On the Visibility and Agency of Migrant Children in the Contemporary World. Educational Issues and Challenges

KRYSTYNA SLANY[1]
ORCID: 0000-0002-1339-3689
Jagiellonian University in Kraków

MAGDALENA ŚLUSARCZYK
ORCID: 0000-0003-4415-5947
Jagiellonian University in Kraków

JUSTYNA STRUZIK
ORCID: 0000-0003-3381-6180
Jagiellonian University in Kraków

MARTA WARAT
ORCID: 0000-0001-9294-310X
Jagiellonian University in Kraków

The presented article focuses on two main objectives. On the one hand, it presents the complex and multifaceted issues of migrant children's education from a theoretical perspective, which have a significant impact on the course of their integration process, their quality of life and their chances of a better future in the country of migration. We draw attention to the importance of migrant children from the perspective of a child-centred approach, which emphasises children's agency and subjectivity, the importance of their voice, their experiences, as well as the mission of the school and the roles of the professionals (teachers, cultural mediators, social workers) working with them and influencing their integration success. We show the school as a space that is not only institutional, formal and oriented towards intercultural education, but also a relational space in which informal processes take place to shape the future of children, dependent on significant others but also on the educational system. On the other hand we refer mainly to the contribution of the research project *Children Hybrid Identity (CHILD-UP)* to formulate theoretical explanations about the visibility of migrant children, their agency in school, and to uncover empirical findings about their achievements,

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[1] Contact: krystyna.slany@uj.edu.pl

barriers, challenges. Although these are in various locations, in different schools and educational programmes, they nevertheless bring about changes in the structure of a class and the occurrence of important processes due to their ethnic and national, cultural, religious, and language context.

Key words: migrant children, education, school, agency, professionals

Introduction

With this special issue of *Migration Studies – Review of Polish Diaspora,* our readers will become acquainted with a number of topics concerning migration and the adaptation processes of migrant children in old and new European countries of migration. The special issue is inspired by a research project called Children Hybrid Integration: Learning Dialogue as a way of Upgrading policies of Participation (CHILD UP) EU (2019–2022)[2]. Besides a few members of the project's team from such countries as Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, papers on education of migrant children in the context of various legal, institutional, living experiences, educational policies, and grassroots activities have been written for the issue by invited Polish researchers. Each of the papers is therefore embedded in the reality of a specific country in which research was conducted. Although these are different localizations, different schools, and different educational programmes, they nevertheless bring about changes in the structure of a class and the occurrence of important processes related to their ethnic and national, cultural, religious, and language context.

This chapter is an introduction to the field of research on the migrations of children and their educational dimension. In the first part, we analyse a change in the approach to children under migration research and also the reasons and forms this paradigm shift. Subsequently, we present key areas within an educational dimension of research into children with migrant backgrounds and an approach based on agency and participation, addressing pupils' holistic needs and supporting teachers in adopting a whole-child approach that characterises the articles selected for this special issue. Finally, the last part of the paper is an introduction to the entire volume and a brief summary of the individual texts.

1. Visibility of Children in Migration and a Paradigm Shift in Research

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been referred to as the century of child migration. According to the data provided by Migration Data Portal, 12% of the total international migrant stock were child migrants below 18 years of age, while the

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young ones, aged 15 to 24, accounted for 11%. In Europe, these figures stood at 7% and 10%, respectively.[3] Absolute figures and a proportional share of children in migration streams are obviously differentiated depending on the region. According to the data by UN DESA, the largest percentage is accounted for by Africa; however, the last thirty years (1990–2020) have seen a slight, but steady increase of the figure also in the case of Europe, which only strengthens our conviction about the necessity of conducting research in this area.

