Engaging communities in education to foster social inclusion and cultural diversity

Edited by
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Engaging communities in education to foster social inclusion and cultural diversity

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Engaging communities in education to foster social inclusion and cultural diversity

Moving to a new country, far from their relatives and friends, and with a different language, culture, and education, is difficult. During the migration journey, children and young people often experience profound and painful cultural, emotional and life transitions that go unrecognized. Paying attention to migrant children and youth inclusion at school and society and making families feel welcomed by these institutions seems increasingly crucial. In a world contradictorily becoming increasingly transnational and multicultural, and nationalistic, it seems particularly relevant to consider how to involve communities in education systems to foster social inclusion and rescue the values of cultural diversity.

School and social segregation is a common challenge in growing multicultural and unequal countries. Despite policies promoting equity and newcomers' recognition and evidence that the more valued immigrants feel, the more quickly they develop a sense of belonging and respect for the host country, many societal prejudices and stigmas continue to hinder their inclusion. The involvement of families and social and cultural institutions in educational communities is crucial to engage migrant children and young people in their inclusion processes.

In the reception processes that schools organize for new students, aimed at fostering migrant children and young people's social inclusion and feelings of belonging, not only schools and families play an essential role, but the whole community and society. Hence the need to make the research and practices in which schools collaborate with local and immigrant families, neighborhood associations, NGOs and social and cultural institutions more visible and recognized.

The 10 articles in this Research Topic, developed by 21 researchers from eight countries, reveal the growing awareness of the relevance of this topic. The contributions address relevant issues to foster the inclusion and reception of migrant minors in education and social systems and the need to involve educational communities and society in the process.

Namely, except for one contribution from the USA, the rest focus on the European context. Some refer to research in different European countries, whilst others focus on specific countries such as Norway, Spain, Greece, and Slovenia. This country's diversity enables us to see the particularities and central concerns in different regions of Europe.

Two articles present cross-country perspectives. The first one (Sancho-Gil et al.) provides insights into the importance of art education for migrant communities' social inclusion, and the work is still to be done by cultural institutions to achieve real inclusion. The second one (Dežan and Sedmak) explores the school environment factors affecting migrant youth's wellbeing.

From the Norwegian context, we find two articles focused on the involvement of parents in schools. One (Ali Norozi and Moen) is centered on schools, whereas the other one (Melnikova) approaches high schools. These insights contribute to understanding the differences in the participation of parents with a migrant background in the education system. At the same time, the first one explores this issue from the teachers' perspectives, focusing on implemented collaborative strategies and practices. The second addresses the relationship between parents and their children's secondary schools from the perspective of school representatives, taking as a reference schools from a wide socio-cultural range. The concerns are school and families' expectations for these children and their possibilities to keep studying or join the labor market.

The three articles based on the situation of migrant students in Spain (Corres-Medrano et al.; González-Falcón et al.; Gigerl et al.) stress mainly two points. (1) How school segregation poses a significant challenge regarding the inclusion of families in educational communities. (2) The importance of including other agents such as intercultural counselors, social workers, or psycho-pedagogical teams. Another common feature of these articles is that they build on research that considers the voices of different members of the educational community (families, teachers, children, and other actors).

The article from Greece (Palaiologou and Prekate) brings a very particular and contextualized case: the situation of adolescents at the Skaramagas refugee camp. The research evidences the vital role of schools in increasing the friendship circles of refugee youth.

No less significant is the contribution from Slovenia. In this article (Medarić et al.), the authors present the paradoxical situation that whilst children perceive their families as a cornerstone of their wellbeing, the involvement of migrant families in schools is shallow. The study also shows how this is understood and approached from a political point of view.

The US-focused article (Naiditch) offers an insightful blueprint that presents so-called "push and pull" strategies for integrating immigrant families into the community. Push strategies refer to those developed by the school to offer families resources and connect them to an array of services that assist immigrants. Pull strategies focus on bringing families from the community to the school building and creating mechanisms to include them in curricular and extra-curricular activities to strengthen their sense of belonging and identity.

The content of this issue is a significant contribution to help scholars, practitioners and policy-makers to approach the complex phenomenon of migration profoundly and to advance policies and practices that improve migrant children and young people's reception and inclusion in the educational and social systems. In addition, it presents research in which participants from different statuses are involved. The contributions of children and youth are especially noteworthy because, although there is a large body of literature on immigrant studies in the United States and, increasingly, in Latin America that highlights the value of youth voices, there is still a need for research based on their voices, especially in European countries.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Migrant parents at high school: Exploring new opportunities for involvement

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This article examines the at-school opportunities Norwegian high schools provide for involving migrant parents in their children's education. The legal and societal expectations of systematic school-home cooperation with all parents at this time of transition to higher education or employment are relatively new in Norway. Thus, how schools act on these expectations as they meet migrant parents is under-researched. To address this gap, interviews with four leaders of three high schools with different sociocultural profiles and observations of meetings with parents at one of the schools were conducted as a part of this study. Examined through a Bourdieusian lens, parental involvement—or rather traditional lack of at-school parental involvement outside crises—can be interpreted as a form of high-school doxa. This unquestionable truth is now challenged as more rights are granted to parents, and new heterodox beliefs and discourses about parents of adolescents at school emerge. At the same time, the schools in the focus of this study appear to have limited room for imagining forms and content of non-crisis communication with the home, especially when parents do not directly claim their rights, as is true for many migrant families. This study thus contributes to the existing research on parental involvement and home-school relations by emphasizing the need for a professional discussion on more equitable and better situated forms of engaging parents, as well as the school's areas of responsibility in including families in educational communities.

