic cultural artefacts in school. Meanwhile, according to Crawford's study, music education programmes have a positive impact on refugee students – specifically, 'fostering a sense of well-being, social inclusion (a sense of belonging), and an enhanced engagement with learning' (Crawford 2017: 353). Leurs *et al.* (2018) state that media literacy education contributes to strengthening participation and resilience. Miller, Ziaian and Esterman (2018: 350) ask for specific funding for 'the ways in which schools can support their students, such as funding for support staff or to implement particular programmes'. Ahad and Benton (2018) mention five policy priorities: (1) ensuring that professionals are equipped for

diversity, (2) addressing students' diverse needs across the entire education trajectory, (3) unlocking the broader role of schools as integration actors, (4) building governance structures that can withstand crisis, (5) designing content and pedagogy for 21st-century challenges. Medarić and Žakelj (2014) add the need to have policies and legislation to deal with violence.

Responding to discrimination/barriers: Multi-level interventions

The literature also, on occasion, refers to ways in which any conflict is responded to. This includes those responses that come without prompting, those that are being promoted through training or other intervention, and also those focusing on migrant children themselves and those addressing teachers, other children or any others.

First, it is noted that new arrivals, when negotiating their multicultural identity, try to avoid being positioned as victims or as vulnerable or exposed to cultural clashes and contradictions. Much like other migrants, the students can be seen to contest and renegotiate the ways they are categorised and labelled by the majority culture (Åhlund and Jonsson 2016), and this may not always be positive. Some of the literature shows how migrant children adapt to the new situation, what psychological mechanism they are using or what kind of behaviour they engage in, including violence in order to negotiate their statuses (Åhlund and Jonsson 2016; Jensen *et al.* 2012; Fangen and Lynnebakke 2014). Most of the studies demonstrate that education in diversity and tolerance and real experience of 'otherness' lower levels of prejudice, open children to critical thinking and sensitise them with higher levels of empathy (Triliva, Anagnostopoulou and Vleioras 2014; Kralj, Žakelj and Rameša 2013). The literature also notes interventions focused on migrant children and their peers. They explore also the problem of tools and strategies of sensitising children to issues related to diversity, social justice and anti-racism – for example, in Northern Ireland (Connolly *et al.* 2006).

A second set of responses are those focused on the broader educational environment, teachers and other staff. This includes structural development, social involvement and empowerment, but also teachers' competences and skills (Forbes and Sime 2016; Edling and Francia 2017). Emphasis is given to those strategies that counter teachers' tendency to lower expectations of migrant students and to perceive them through stereotypes (Peterson *et al.* 2016; Glock, Krolak-Schwerdt and Pit-ten Cate 2015). Furthermore, it is generally accepted that an intercultural curriculum, teaching diversity and tolerance, and understanding the

'other' are important factors in conflict resolution, respect for migrant communities and their further inclusion in the host societies (Atamturk 2018; Margiotta 2018). Here we focus on the case of asylum seekers and unaccompanied child migrants as particularly vulnerable groups within the wider group of child migrants.

Asylum-seeking and other unaccompanied child migrants

Some child migrants, however, are not embedded in migrant community structures and do not have access to either formal or non-formal education. Asylum-seeking and other unaccompanied children do not have immediate recourse to those organisations their family connect to, although they may do so independently. They may also be housed by the state, fostered or otherwise have transitional arrangements that lack the stability that enables long-term integration. Sedmak and Medarić (2017) and Sedmak *et al.* (2018) investigated unaccompanied children's subjective views with regard to their perceptions of daily life and their wellbeing, concluding that the best interests of the child (UNCRC) are not achieved due to unclear national politics regarding unaccompanied minors.

Legal protection and ground-level practices

While unaccompanied migrant children do have legal rights courtesy of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, these are not always fully realised in practice (Luangrath 2016). Where such children are undocumented, individuals may be fearful of engaging with the educational system, or the system may refuse to engage with them. Even where paperwork is in order, there may be limited access to education for refugee children and minors (Uyan-Semerci and Erdoğan 2018) or failure to provide resources that should be available. Further, unaccompanied children do not have the support of parents to assert their rights, but are reliant on support organisations where they exist, including NGOs providing support for refugee children in the educational system (Hanna 2014). As noted by Karlsson (2019), '[i]mplementation of […] rights is often conditional, because children have an uncertain citizenship status'.

Indeed, a key component of this experience is the early transitional period, which may involve forms of detention, asylum centres (Karlsson 2019) or transitional houses (Malmsten 2014) as 'home'. 'Research on asylum-seeking children's experiences of the reception period has shown

that they live in housing conditions that do not meet their needs and are inconsistent with their rights' (Karlsson 2019). Evidence from the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) notes that such social isolation affects access to other basic rights such as education, which is hampered by long waiting periods, language barriers, residing in remote locations, lack of information on educational opportunities, bureaucracy, limited financial support for asylum applicants, and racism. Some of these are discussed below.

Trauma, mental health and responses

Asylum-seeking and other unaccompanied children are more likely than other child migrants to have experienced extreme situations such as unsafe journeys, war and other conflicts. Thus, they often have higher rates of mental health disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety (Hall and Olff 2016). Important in this process is the first assessment of the needs of young refugees arriving in Europe (Hebebrand *et al.* 2016), and then the identification of psychosocial needs of refugee children in the domains of social support, security, culture and education (Nakeyar, Esses and Reid 2018). However, where those first few weeks involve detention, there are further effects on the wellbeing of refugee children and minors (Zwi *et al.* 2018).