Whilst decades of previous research into migration has evidently been dominated by an adult centric approach, recent years have seen a clear shortage of research focused on the involvement, role, and experiences of children and youth in migration. The statistical data on migration of children and youth under 18 years of age are also very scarce and incomplete. Sources of information on migration, however, provide alarming data on the percentage of children in migration, especially relating to refugee children, those seeking asylum or migrating without their families. Not only is this evidenced by statistics showing the percentage of children in migration streams, but also by in-depth quantitative and qualitative studies presenting the types of migrations and the multi-dimensionality of their consequences in children's life. Although children have always participated in migrations, a new chapter of the process was brought about by a great migration crisis (2015–2016), which made researchers, practitioners, and international organisations, such as for example, UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, particularly sensitive about complex issues relating not only to refugeeism of children and youth, but their broader role in society (*Children Youth* 2005, *Children in Migration* 2016). As never before, we have become aware of the matters and issues concerning not only migrant movements as such, but also conditions for migrant processes in a country of inflow, threats, chances, and challenges faced by children themselves and their parents and also by political and social institutions responsible at various levels of structures of the social world for children's well-being, quality of their lives, safety and security, health and opportunities for a better tomorrow and education. Therefore, the issue of migrant children occurs in both an analysis of economic matters, especially in relation to the need for migrants to work, of legal regulations, and the length of stay, and also in social issues, such as the reunion of families or their upbringing in the country of immigration. Especially important are also humanitarian issues and challenges related to refugeeism. There are three categories of children entangled in migrations that are usually subject to separate research analysis: children of migrants, but also children born after leaving; children left-behind by both or one of their parents, most

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[3] According to the UNHCR, between January and June 2020, 6,177 children arrived in Greece, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta. Of these, 2,302 (37%) were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC). Child arrivals in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain in the first half of 2020 decreased by 32% compared to the first half of 2019 (8,236). Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Overview of Trends January to June 2020UNHCR-UNICEF-IOM%20Factsheet%20on%20refugee% 20and%20migrant% 20children%20Jan-June%202020.pdf.

often because their work outside the homeland; migrant children and child refugees requiring international protection.

In general, the tremendous mobility of children, which makes them experience transnational childhoods, requires the application of a specific so-called child-centred approach (Ni Laoire et al. 2011). Such a requirement stems from the assumptions of the so-called new sociology of childhood (1970s) in which the child is discovered as an agent, a reflecting actor, who may tell a lot about their experiences, occurrences, connections of transnational migrations with their childhood. Perceiving children as passive actors has primarily been driven by the fact that they were mostly viewed as victims of conflicts and violence produced by wars and migration of their parent/s, who have been the key decision-makers about migration movement, its nature and course. That "paradigm shift" is manifested in the application of different qualitative or participatory methods that allow children to be given a voice (Christensen, Prout 2012: 42; Hogan 2012; Smith 2011, Scott 2004) and designing research "with children", and not only "on children". Children are not seen as "migration baggage" (Orellana 2001), but as active actors influencing numerous spheres of the family life (Scott 2004: 122). They are perceived as rightly-entitled individuals, who act and have an impact on the lives of others, on what happens around them, and who take decisions in specific broader social conditions, respond to what life brings about, naturally as measured by their own means and possibilities.

The results of the conducted research reveal both positive and negative consequences of migration for children (Baraldi in this volume). It is most frequently emphasised that migration is a strategy aimed at improving the economic situation of the family, increasing chances for educating children, accessing better health care, and thus improving the quality of their lives (Baraldi in this volume; Ensor 2010). Negative consequences of migration are also described, including migration trauma, adverse consequences for mental health (Franco 2018; Nurius et al. 2015; Margari et al. 2013; Chan et al. 2009), difficulties in adapting to a new environment (Roth et al. 2020), axionormative differences between the country of inflow and outflow, low language competences, problems at school, and the lack of educational motivation (Stevens et al. 2003). As concerns the migration of children with their parents, emphasis is placed on difficult experiences related to a cultural shock, discrimination at school and in a peer environment, language barriers, occasionally problems related to the legality of their stay, problems concerning group/ethnic/national identity. Children and youth who migrate on their own (especially those from developing countries) are exposed to the risk of violence, becoming victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse, and free labour force (Ensor, Goździak 2010; O'Connell Davidson 2011). Susceptibility to harm is particularly large in the case of non-documented migrations. Global organisations, such as UNHCR, UNICEF[4], or international or supranational ones like the European

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[4] Access to education or refugee and migrant children in Europe https://www.unhcr.org/neu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/09/Access-to-education-europe-19.pdf [Accessed: 5.11.2020].