KEYWORDS

parental involvement, high school, migrant parents, upper-secondary education, parental engagement

Introduction

Educators, researchers, and policymakers argue that, just like parents of younger children, parents of adolescents and young adults (those aged 16-19) have a strong potential for cooperating with their school to support the performance and well-being of students (Wang and Sheikh-Khalil, 2014; Vedeler, 2021). At the transition from high school (upper-secondary education) to higher education or career, students come to terms with the tensions between their developing individual autonomy and more

pronounced expectations regarding their choices from both family and culture (Kryger, 2012; Ball et al., 2013). For students with migrant parents, this transition takes place in the context of negotiating multiple identities and belongings affected by race, religion, and language. Therefore, teachers need to reckon with the changes in the students' life and use other strategies for relating to families than in lower grades (Hill et al., 2004; Deslandes and Barma, 2016). They should thus include all families in the dialogue and support around their children's general well-being, schooling, and higher education and career plans as a part of the educational community (Epstein, 2008). This idealized representation of a democratic partnership is, however, criticized for being based on assumptions of homogeneity of families' experiences and positioning with the school (Vincent, 2000). Parents with migrant experiences are a heterogeneous group and are defined for the purpose of the present study as parents or guardians who have moved to Norway as adults with experience of migration and studying in a different school system. Antony-Newman's (2018) meta-synthesis confirms that migrant parents have different stories, distinctive educational expectations, and unique struggles that are often made invisible to the school. Studies looking at how schools meet migrant parents make an important contribution to the discussion on parents and power in education, exploring the differences the families' sociocultural background make in terms of how confident and successful or compliant the parents are in approaching the schools and interpreting their codes (Crozier and Davies, 2007; Vincent, 2017; Pananaki, 2021). The significance of teachers' perception of the role parents should play in their children's education and efforts made by school leadership to make schools more friendly for all parents, as reflected in school practices, have been highlighted as particularly significant for ensuring equitable parental involvement (Kim, 2009; Rissanen, 2019).

At the transition to higher education and career, family migration experiences have been shown to play a significant role in student choices, strategies, and exploration of their identities. Most of the strategies adopted by migrant parents are pursued at home through high aspirations and the use of ethnic networks (Reay et al., 2001; Kindt, 2018). At the same time, there is a dearth of literature on the role high schools play in their encounters with migrant families. At-school parental involvement that is the focus of this paper is here broadly conceptualized as interactions between schools and students' parents or guardians. The practices that high schools initiate, based on Epstein's model, may take the form of organizing school meetings and activities, communicating with parents, and inviting them to volunteer at school and participate in school decision-making (Epstein et al., 2019). A case study involving two U.S. schools conducted by Villavicencio et al. (2021) adds several new age-appropriate contextualized forms of at-school parental involvement. These include mediating between families and students in conflict situations, being open

for unplanned conversations, making home visits, and building legal, educational, and emotional support networks for migrant parents. Still, extant research consistently shows that schools are less likely to reach out to parents as their children reach higher grades and mostly do so when there are problems with performance (Seitsinger, 2019). At the upper-secondary level, there is little evidence for schools adopting practices associated with Foucault's (1991) governmentality, where the teachers interfere in their students' home culture in an effort to adjust the socialization process according to the non-migrant middle-class norms (e.g., Vandenbroeck and Bie, 2006; Bendixsen and Danielsen, 2020). In Norway, Vedeler's (2021) recent study involving focus groups with teachers and school leaders shows that where school policy is not clear and deliberate, some high school teachers may choose to have less contact with parents, citing safeguarding the boundaries of student autonomy as their "natural" motivation. Older students may resist parental involvement in forms they see as inappropriate, and the parents, lacking school and community guidance, may retract in response rather than adapt the balance between autonomy and connection (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2009; Deslandes and Barma, 2016; Jónsdóttir et al., 2017).

By focusing on the practices Norwegian high schools adopt for involving their students' parents, this paper contributes to the broader research on the schools' role in shaping the dispositions of students with migrant parents at the transition to higher education or career. I examine how three schools enact their role to create opportunities for parental involvement through their home-school encounters. Specifically, I look at how the practice was organized and what matters were discussed during the families' encounters with these schools. In the following section, I present the theoretical tools adopted for this analysis that include Bourdieu's concepts of doxa and field that help expose the mechanisms of the field of high school education and its traditional ways of imagining and doing at-school parental involvement.

Doxa and field change in at-school parental involvement

Bourdieu's theory is often applied to question the school endeavors purported to be beneficial to all students. Bourdieusian analysis has contributed to the exposition of mechanisms of inequality in expansion of higher education, promotion of free school choice, or increasing parental access and representation (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1999; Holme, 2002; Pananaki, 2021). Following in this tradition, in this work, I use the concepts of field, doxa, capital, and habitus to examine how family backgrounds interact with schools' social and cultural contexts. The relationship between the school and the home can be described as a struggle for recognition of various forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1984). In

this struggle, the acquisition and engagement of different forms and amounts of capital depend on the students' or their parents' habitus. Habitus is the individual's embodied history, including family socialization and early school experience, which manifests itself in the present in the form of behaviors, preferences, and perceptions deeply involved in choice and interpretation of present experiences. A field that the habitus matches is structured so that making choices comes naturally as "procedures to follow, paths to take" with the instruments and institutions set in place for the individual's competent practice (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). An established institution will thus tend to have members with homogeneous habitus that seamlessly fit into their surroundings without the need for coercion or direct reference to rules. The institution will then function in "conductorless orchestration," as the prevailing harmony does not require conscious guidance and can reproduce itself (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 59). Thus, at some high schools, staff and students would share history, language, social codes and a "common sense" regarding the manner and degree of parental involvement at schools and at home. Other schools would have evolved during a shorter time and thus resort more to coercion, not expecting students or parents to understand the implicit ways of the school's practice. More recently developed theories of community cultural wealth and ethnic capital challenge deterministic interpretations of Bourdieu to insist that schools can change and develop appreciation for the capital students coming from non-majority homes possess (see for example Modood, 2004; Yosso, 2005).

Bourdieu highlights the role of the field's doxa—"a set of inseparably cognitive and evaluative presuppositions" most people in a social field take for granted—in constructing the education system's practices (Bourdieu, 2000). Those caught up in the field's game would commonly comply with the doxa, including its imposed sense of limits of what is doable and not doable. Competing beliefs, however, can arise, as in the case of the emergence of more active parental involvement at high school. These changes may stem from the influence of the metafield, that is the field of power where the interests of business, cultural, and intellectual elites of the modern societies clash (Bourdieu, 1996; Lingard et al., 2005). However, in a field, any new discourse can only be mediated by recognized parties (Deer, 2008). This means that, although dominant beliefs can be challenged and changed, the power structures in the field would largely remain the same (Bourdieu, 2000). The middle-class parents—possessing the cultural, social, and economic capital appreciated by the school—are thus best positioned to shape the school field to their advantage (Reay, 1998; Lareau, 2011). Still, parents' ethnic background, migration experience, and different combinations of capital (cultural vs. business middle-class) the families possess also affect how they operate at school. Middle-class families that have migrated to their host country may also experience difficulties in translating their high cultural or economic capital into that of the local schools, even though

some gradually become more familiar with the local system through acquisition of social capital and additional education (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Antony-Newman, 2020).