Thus, many responses to such experiences use art or narrative approaches to give voice to and to then push back against more negative perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers. Such work includes art, literature, music and theatre in the integration of refugee children (Balfour *et al.* 2015; Crawford 2017), and responses to stereotyping representations of refugee children through media literacy and production (Leurs *et al.* 2018). Other activities include participation in musical play for the wellbeing of bicultural children, refugee and migrant children, and digital storytelling as a means to give voice to the excluded (Moutafidou and Bratitsis 2018). Further, this work can also be used as part of the response to trauma, with narrative therapy, expressive arts therapy and mindfulness strategies as preventative interventions to help refugee children in a trauma-informed and culturally and developmentally sensitive way (Lundberg 2016).

Most obviously, community groups (including religious and other cultural associations) and family provide immediate sources of identity formation or social anchoring, and allow for more successful integration into wider society, but this discussion is outside the scope of the present chapter.

Conclusions

The chapter started with discussions of identity, culture, community and belonging that are found in the sociological and psychological literature on migrant identity and integration, emphasising the need to avoid the simplifications of 'ethnicities' and 'cultures', and suggesting other approaches – particularly ideas of 'anchoring' and a bottom-up approach – that may be fruitful. We focus on this as there are many gaps in a child-centred approach to migration in educational settings. The concept of anchoring is a relatively new integrative concept, embracing aspects of identity, stability/instability and integration, all of which are relevant when discussing migrant adaptation in host environments, and are particularly relevant to younger groups of migrants. Such a concept encourages novel ways of understanding processes of how migrant communities, through education, become established in local contexts while simultaneously fostering belonging and attachment. Social anchoring, as seen in this chapter, focuses on the sociocultural dimensions of human agency, and is useful for the psychosocial functioning for children within schools, for establishing 'life footholds' for adaptation and integration, and navigating through structural inequalities and constraints that shape their experiences of stability and security.

The chapter highlights key barriers to integration. The first, which most obviously distinguishes the migrant child from other children, is the institutional and interpersonal discrimination and prejudice that occurs as a form of racism. The chapter includes some discussion of research that examines existing approaches to tackling this. The second addresses health and mental health, under the rubric of *wellbeing*, noting that wellbeing and integration can be interrelated. For example, education and school policies need to prepare young refugee migrants with problem-solving and by fostering intercultural understanding (Wiseman and O'Gorman 2017; Campos-Saborío *et al.* 2018).

Within schools and the educational context, Harte *et al.* (2016) discuss the impact of socioeconomic dispossession and biases in the curriculum, while Nakeyar *et al.* (2018) consider that school and health care should also focus on immigrant youth as facing the same challenges with independence and liberation as other young people. Adopting a children's rights perspective, Cox and McDonald (2020) analyse and critique the UK Government's 'Green Paper' on young people's mental health provision, arguing that the overarching challenge is that the paper is premised on Western-centric models in its understanding of the experiences of refugee children and young people, and fails to recognise the significance of culture and diversity. Thus, policies require the construc-

tion of a welcoming atmosphere, effective leadership, holistic programming, evaluation programmes with an explicit inclusion process, and child-centred learning supported by political and cultural leadership.

Finally, the chapter identifies the specific context of schools and education. While schools themselves might be the source of barriers to migrant success, the literature here argues for the importance of education in the integration of migrant children (McBrien 2005), in a very holistic way. As Asadi (2015: 199) suggests, it is hard to promote long-term positive integration without a policy based on a 'holistic approach to their educational journey, with particular attention to the areas of learning and the social and emotional needs of the students'. Some studies also acknowledge the need to look beyond schools for a better integration process. For example, Dovigo (2018: 48) talks about 'a shift from a school-centred view to a network-based perspective focused on active cooperation between services and communities' that can strengthen the footholds emphasised in a social anchoring framework. It is argued that education enables 'the possibility of breaking out of cycles of chronic poverty' (Nicolai, Wales and Aiazzi 2017: 3) and 'holds the potential to minimize the likelihood of marginalization, neglect and ghettoization of newcomers, by providing social connections and aiding in community development' (Nofal 2017: 8). It therefore provides migrant children 'the opportunity […] to live in a relatively safe and harmonious land' (Nordgren 2017: 86), contributing 'to children's well-being and sound, healthy development' (Naidoo 2016: 5).

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Migrant Children's Integration and Education in Europe

Approaches, Methodologies and Policies

The process of the reception of migrant children and young people in European societies positions the education system as one of the most important and powerful resources to foster their participation and inclusion in the host societies. This process is multidimensional, involving different actors (migrant children and young people and their families, schools, teachers and peers, members of the local community, etc.) and works in different ways on a scale ranging from unidirectional assimilation to bidirectional integration and inclusion. When discussing the integration of migrant children and young people, one must take into account that they do not form a homogeneous social group. Rather, they are diversified in terms of past experiences, present situations and future aspirations. They differ in terms of their legal status, as this group includes economic migrants, refugee children, asylum seekers and undocumented and irregular migrants. On top of that, they have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, belong to different ethnic groups, and differ in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic status, cultural and social capital and so on. The heterogeneity of migrant children as a social group implies that their social integration must be understood as an intersectional phenomenon.

The chapters of *Migrant Children's Integration and Education in Europe: Approaches, Methodologies and Policies* pay attention to how we address issues related to the integration and inclusion of migrant children and young people, how we research the problems, what epistemological paths we follow, what methodological approaches we use and, consequently, how research findings are reflected in policies enacted at national and EU level and how they can contribute to improving the everyday life in schools.

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