Commission[5] focus on the protection of children's rights and fighting any forms of their discrimination and abuse (Bhabha 2009). In their documents it is stressed that children are entitled to fundamental rights and to having their opinions and experiences considered, which, in turn, contributes to the improvement of their situation and articulation of their interests. It is proposed that an evidence-based policy considered an intersectional approach (among others, age, gender, race, ethnic group, and class) stressing the importance of a difference and diversity to eliminate adverse consequences of migration and to empower children of migrants (*Children Youth and Migration UNICEF* 2005). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that considerations relating to children and youth require the inclusion of social development, and the results on migration from globally peripheral, excluded, and extremely precarious regions (e.g. Parreñas 2008; Pratt 2013) may not be directly applied to the context of intra-European migrations.

On one hand, the migrations of children demonstratively reflect and thus document the impact of economic inequalities, political conflicts, wars, persecutions on their lives and, on the other, the importance and enormous potential of great emotional, intellectual, and organisational work related to the course of adaptation and integration in the educational dimension, among others.

2. Migrant Children in the Education Context

Venturing into a school area we are interested in issues concerning children education in institutional and non-institutional aspects, namely, the course of important educational processes in a school and non-school environment, or in experiences of multiculturality presented from a point of view of both professionals working with children (teachers, mediators, social workers) and the children themselves. We believe the school doors are a metaphor of integration into a receiving society and of questions about one's own identity, confrontation of mutual expectations of a receiving state and migrants (Adams, Kirova 2007; Adams, Shambleau 2006; D'Angelo, Ryan 2011; Reynolds 2008). It may also be a place where a family is faced with language,

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[5] European Parliament, (2016), Resolution on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values (2015/2139(INI)), http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0005_EN.html. European Parliament; Resolution on the protection of children in migration (2018/2666(RSP) http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0201_EN.html?redirect. [Accessed: 25.10.2020].

Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching ST/9010/2018/INIT, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29 [Accessed: 20.10.2020].

European Commission (2013), Study on education support to newly arrived migrant children. Policy framework for the education of migrant children Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da5ec9fe-c1e0-4fbda810-f5ee-4a14942e/language-en/format-PDF/source-search [Accessed: 11.11.2019].

social, and cultural barriers or with an opportunity of deeper integration (D'Angelo, Ryan 2011). Besides its fundamental tasks of transmitting knowledge and skills, the school fulfils a triple function for migrants: 1) it is a decision turning point, since often the moment of entering a school system is tantamount to a decision to settle down in a receiving state (Praszałowicz et al. 2013; White 2017), 2) it brings about a requirement of becoming confronted with a culture of a receiving society, with social values and expectations, 3) and, finally, as a further consequence, it confronts migrants with the need to consider the national identity of their children (D'Angelo, Ryan 2011; Praszałowicz 2010; Praszałowicz et al. 2013). These processes operate on a few levels. The first of them may be termed as systemic, or referring to the assumptions of a migration and integration policy and the available solutions concerning the support for migrant children. The general solutions of an educational policy are also of importance here. The adoption of rules of egalitarianism and inclusiveness in the education system structure denotes the fact that the emphasis is placed at least partially on avoiding the traps of institutional discrimination.[6] Such discrimination can be found in legal regulations (even when they formally guarantee equal opportunities) and individualised aspects which are much easier to identify. Moreover, one of the essential problems is the fact that it may occur despite the will of social actors (Kristen 2006), and even as an unpredictable side effect of actions that are aimed at the improvement of the situation of students with special education needs, including those with a migrant background (Gomolla 2010; Gomolla, Radtke 2002); analysing a situation of migrant children in education systems, they refer to a direct and indirect dimension of institutional discrimination. The first type occurs when we predict problems of students exclusively on the basis of their country of origin, and their explanations are only sought on their and their families' part. It may be a presumption relating to language difficulties, or the lack of parents' support (Gomolla 2010), or social difficulties. Furthermore, research shows that depending on the national/ethnic group, the risk of the occurrence of discriminatory behaviour of that type may be higher or lower, it may also change with the arrival of children from an ethnic group defined as being more problematic (cf. Margari et al. 2013; Stevens et al. 2003; Wærdahl 2016). The second type is indirect discrimination resulting from institutional dependency: excessive regulations, limited flexibility, or a low level of autonomy at work and individualisation. Consequently, in certain cases the same instruments may be helpful and provide support to students with a migration background, while in others they may become tools of discrimination. By way of an example, these might include: a tendency to build homogeneous groups (and, otherwise, grouping "different" students, for example, within one school form), a pos-