Norwegian high school context

High school is the first formal point of student selection in Norway, as admittance to the different tracks is based on grade point average. All students who have completed primary and lower secondary education are entitled to high school (upper secondary) education and nearly all (98%) enroll. However, not all students can apply to all tracks, as some tracks qualify students for higher education, others result in vocational certificates, and some combine both. The choice of track and subsequent choice of subjects and subject levels are presented as the young person's independent decision (Hegna and Smette, 2017). In addition to tracking coming late in the schooling process, the understanding of independent and equal choice is reinforced by the absence of university fees and the availability of low-rate loans to support housing and living costs for those pursuing higher education. Vocational tracks are advertised as equally appropriate for all students due to the availability of relatively stable and well-paid vocational career paths. In practice, however, the vocational labor market and apprenticeships are less open for students with migration backgrounds, especially refugees (Jørgensen, 2018). In Norway, there is generally a close relationship between family background and educational and career choices, as students tend to enter occupational domains similar to those of their parents (Helland and Wiborg, 2019).

Since 2006, Norwegian high schools have been bound by law to organize regular general parent meetings (assemblies) and parent conferences, report on student academic progress, and send out warning letters if that progress or attendance may be insufficient for graduation (Norway Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). Unlike compulsory schools, high schools are not expected to involve parents in the decision-making through participation in school boards. Maintaining "ongoing contact" with all parents, irrespective of whether the student is seen as experiencing problems, is required and this responsibility is assigned to a contact teacher, even though the specifics of what ongoing contact means are not provided. This vagueness in the regulation may have a variable effect on the roles of parents depending on their backgrounds. Bæck (2017) argues that the new government policies endorsing parental involvement at school in practice encourage more involvement from middle-class parents, which may eventually increase rather than moderate social differences. This concern echoes Crozier's (2001) earlier warning that treating all the parents equally without recognizing their ethnic diversity may contribute to "widening the gap between the involved and the uninvolved" (p. 338).

In Norway, a contact teacher has similar function to that of homeroom teachers in the U.S. school and form tutors in the UK. While teaching regular subjects, the contact teachers are responsible for attending to their students' administrative issues, organizing special events, participating in teams formed to support students with special needs or in special circumstances, and keeping in contact with the home. In lower grades and some tracks in high school (sports, dance, and recently some specialized science tracks), the same teacher can follow the class over 2 or 3 years. In the teachers' nationwide collective labor agreement (binding for all schools), one to two school hours per week are allocated to this function. This agreement that concerns teachers' pay and working conditions has been recently renegotiated by the trade unions that have a strong influence in Norway. After teachers repeatedly complained of the increasing workload related to out-of-classroom assignments, extra time was included to cover contact teacher assignments. The time was doubled for classes with over 20 students in primary and middle school, but not in high school. As a result, high school teachers have received an extra 15 min of paid working hours per week per student (Bjurstrøm, 2022). This debate around legal distribution of work hours shows that many teachers view their student care responsibilities outside the classroom as a significant burden. The difference in hours allocated between school levels may indicate that the contact teacher role is valued less or is seen as less of a drain on teacher resources in high school. Against this backdrop, the aim of the present study was to examine the high schools' role in encouraging parents to engage in the education of their children. As this is a relatively new topic, a contextualized exploratory multiple-case study was conducted, as described in the next section.

Materials and methods

This paper draws upon the material gathered during a 3-year multiple-case study of three Norwegian senior high schools—one urban (Park High[1]), one rural (Fjord High), and one suburban (Birchwood High). High schools in Norway often specialize in either vocational or academic programs. Following maximum variation case selection strategy to provide rich complexity to the collected data (Flyvbjerg, 2006), I chose schools with different tracks and social histories to explore a breadth of approaches for involving migrant parents these schools adopted. I approached these specific schools as local teacher education programs

indicated that they actively worked to involve migrant parents.

The schools: Contextual details

The urban Park High[1] has a large population of students whose parents or grandparents have migrated to Norway, many from Southeast Asia, but also some students that have recently arrived from the Balkans, Middle East, and Eastern Europe. The assistant rector estimated the share of students with migrant backgrounds in the general academic tracks at 80%.[2] Park specializes in academic programs and professional sports tracks but has also previously offered art programs. The school is open in the evenings for free tutoring (Homework Club), exam help, and access to training facilities. After the initial interviews, Park High became my main research site, as this school offered the level of access required for studying their school-home practices in more depth (see Table 1 for an overview of the data collected at the three schools that was used in this article).

Birchwood High hosts highly competitive academic tracks and is located in a suburb where some parents work in the city, some at large local construction projects, and a few are involved in agriculture. Polish, Kurdish, Urdu, and Dari are the most commonly spoken home languages by students with migrant parents at Birchwood. The school hosts both an induction program with Norwegian as a second language (NSL) for recently arrived migrant students and two adapted tracks that admit 30 migrant students who intend to continue into higher education.[3]

Fjord High is a rural school that hosts two academic tracks and five vocational tracks with further specialization, which are popular among local students. Students arrive from local fishing and agricultural villages and from the town located about an hour's bus ride away. Both refugee students attending the local induction program and those already studying in the main tracks come to Fjord on this bus. Other youth travel to the town where the school offers a wider choice of academic, sports, and arts tracks. At the time of this study, approximately 25 students were receiving extra tuition in Norwegian while attending regular classes,[4] many of whom were refugees and most were unaccompanied minors.

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1 All names are pseudonyms, and some details were omitted or changed to maintain confidentiality. Schools, and subsequently individual staff members, otherwise could be easily identified in the relatively small Norwegian context.

2 The schools in Norway do not collect or publish statistics on student or parent backgrounds. School profiles are based on interviews with the school leaders.

3 According to municipal information, the offer is adapted for students who need to strengthen their knowledge of Norwegian, English, and other general subjects, before they can apply for ordinary senior high school courses.

4 According to municipal information, the offer is adapted to students who can complete high school in the standard 3 years with some extra language support. The offer is designed for students who can compensate for academic gaps by "working hard" and who aim for higher education. The study requires approximately 3.5/6.0 grade points in science and/or social studies from secondary school.

TABLE 1 School profiles and data.