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[6] The term itself derives from "institutional racism" coined by Carmichael and Hamilton in the 1960s in the US in relation to the so-called *Black Movement*. The term refers to a situation where regulations, criteria, or behaviour of persons in an institution are seemingly neutral, while actually favouring racist-based actions (Carmichael, Hamilton 1967).

sibility of delaying the start of school education, sending children to special needs schools or temporarily lowering requirements for a student (Szybura 2016). Although those are favourable actions that are positively perceived, they may nonetheless foster discrimination if they are subsequently considered when determining their further educational path (Gomolla 2010). For example, preparatory classes/lessons have also been found to hinder integration by separating migrant students from their native-born peers or migrant students' educational progress may be delayed, if too strong a focus is placed on the acquisition of the language of instruction, to a degree that students' learning in other curriculum subjects is arrested (Nilsson, Bunar, 2016). Indirect discrimination also involves inconsiderate equal treatment, irrespective of specific conditions at the outset. In such situations, the selection, actually done according to social criteria, is presented (and legitimised by the state authority as a school operator) as a merit-based one. This means that such failure is personalised and an individual must accept themselves being considered to be a loser (Ślusarczyk 2019). In addition, there is so-called statistical discrimination, or the assessment of individuals based on issues recorded for a given ethnic group as a whole (Kristen 2006). School challenges are here transferred onto migrants themselves by adopting an inheritance hypothesis (Kalter 2005), or the concept of the lack of proper cultural capital (Devine 2011, 2013).

The second level is the space at school or in the classroom, therefore involving specific solutions offered by schools for children from migration backgrounds (or for all the students, too), but also the engagement of parents and the dynamics of the functioning of classroom peer groups and solutions, applied for example to ensure actions in favour of inclusiveness, avoiding discrimination, or emphasising values of different cultures (Senge 2000, in: Carrington and Robinson 2006), thus warning, however, against the phenomenon of so-called apparent change. It has been noted that we often encounter a dissonance between the declaration of inclusiveness assumptions by teachers and the actual pursuit of their traditional, deeply rooted personal beliefs, values, and attitudes expressed in interactions with students which are non-compliant with the ideas of inclusiveness. A similar problem has also been pointed out by Krzychała and Zamorska (2015), who termed it closed changes of the school culture. It consists in the transformations of the functioning of a school, which from the position of an external observer and the viewpoint of the persons involved, significantly change the ways in which the teacher's educating and upbringing work has been organised while only slightly affecting the most essential dimensions of the school culture. Such changes are enclosed in already rooted pragmatic patterns of behaviour and orientation of a specific school community (Krzychała, Zamorska 2015: 58) again shifting the responsibility for problematic situations onto individuals. Reflecting on the values and beliefs preferred in a given school is the basis for developing an inclusive culture. Considering the issue from the perspective of social constructivism, it must be admitted that in their actions

relating to inclusive education teachers are guided by their already developed system of values and beliefs. The system functions in a broader social and cultural context of a school and within a local community. To foster an inclusive culture, the development of the school's ethos and culture must thus be considered as an important goal of reformation efforts, while taking into account the existing values and beliefs (Zollers et al. 1999).

The third level may be called the family one, since it concerns the impact that a school may have on migrant families and actions pursued by migrant families in relation to the expectations and requirements of a school. This also applies to both the transmission and any negotiations of norms and values, and also to the pursuit of actions of importance for integration in a local community. Thus, the area also includes, but is not limited to, parental decisions, the social capital of migrants (Erel 2012; Putnam 2000) and a structure of inequalities relating to the class, gender, race, and nationality (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; McGhee et al. 2012; Pessar, Mahler 2003). Erel (2012) emphasises the gender dimension here, since in her opinion it is women/ mothers who are perceived as capital brokers providing their children with cultural and social capital, acting to increase their life opportunities and social mobility.