School	School profile	Interviews	Tracks
Park high	Urban 750 students[2]	School leader (female), 46 min	Academic (three tracks) Sports
Observation of 19 student-teacher conferences with three teachers (one male, two females; average duration.			
Parents of the 19 students present at these conferences: 4 mothers, 3 fathers, 1 with both father and mother, 11 without.			
PowerPoint presentation from general parent.			
Observation of school leader in different contexts, one school.			
Birchwood High	Suburban 650 students	Two school leaders (both female), 55 and 45 min	Academic (two tracks) Academic, adapted[4] (two tracks) Music and Drama Sports NSL-program
Video of principal addressing parents			
Fjord High	Rural 400 students	School leader (male), 43 min	Vocational (five tracks) Academic (two tracks) Preparatory for NSL-students[3]
PowerPoint presentation from general parent meeting			

Exploratory multiple-case study methodology

The present study builds on interviews and observation notes selected from data gathered during a larger multiple-case study. Multiple data sources were brought together to provide deeper understanding of high school encounters with migrant parents in different contexts seen from different perspectives (Stake, 2006; Thomas, 2016). First, I present data from my semi-structured interviews (Rapley, 2012), lasting on average 45 min, with four school leaders—two principals, one assistant principal, and one department leader (see **Table 1** for the details). I have asked them how the school-home cooperation was organized at their schools, what they expected of their students' parents, and whether and in what way the parents were different. As all school leaders had teaching backgrounds and long experience (over 20 years on average), we also discussed school histories and the types of students and parents they had encountered over time, both migrant and non-migrant.

The current paper also builds on my observations of contact with parents at the main study site, Park High. I have analyzed notes of 19 teacher-student conferences (nine of which involved parents), as well as of my informal observations of the work of a school leader with special responsibility for parent contact—at her office, in the school corridors, in the school library and at the teachers' quarters) —and the documents she provided. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and rescheduling of meetings, no observations at parent general meetings and evenings were possible. Instead, I used presentations made by the principals at these or pre-COVID meetings, two of which

were available in PowerPoint format and one was a video file that Fjord shared with me. Other resources from the case study, including teacher, student, and parent interviews and other online and printed material representing the schools, provided background information. All text was transcribed and coded in the original Norwegian or my first language, with some elements of oral speech remaining. The citations used in this paper were translated and edited into more standard written English to better safeguard the informants' identities.

The required ethics clearance from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) was granted for this project. Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, 15 of 19 of teacher-student conferences I observed were conducted online. Upon a discussion with the contact teachers and the ethics advisor from the NSD about maintaining student confidentiality and well-being, a conclusion was reached that video recording was inadvisable, as it could interfere with what the students and families would be willing to share in these conversations. The participants were informed that my role as an observer was limited to witnessing the school practices, rather than focusing on individual students. They were further advised that they could choose not to have me present in these meetings, and one did. Although I have not discussed individual students with the school leaders, some of the excerpts that might have unintentionally divulged identifying information had to be omitted from the school descriptions to avoid breaches of anonymity.

The analysis conducted as a part of my larger study involved a combination of intuitive processing and some elements of formal inductive coding (Simons, 2009). Interview and video

TABLE 2 Multiple case analysis example.

Stage 1. Zooming out School case narratives	Stage 2. Zooming in Thematic analysis across cases	Stage 3. Zooming out Results: Contextual narrative in study of practice
Birchwood High. Practice, 14 initial codes, including: ● Less segregation ● Few attend general meetings ● Student autonomy ● Little contact with migrant parents ● Little contact between parents ● No policy documents **Park High. Practice**, 27 initial codes, main research site, including: ● Less segregation ● Few attend general meetings ● More attend other events ● Student autonomy ● Mother's group ● Ethnic networks ● No policy documents **Fjord High. Practice**, 9 initial codes, main research site, including: ● No policy documents ● Few attend, general ● Student autonomy ● Little contact with migrant parents	Theme: Community networks ● Less segregation (less recognition of cultural capital) means less network ● Little contact with migrant parents (less power/symbolic capital) ● Few migrant parents attend general meetings (different cultural capital) ● Doxa: Expectations of student autonomy ● And no policy documents leads to ● Little contact between parents ● But Mother's group ● But Ethnic networks	Section: General Meetings and networks ● Little contact with migrant parents at two schools, more before desegregation at Birchwood ● Changes at Park: mother's group, ethnic networks, new forms for meetings ● Contextual reason at Park: behavioral issues ● Discussion: Can expect more contact, but still around behavioral issues – no change in doxa, but helps with social capital?

transcripts, observation notes, and presentations were organized in NVivo software. The material was first used to construct narratives of school and individual leader cases. Shortened and anonymized versions of these initial school narratives (2–3 pages long) are used in the section "The schools: contextual details" and provide context for the discussion section. In the second stage of my analysis, the material from all data sources, including observation material from Park High, was coded inductively inside each of the cases. It is here that the practices schools adopted to involve parents, rather than what the research informants thought about their experiences with parents, came into focus. My final analysis conducted for this article was performed across the cases to identify a variety of common themes connected to school practices while defocusing in order to increase the study's validity by being sensitive to the specific school and community contexts (Stake, 2006; Simons, 2009). The categories that emerged included General meetings, Crisis communication (at one-on-one and class level), Community networks, Concern for student autonomy and safety, Time and other resources, and Choices and assessment. Change was a theme that originated from the individual case narratives and permeated all categories. The interpretation of data in this study was not linear (Rule and John, 2015), but a simplified example describing the steps in the analysis process for theme Community networks is provided in **Table 2**. I take up the themes that emerged in the analysis in the next section to answer the research questions of how practice of involving parents at school was organized and what matters were discussed with or

presented to the parents. Given the differences in the school contexts and available data, no systematic comparison was attempted. This strategy also aligns with the main objective of this article—establishing how difference was constructed in schools' practices rather than examining discourses about parents and experiences with them. This focus was born out of my engagement with Bourdieu's theory and previous research, as well as my interest in the schools' enactment of the new regulation on involving parents at the high school level which had been in force in Norway since 2006. However, none of my informants remembered that change, so other elements of school governance became more central to the analysis, such as the collective labor agreements.

Results: School efforts to involve parents in children's education, old practices, and change

At all three schools at which my study was conducted, the leaders agreed that parents were important for the students' well-being and performance, including positive and negative influences. They particularly appreciated the subtler at-home forms of encouragement and care. Indicating the changes in the field of schooling, the leaders acknowledged that the old, for some nostalgic, days of academic gymnasium schools predating the reforms of the 1990s were relegated to history. The teacher

could no longer go into the classroom, shut the door, teach the subject, and then go straight home to prepare the next day's lectures alone. Cooperation was now widely expected not only with other teachers, but also with other professionals (including various specialized counselors, nurses, and psychologists) and social agencies, and with parents. In the words of the leader from Park High, "The autonomous teacher is gone." Another important change that all three school leaders referred to was that, in the current system, the students have much greater legal rights in terms of the school's responsibility for providing an environment free from bullying and generally supporting their well-being and learning. Birchwood and Fjord in particular have experienced that parents and students would accordingly refer to the new Section 9A-4 of the Education Act (Norway Ministry of Education and Research, 1998) that came into force in 2017, enforcing the students' right to experience a "good physical and psycho-social environment." This section, rather than changes to home-school cooperation regulations, came to mind of my informants when I talked about the changes in the legal framework of their work with parents. Still, the strategies, policies, and the amount of effort the schools and individual teachers invested in their encounters with parents varied across schools and teachers, as well as among what they recognized as different groups of parents. I now present forms of at-school involvement practices, general and one-on-one, before turning to matters discussed with parents at the three schools.