Finally, we obtain such an arrangement of many differentiated factors that encompass the general assumptions of a specific state's migration policy through system design and the local environment towards families of students and their cultural capital (Devine 2011, 2013; Erel 2010; Slany, Ślusarczyk, Pustułka 2016; Ślusarczyk 2019; Ślusarczyk, Nikielska-Sekuła 2014, Ślusarczyk, Pustułka 2016). Schools are a major place of socialisation and acculturation, the place of a deep relation with a culture of the receiving community and an area where the key discourses between norms and values occur. Children with migration backgrounds starting their school education thus find themselves at the point of overlapping interests of various institutions, and their situation is an outcome of the pressure exerted by the receiving society, the integration policy, their family situation and ultimately, their personal choices made during subsequent years of education.

In this volume we primarily focus on the level that has been defined here as the second one, relating to schools and classrooms as social spaces, but in the contexts of conditions for the two remaining areas. We have adopted an assumption of the key role of education in integrating children, building relations among them, providing them with knowledge (especially language competences), and discovering their identity by assuming the recognition of their right to present agency. Recognition of the importance of agency allows the discovery of its various forms, both present in individual schools and among countries. Such an approach also allows us to focus on formal and informal actions pursued by children, their participation in the life of a school, activities among their peers and in families (Baraldi 2015, 2018; Baraldi, Iervese 2014). Being the basis for a significant majority of the papers in the volume, the CHILD-UP project actually focused on recognising:

children's agency as children's active participation enhanced through the availability of choices of action, which subsequently enhance alternative actions, and therefore change in the interaction. Migrant children's agency may be analysed in terms of various dimensions and within socio-cultural contexts, institutional and legal considerations, traditions of countries concerning reception of different category migrants, and in terms of experiences relating to the integration of migrants, including children and adjusting of the educational system (Baraldi 2014:68).

Thus, agency is conducive to integration and well-integrated students have greater chances of educational success and the development of their potential. It is particularly important in the case of students with a migration background, who face a number of challenges in this respect that can affect their learning and development. Such challenges may be divided into three categories:

– those related to the migration process (e.g. leaving the home country, having to acquire a new language, adapting to new rules and routines in schools, etc., and the impact of these acculturation stressors on migrant students' overall well-being) (Hamilton 2013);
– those related to the general socio-economic and political context (e.g. social policies and concepts of inclusion) (Sinkkonen, Kyttälä 2014);
– those related to students' everyday functioning (e.g. obtaining educational, social, and emotional support or its lack, mono- or intercultural education, Reakes 2007; Hamilton 2013; Nilsson, Axelsson, 2013; Trasberg, Kond, 2017).

Migrant students often lag behind their native-born peers in most European education systems. It is therefore no surprise that overall migrant students underperform and express a lower sense of well-being in school compared to native-born students in most European countries. As reported in the OECD's PISA survey of 2015, the proportion of low-achieving migrant students exceeds that of native-born students in most participating European countries, even when socioeconomic status is controlled for (OECD 2016). Similarly, according to the latest Eurostat data, the rate of foreign-born students leaving education and training early is higher than the rate of the native-born population in almost all European countries for which data is available and primary school students who do not speak the language of instruction at home report a lower sense of belonging and experience more bullying at school (Eurydice 2018).

What can be done? Obviously, proper legal regulations and material resources are of importance, nonetheless the key is the already mentioned school culture. Schools that promote a holistic approach to children, considering all of their needs, including their needs of expressing agency and being responsible for themselves, but also focusing on the needs of other school actors, or ones where the needs of all stakeholders are considered and satisfied, will have greater chances of becoming successful in integrating students with a migrant background (Hamilton 2013). To attain that it is necessary to meticulously plan and pursue actions that are focused

not only on supporting migrant children themselves, but on building coherent classroom groups and training teachers. In other words, in order for changes to be effective and permanent, they must be comprehensive and systemic (Slade, Griffith 2013), and a whole-school approach stands a chance of not only supporting integration of migrant children, but also of creating a school as a space for the development of everyone (e.g. Weare 2003; Cefai et al. 2014; Hunt et al. 2015). Schools are also often supported in those tasks by non-governmental organisations, as it is sometimes necessary when countries do not guarantee the provision of sufficient support. Adoption of the presented concept shows which activities should be enhanced, developed, and followed in order to improve the quality of life of migrant children, and what needs to be corrected in order for them to feel important when expressing their opinions.

3. Structure of the Volume

The special issue therefore explores a search for the educational potential of migrant children, their agency and its enhancement in education. The merits of the presented studies not only include cognitive values showing different national contexts of the discussed issues, the specific nature of school systems, educational policies, inequalities of educational opportunities, but also practical values showing the work done by professionals in the area: teachers, intercultural assistants, social workers, and activists from NGOs, together with the challenges they face and the strategies they employ. The volume contains the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted by the project's partners together with a presentation of Polish issues concerning the education of migrant children, on the other. Some of the papers also discuss the educational challenges that have appeared during the COVID 19 pandemic, problems which all school actors have struggled, and the solutions undertaken. In more details, the topics of the special issue focus on:

– perspectives, involvement and experience of professionals and experts (teachers, mediators, social workers) concerning the integration of migrant children in school.
– migrant children at school, their relationships with peers, teachers, parents/ family members and guardians, other professionals working in/with the school; children's agency and subjectivity in the school environment; children's experiences of integration and integration measures/programmes);
– the impact of (social, educational) policies on experiences of migrant children in the school environment;
– the diversity of integration measures at local, national, and transnational levels in the education systems; the evaluation of educational policies supporting school integration; the role of NGOs and other social organisations in promoting the integration of migrant children in school.

The collected papers have been divided into two parts: the first group are in the section entitled *Building the Framework – Theoretical and Empirical Results on Migrant Children Educational Issues* while the second is *Acting Within and Without Schools – Migrant Children Educational Practice*.

The issue starts with a paper by Claudio Baraldi entitled *Studying Hybrid Identities in Schools: Notes on a European Project* in which, using the above-mentioned example of the Child-Up project, Baraldi focuses on the dimension of agency, pointing out that in a situation where the life of children with migrant backgrounds is conditioned by the intersection of a variety of social and cultural factors, the key aspect of research is to analyse their ability to participate in changing their social and cultural conditions of integration, in educational practice and policies, and in relations with social protection services and families. In the context of non-essentialist theories (Holliday 2011) active participation in communication activities and the process of assigning meanings does not lead to cultural adaption, as it has been assumed on numerous occasions, but to building a hybrid identity that is the result of a social influence and also of autonomous actions pursued by individuals (Baraldi 2014). A discourse between the claims of essentialist and non-essentialist theories is also the subject of a paper written by Sara Amadasi and Adrian Holliday titled *The Yin-Yang Relationship Between Essentialist and Non-Essentialist Discourses Related to the Participation of Children of Migrants, and Its Implication for Research.* By mentioning that each of the approaches has had its successes and failures in explaining the potential of migrant children's participation in society, especially in the school context, they propose a combined approach defined by them as a "ying-yang framework" in which, like the first paper shows, the key role is played by a hybrid nature of building identities that assumes activity of children themselves. The subsequent papers in this part undertake in-depth analyses in individual areas related to education, all of them, however, in relation to children's agency. The paper by Thomas Droessler, Margund Rohr, and Lena Foertsch *Migrant Children Are Not the Problem. The Problem Is the Need to Make the Administration Happy. The Perceptions of Professionals' on Participation and Acculturation in Education Contexts* presents tensions between theoretical discussions and concepts, on the one hand, and practices in educational settings on the other, highlighting attempts to apply an inclusive approach compared to erecting barriers, especially by means of systemic difficulties. It also documents ideas offered by professionals (teachers, educators in early childhood care, after-school educators and social workers) related to the possibilities of conducting intercultural education. On the other hand, a paper by Federico Farrini and Angela Scollan entitled *Between Marginalisation and Agency. Primary School Teachers' Narratives in London and the Position of Children with Migrant Backgrounds* focuses on teachers' narratives to uncover how children with migrant backgrounds are positioned in the contexts of their learning experience, emphasising the extremely important category of trust or its lack in building the relations of teaching and learning. They also ask a question