Forms of involving parents at school: How practice was organized

Generally, I found that contact with migrant parents did not constitute a significant part of the teachers' job, with the exception of a few students that required special attention (due to being in some sort of difficulty or crisis) and some work related to testing and formal notices about attendance and grades. The framework of the collective labor agreement with approximately 2 h per week allocated for contact teacher work was mentioned by leaders at both Fjord and Birchwood when discussing this topic. There were no other local policy or strategy documents concerning parental involvement at the schools, and only Fjord had a section of its website dedicated to parents. The teachers and leaders at Birchwood and Fjord struggled to recruit migrant parents for my study, admitting that they had limited contact with student families, or had contact with parents who would not feel comfortable talking about rather difficult situations that required their involvement at school.

General meetings and community networks

Based on my interviews with school leaders and observations at schools, with the exception of critical situations, the expectations from all three schools in terms of at-school participation by parents were confined mainly to attendance at

two to four general meetings during the first 2 of the 3 years of high school. The first general parent assembly soon after the start of the first school year was seen as particularly important. Still, all general meetings were held outside work hours to facilitate attendance and were considered the central arena for establishing and maintaining contact. There was, however, a marked difference in attendance between groups of parents and the efforts to invite parents varied from teacher to teacher. Having general parent meetings at the high-school level, although not legally required prior to 2006, was not new at any of the three schools, were this practice dates back to the 1990s and 1980s. In the past, at times of large refugee crises, Birchwood organized separate general meetings for parents with specific refugee backgrounds and invited interpreters. However, as the number of languages the parents could speak increased over time, having too many interpreters was deemed impractical as it would disrupt the meetings. The school leaders noted that there has also been less segregation of migrant students over the years. This means that schools now have fewer classes where all or most students are migrants or where no students have migrant backgrounds, reducing their visibility as a group and efforts made at including parents from specific ethnic groups. Judging by PowerPoint presentations and the video I received from the schools, these general meetings were now organized in a traditional format where the principal and some leaders welcomed the families and introduced themselves and the school, after which families moved to individual classrooms where contact teachers made their presentations followed by a few questions from the parents. The second general meeting was often reserved for discussions with subject teachers and was popular with the more involved parents at Park and Birchwood. Career guidance counselors were also available for the parents and students to ask questions at the end of these meetings.

For a few years, the urban Park High has been testing a new strategy, whereby a general parent assembly was replaced by meetings with the contact teacher, which in the views of the school leader would also allow the parents to get to know each other. I have also received a one-page description of Park's attempt to organize a meeting where parents were more active. As a part of this initiative, contact teachers were supposed to hold a 20-min group discussion in a classroom setting about how parents "think middle school is different from high school" and what expectations they have of "the teachers and the school" with written answers presented in plenum. The following excerpt is taken from the description of the reasoning behind this new plan:

> School-home collaboration project method aims to reach parents with immigrant backgrounds in a more dialogue-based way that seems engaging and in a slightly more "harmless" setting. The goal is to get immigrant parents more involved in the field so that they can help the school to help their children succeed in school.

Although the counselor who suggested the method was on parental leave during my study, it is interesting that the suggestion was still presented to me as a form of documentation. Not going into details of how migrant parents are presented in this discourse, in terms of school practice, which is the focus of this article, the idea of changing meeting form to reach out to parents is in this document seen as novel and requiring "committed school leaders and committed teachers."

In terms of other opportunities for building networks, and thus maintaining and gaining social capital, when asked if parents formed any groups or if they mostly had one-on-one contact with the school, a school leader at Birchwood answered:

> You used to know all the parents of your 10th grade, but suddenly you're in our region. Now you can apply to seven different schools, and then here, you suddenly have no parent network. So, I, as a parent, also experienced going to parent meetings and not knowing anyone. It's a bit like "hello," but very distant.

The school leader argues that it is normal irrespective of parent background, for parents of all high school children to lose contact with each other as the students choose schools in different parts of the city or municipality. Contrary to this description of normality in this middle-class suburban school with migrant parents in the minority, urban Park High was hosting a newly established mothers' group. According to the group's leader that I interviewed, their purpose was mainly to empower the local women to support the community by, for example, patrolling the streets at night, and to help the newly arrived families orient themselves in the city's public services. The school was not the organizer or the sole focus of the group's program, but they offered parenting courses where the importance of attending parent meetings was specifically communicated. At Park, the leader hoped that the new parent network could help them reach the parents they "needed."

At this school, the expectations regarding parental involvement were higher than at the two other schools, partly because of behavioral issues. I observed planning for a meeting at Park to address student behavior in one of the classes. A counselor led the discussion, listening to what the teachers who worked with the class experienced and giving advice on how to guide the meeting so that the conflict did not escalate, but all sides felt heard and appreciated, as exemplified by the following excerpt from my observation notes:

> Counselor: [We need to master the] way to listen and understand, not comment, not justify ourselves, so that they [the students involved in a conflict] feel understood and listened to. Take up some challenges and how they experience them.

The counselor, the contact teacher, and the school leader came back to me after the meeting and said that they were thrilled and relieved when several parents came and showed support and understanding for the school. In my notes after the meeting, I quote the contact teacher saying:

> It's very good when the parents are, like, "I know how this feels, what you are faced with" when they support us. It is good that you've put some effort into [planning] this.

As I interpret it, parents were "needed" by the school partly because student behavior was, like in the situation I observed, more often perceived as a challenge. School leaders and teachers were thus disappointed when many parents did not meet up. Both general and individual meetings were seen as an important opportunity to establish and maintain contact and, apparently, control. Irrespective of the motivation behind the efforts to invite more parents and build a parent network, the parents at Park were visible. The leader expressed to me that she was surprised at how many parents now showed up for the open house the school organizes for potential applicants. Students attended and were actively involved in all the aforementioned meetings. This is also true of the so-called parent conferences, which in my experience were teacher-student conferences with parents in attendance, which are described below.

In sum, the two primary forms of at-school involvement including groups of parents were general meetings and school-initiated contact in crises. On those occasions, the attending parents were, as was the tradition, expected to be passive listeners, with room for only a few questions after presentations made by the school staff. When attempts to introduce dialogue were made, the discussion was still to be carefully planned and strongly controlled by the school. The parents could write or speak in front of a large audience and always on school territory. Only Park High leadership was concerned with building a community network that connected local parents and the school. Given the cultural heterogeneity of this school's parent population, this effort can contribute to parents maintaining and developing their social capital, especially if it prompts the parents to see each other as a source of support. This initiative can be further strengthened if, hopefully, some of the Southeast Asian parents (a large group at Park), many of whom are already rich in school-related social and cultural capital, are also invited to join the group. This assertion also aligns with the findings of Li and Sun (2019) pointing to the importance of closer contact between schools and Asian immigrant families. They argue that when parents meet the school, students get new opportunities to negotiate the sociocultural differences that can create conflict between how education is approached at home and school, while teachers better understand the differences within this group, thereby avoiding the model minority stereotype.

One-on-one contact: Planned conferences and crisis communication

In terms of planned direct contact between parents and teachers, there is a legal requirement that high schools hold two annual parent-teacher conferences before the students reach the age of majority of 18 to discuss student progress and well-being. Starting from the compulsory school, students almost always attend these meetings, and sometimes take the lead in organizing them as a presentation of their recent work and progress. As high school students could, to a large degree, decide whether the parents needed to be there at all, I noted that the teachers often did not know whether the students' parents would be attending.

At the online student-teacher meetings I observed under COVID-19 rules at Park, one or two parents were present at 8 out of 15 conferences. One of the three conferences I observed at the school premises was attended by a father. One teacher explicitly decided not to invite parents on this occasion, choosing instead to maintain contact *via* regular phone calls. The meetings were organized as 10-15 min conversations with individual students, where the teacher, once or twice, asked the parents whether they had "anything they wonder about," and after receiving a short answer or a simple "no" followed by one more question and a brief response, the conversation returned to the student. On a few occasions, the parents were unsure whether the teacher was talking to them or the student, as the student was usually at the center. This dynamic is demonstrated in the following extract from an online conference with a first-year student. After suggesting some strategies to improve his English grade, the teacher turns to the father:

Teacher: Anything you wonder about?
Father: Generally, how it goes. Many things are new [after middle school. It's] difficult to follow.
Teacher: A lot is new for us too. We see society turned upside down.
Father: What will happen to the assessments [under lockdown]?
Teacher: Assessments are so much more than just tests. Tests do not show the full extent of what students can do! We take a more holistic approach. I think it's important. Some do well on the tests, some do very poorly. The math exam is fully digital, English – more listening, filling in, oral, choice. We don't know much yet. Teachers are also waiting.
Father: [There's] lots of change, from day to day.
Teacher: Some classes are quarantined for the fourth time. You [students] need to be at school, but it works when you come every other day.
Father: Better than nothing.
Teacher: I focus on 16 students. [Back to the student] Anything you wonder about?

All parents except one had migration background but did not seem to have problems understanding Norwegian.

All three schools reported that they used interpreters in individual meetings whenever parents indicated that this was required. All students in the class I observed were born in Norway or came to Norway as small children, except for one. This student's father, who has been in Norway for 4 years, was present and responded to the teacher with a few words. The student struggled somewhat with language related to educational and subject choices, but the teacher explained things several times until the point seemed to come through. The language barrier and time expectations could have made some parents more hesitant to ask more questions and the teacher reluctant to delve deeper into the matters they were discussing (the content of conversations is addressed in more detail in section "Matters to discuss with parents").

Most attention was placed on students' measurable goals and individual strategies for reaching them in the different core subjects, with the contact teachers dedicating more time to their subject areas. A few migrant parents engaged actively and naturally with these matters in their dialogue with the school, asking about homework, grades, and tutoring opportunities. However, most parents, including the only non-migrant (mother), took on a more subtle interest and caring role, often briefly praising the student for being clever, hard-working, or motivated. A leader at Park stated that the school alternated between inviting and not inviting parents to student-teacher meetings because the one-on-one time between the teacher and the student with complete focus on the student's academic progress and goals was seen as necessary, as indicated below:

Because you may want to create motivation in the young person, and then the parents may be sitting there being very critical of their own child. We have to try to do a little bit of both.

None of the parents I have observed or interviewed in the larger study, however, appeared to be critical of their children. The COVID-19 lockdown has provided opportunities for gaining insight into more personal and familial exchanges between the teacher and the families in online meetings. I have observed the teacher expressing concern regarding the time spent by the student on schoolwork, proposing ways of going out to get some fresh air. I have also witnessed a short exchange about a recent loss of a family member, where the teacher responded, "When something like this happens, it will affect anyone. You should allow yourself. just always do your best." One of the parents questioned their adolescents' multitasking habits, and the teacher calmed her down:

It's not good, but mine at home are the same. The brain works best when we sit and focus. [. . .] But listening to music is effective. They don't notice. [With] 23 [students] in the classroom, they're not used to having it very quiet.

Here, the teacher can be seen as helping the parents to support student autonomy, in line with Deslandes and Barma's (2016) observation that high school teachers need to be mindful of the challenge parents face in establishing a right balance between adolescents' autonomy and connection to allow for openness in their relationship. However, these short exchanges never developed into full-scale mediation between parents and students, and the conversation quickly returned to the student and specific learning strategies and goals.

At Birchwood and Fjord, the direct information flow between the school and the parents for "non-problematic" students was limited unless initiated by the parents. No opportunities for parental engagement in school decision-making or digital communication were provided. Parents could ask for access to the students' digital platform with grades and lesson plans. Based on the information gathered as a part of my larger study, students and teachers at all three schools concurred that most parents never made such requests. The leadership of all three schools spoke of their attempts to expand outreach to all parents by promoting the practice of the contact teacher routinely phoning or sending an e-mail to parents of the entire first-year class, making them welcome at school, and inviting them to the first general meeting. Several teachers commented that the parents were surprised when the school used the time just to welcome them, as they were used to be approached only in difficult situations. It appears that some parents (mostly non-migrants) did initiate communication with the school, usually by calling to raise a complaint or claim their child's rights. At Birchwood, according to the information a school leader shared during the interview, a special hierarchy was developed for parent calls to prevent parents from routinely contacting the principal. At Park, where most parents had migrant backgrounds, the leader I interviewed and observed did have contact with several parents, as students that we met followed up on earlier conversations she had with their parents, and parents ringed while I was in her office. Even contact in times of difficulty or crisis could be limited to students under the legal age of 18. Older students could withdraw permission for the school to contact their parents and, as a leader at suburban Birchwood said, contact was generally "phases out" once students reached the age of 18.