about a type of categories that are the foundations of the process of defining students as trustworthy or not, whether they are based on categorical inequalities or personal relationships. In their text on *Professionals' and Parents' Representations of Integration, Cultural Differences and the Intercultural. A Quantitative Analysis* Sara Amadasi and Chiara Ballestri have not only included teachers in their analysis, but also parents and ask questions about uncertainty, disorientation, and tensions related to intercultural education, issues of stressing cultural differences or not, celebrating cultural diversity and concerns relating to the assimilation pressure. The paper by Angelika Popyk, *Social Capital and Agency in the Peer Socialization Strategies of Migrant Children in Poland*, adopts the theory of social capital and agency and explores migrant children's peer socialization strategies. The author also highlights the ethnic or non-ethnic nature of the relations built. Finally, the two papers at the end of this part: by Justyna Struzik, Krystyna Slany, Magdalena Ślusarczyk, and Marta Warat (*We do everything with Our Own Hands – Everyday Experiences of Teachers Working with Migrant Children in Poland*) and by Małgorzata Pamuła-Behrens (*Polish Teacher Competencies in Teaching Students from Migrant Backgrounds in Preparatory Classes*) present an account of teachers' reflections. As regards the first of the papers, based on the results of research, its authors analyse considerations presented by teachers on the resources they have to perform intercultural work and strategies they pursue, while the second one deals with an issue of teaching in so-called preparatory grades and aims at understanding teachers' beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and competencies in this new context in their professional practice.

The second part of the issue begins with a paper by Shannon Damery and Alissia Raziano *Excluded or Included by COVID 19? The Impact of COVID 19 on Inclusive Education Efforts with Regard to Migrant Children in Belgium* that tackles the very current research problem of the social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the basis of Belgian research, the authors analyse the consequences of restrictions imposed during the pandemic period in the form of remote teaching to prevent inequalities and implement the concept of an inclusive school. In another paper, entitled *The Articulated Involvement of Stakeholders in Social Innovation Research,* Claudio Dondi and his team pose the question of the role of social partners in conducting research, hoping that their analysis will contribute to a discussion on the relationship between academia and society, thus highlighting best practices. Another two papers: by Jakub Kościółek (*School Staff Experiences of Intercultural Teaching in Kraków – A Contribution to the Discussion on Integration Practices*) and Urszula Majcher-Legawiec (*Reflective Practice as a Manifestation of Intercultural Competences in the Work of Teachers*) analyse intercultural teaching using the example of Kraków. Kościółek especially focuses on opportunities and threats in the development of intercultural education, while Majcher-Legawiec refers to teachers' competencies with a special consideration of their reflexivity and attitudes towards change, which may bring about good results despite other barriers and difficulties. Finally, the last two

papers combine the macro- and micro-perspective. Katarzyna Gmaj analyses in her paper *Polish educational system response towards immigrant children's presence at public schools* the last twenty years of the presence of migrant children in the Polish school system and reviews the strategies of the Polish state in relation to the needs of migrant children in schools. Ewa Kozdraj and Agata Świdzińska (*The For the Earth Association's Activities Promoting the Integration of Refugees – A Case Study*) in turn use the example of The For the Earth Association as a lens through which they focus on the challenges of everyday work with refugees and persons seeking protection. The analysis of the Association's activity suggests it has the potential to fulfil an integrative function through various forms of education, while also characterising the activity as methods of intercultural activation.

We would like to express our thanks to all the authors for preparing their papers and collaborating in the preparation of this special issue. We hope that the papers will become an important voice in the debate on the desired form of the school in terms of its multiculturality, openness, the equality of opportunities, intercultural dialogue, and the actions pursued by all its actors, migrant children included.

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