To summarize, my findings concerning the form of one-on-one contact with the parents, digital or physical, correspond to those of Seitsinger (2019), who reported that high schools had contact with parents less than once a week. They also concur with the observations made by Deslandes and Barma (2016), indicating that parents of high school students perceive teachers as reluctant to make contact before things get "very serious" (p. 19). Some parents did have contact with the school, but they had to possess the relevant cultural capital in order to initiate it. Before turning to the content of school-parent encounters, I note that the agendas of these meetings were predominantly formulated and often carefully conceived by the staff. The school not only largely decided how meetings were organized but also formulated the matters to be discussed. In the next section, I analyze these discussion topics based on my observations, PowerPoint presentations from general meetings, and templates for student-teacher conferences.

Matters to discuss with parents

The matters the schools expected to discuss with the parents, outside crises, were predominantly related to students' individual academic achievement and well-being expectations. At Park, the school leader, for example, said that some parents phone her often early in the year and share concerns that their child has not yet made any new friends. According to the interviews and presentations I studied, the typical themes of general meetings included teaching and attendance, assessment (the difference between summative and formative evaluations), student rights and ways to handle complaints, and subject and education choices (see summary in Table 3). These topics concur with those that emerged from Antony-Newman's (2018) meta-synthesis of research on parental involvement of immigrants, showing that involvement was defined in narrow school-centric terms of academic performance, which meant that "issues of genuine inclusion of immigrant parents, their cultures and experiences are often side-lined" (p. 367; see also Doucet, 2011).

When presenting their expectations of parental involvement at the general assemblies, all school leaders highlighted the importance of school-home collaboration and provided contact information and dates for new meetings, as well as outlined the way student attendance was registered. The principal at Fjord defined the parental role at high school as follows:

> Many people probably think that now the students and children are so big and mature, they are 16–17 years old, and now we as parents do not have to think so much about school anymore. But all experience shows that it is very important that you, parents, get into the school race together with the student by asking about how things are going at school, what kind of subjects you have had today, what did you learn today and so on. That's very important. We do not expect you to be able to provide homework help in all sorts of subjects, but [to communicate] general interest in schooling. It helps to strengthen the opportunity for the student to graduate and pass the school year.

The school leader further expressed that they expected to be able to contact the parents even once the student turned 18, and the students signed special voluntary consent forms to enable this continuation. Birchwood also had a detailed

TABLE 3 Themes presented at general parent meetings.

Park high, meeting 1	Birchwood high, meeting 1	Birchwood high, meeting 2	Fjord high, meeting 1
PowerPoint, 28 slides	*PowerPoint, 14 slides*	*PowerPoint, 24 slides*	*Principal's video address, 25 min*
Welcome to cooperation, 2 slides	About our school, 1 slide	Subject choice, 15 slides	Welcome to new students
Contacts, 4 slides	Parental involvement, 2 slides	Assessment and exams, 5 slides	Contacts, 1 min
About our school, 2 slides	Expectations from students, 1 slide	Application forms, 2 slides	Parental involvement, 5 min
Teaching, 2 slides	Teaching, 2 slides	Contacts, 1 slide	Subject choice, 1/2 min
Assessment and exams, 1 slide	Assessment and exams 4 slides		Student well-being, 10 min
Attendance, 9 slides	Student well-being, 1 slide		Assessment and curriculum, 5 min
Student well-being, 5 slides	Attendance, 2 slides		Attendance, 1 min
Parental involvement, 1 slide			Stipend for PC, 2 min
Subject choice, 3 slides			Cooperation around substance misuse, 1 min
			Welcome again

summary of their view of parental involvement at high school, which according to its PowerPoint presentation, is:

- The students are approaching the age of the majority.
- Parents and guardians become less important.
- School is the students' choice and responsibility.
- However, parents can support and help.
- Be aware of notifications about attendance.
- We call in parents and guardians when needed.

The schools appear to differ in their approach to parental involvement. It is more welcoming at Fjord that, as a school with mostly vocational programs, is not often approached by "complaining" middle-class parents, and is more reserved at Birchwood, where those parents are in the majority. It is also worth noting that no references to culture, religion, or social issues were made in any of the presentations, thus treating all parents as a homogenous group. Both presentations are in line with the findings obtained in the Norwegian (Vedeler, 2021) and international context (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2009; Deslandes and Barma, 2016), showing that at-school involvement is not part of the natural, doxic ways of parents of high school students. The involvement is seen as largely instrumental, with the aim of supporting completion and ultimately graduation (see also Antony-Newman, 2018).

As described in the previous section, the parent conferences I observed loosely followed the school's template that teachers were encouraged but not required to use. The template states the goals of the conversation as a reflection on the student's academic ambitions, learning strategies, and classroom environment. The latter meets the requirements under Section 9A-4 of the Education Act adopted to counteract bullying and protect student well-being. The template also included questions related to student well-being, first-semester grades, learning strategies, teacher expectations, choice of subjects, and dreams and ambitions. In relation to the learning strategies, the teacher

and student discussed organizing study groups and transitioning from school to university, requiring more independent learning strategies. The parents showed interest in homework, tutoring (Homework Club), and organizing the time and space for homework completion. All parties were concerned with the new formative assessment forms and subject choice.

When asked about parent complaints in their interviews, the leaders of all three schools talked about their responsibility to get the parents to trust that they work in the students' best interests. At the same time, especially when migrant parents were concerned, the school leaders were sometimes convinced that the teachers and school counselors had a better understanding of students' interests than their parents did and felt they would breach the students' trust if they engaged with the parents. At Park High, there was also a clear concern for students' safety at home, and the school provided room for a special "minority councilor" employed by the Directorate for Integration and Diversity specifically to counter "negative social control, forced marriage, and honor-related violence." These concerns were notably made by teachers and school leaders based on their conversations with students and experience dealing with crises, given that they did not have long-term trusting relations with many of the parents. The schools especially guarded students' independence in choosing subjects and higher education or career. Park and Birchwood saw it as their responsibility to guide the parents to understand that "not everyone should become a doctor or a lawyer" and that many other professions existed and that could be more appropriate for their children. Apart from minority councilor's job description, in the three schools and outside general meeting context migrant parents were not treated as a homogeneous group. The school leaders, sometimes after being prompted to share their views about students outside induction classes, did indicate the somewhat essentialized categories of refugees, newly arrived students, work migrants, Muslims, and model minority Asian students, or remembered individual parents with whom they were in more

regular contact. Both leaders interviewed at Birchwood said that, in their experience, differences between migrant parents are much greater than between "Norwegians." Still, the school policies and practices did not indicate that the schools saw this heterogeneity as worth exploring in any depth. Moreover, the information leaders provided about individual students was not always confirmed in the interviews with those students.

Discussion: Schools' shifting responsibility

The preceding analysis of interviews with school leaders, observation notes, and presentations indicates that the way the three schools in focus of this study addressed parental involvement was contextualized. Schools differed in terms of the matters discussed, including which parents got to have a say on their children's education and choices. Differences were also noted in the degree to which teachers and school leaders saw engaging all families as their responsibility. Interestingly, as the schools moved from the more segregated practices of individual "migrant" classes to more inclusive practices, their attention to migrant parents waned. As a result, the doxa of minimal parental involvement beyond the context of crisis management was implicitly restored. The exception was made for parents who "knew the students" rights' and had the right forms of capital (which mostly applied to parents that were not migrants) to position themselves as dominant in the field and make the school responsive and responsible. This created what Bourdieu (2000) calls the situation of "real inequality within formal equality" (p. 76). When crises occurred, the migrant parents were invited but were engaged in the discussion in a subordinate role of disciplinarians. Still, getting them on board was difficult, primarily because no time was invested by the school personnel to earn their trust, as pointed out by Deslandes and Barma (2016).

The ideal of free choice and the teachers' concern with safeguarding student autonomy by not involving the parents unless this was deemed necessary correspond to some of the values demonstrated in Vedeler's (2021) study of the Norwegian high school approach to all parents. The emphasis on student independence and individual choice can be connected to Gullestad's (1996) descriptions of the modern quest of youth finding themselves and exploring their identity through resisting and reinterpreting family influences. The author argued that, to meet the needs of the modern flexible entrepreneurial economy, children needed to learn to be "tuned to indirect and subtle cues, to be a part of teamwork where the power relations can be more or less hidden" (p. 37). The modern parenting style Gullestad describes with its subtle expectations and focus on internal discipline today can be attributed especially to the cultural middle-class of academics, journalists, or writers, which can include teachers. In her interviews with middle-class high school students, Eriksen (2020, p. 108) observed that,

in contrast to the cultural middle-class with its "detachment between parents and school" and internalized career ambitions, financial middle-class parents made quite explicit academic demands of their children and practiced direct consequences to award or punish school achievement. This assertion may indicate that the teacher practices identified in the present study are guided by habitus associated with their class rather than by any uniform Norwegian or Western culture they intend to instill in students whose migrant parents are not socialized with the same values of flexibility and identity exploration that form the cultural capital appreciated by the field of schooling (see also Lareau, 2011).

In line with this doxic understanding of parent role at high school, all three schools provided limited opportunities and had no expectation for parental involvement in positive or neutral cooperation. There were also no systematic guidelines for moderating conflicts between parents and children, and unplanned contact or access to community networks was rarely provided by the schools, unlike the findings reported by Villavicencio et al. (2021). Schools did not invite parents to discuss curriculum or the students' home culture values, dreams, and educational plans, although at Park, they could be present at some of such discussions between teacher and student. Generally, families were recognized as an important part of the students' life, which was seemingly expected to largely remain outside the school's purview. In line with the national trends recognized in the general labor agreement, insufficient resources were allocated to support development of trust by all parents, as other pressing issues were given precedence (school behavior, new curriculum, new teaching and assessment methods, anti-bullying campaigns). These priorities describe the influence of the field of power that impacts what is recognized as valuable capital in the global field of education policy (Bourdieu, 1996; see also Lingard et al., 2005). The teachers, especially in the Norwegian context, still maintain a degree of autonomy from the field of power and could demonstrate resistance to the dominant practices by recognizing the migrant parents' capital, as for example described by Rissanen (2022). As long as teachers only merit non-migrant middle-class parents' attempts to interfere and remain unwilling to initiate change themselves, the school system will only serve to perpetuate inequalities in student performance, well-being, and educational aspirations. The findings yielded by this study confirm the observation made by Lareau and Horvat (1999) more than two decades ago that only parents who manage to engage their cultural and social capital in the school field by actively demanding attention and acting in the interests of individual students benefit from the legislative change. As a possible exception, staff at Park High, with its large population of students with migrant backgrounds, is readily discussing new ways of involving parents more, thus breaking with the traditional discourses on parents' absence at high school from a position of power. However, these discussions still mostly focus on "hard-to-reach parents" (Crozier and Davies, 2007)

who may be failing in their taken-for-granted role as emotional supporters and disciplinarians for their adolescent children. Some indications that schools are willing to take greater responsibility for broader involvement of all parents are emerging at Park High, both through new, more inclusive forms of involvement and communication, including this school's cooperation with the local mothers' group, as well as through unplanned telephone contacts and new conversations with parents about student well-being and future plans brought about by the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

A decade after the first policy changes introduced mandatory home-school communication in Norwegian high schools, the teachers that took part in the present study have developed a new awareness of the importance of parental involvement in students' transition to higher education and work. At the same time, the schools appear to have limited room for imagining unorthodox forms and content of cooperation with the home. The focus on the relatively few formally organized occasions when parents meet the school staff is mostly on appraisal, attendance, and student behavior. These themes and forms of communication are more appropriate for the parents with middle-class habitus who are more concerned with their children's performance and are more at ease in the school environment. Hence, many migrant parents' reluctance to be involved in these limited roles may not be surprising. An unorthodox broader recognition of the families' resources, interests, and futures beyond individual student performance on measurable outcomes would be a positive next step in expanding parental involvement in a diverse world. In light of Bourdieu's analysis of the school as a stratified field, this recognition would be more difficult to accomplish at schools with a long history of "orchestrated" relations with parents in which parents' more subtle forms of engagement with the children's education are taken for granted (Bourdieu, 2000). It remains to be seen how the new stream of immigrants from Ukraine can affect the schools' practices. The school system may perceive this development as a crisis requiring extra temporary investment to build mutual relationships, if only initially, to resort to some practices of governmentality common at lower grades (Bendixsen and Danielsen, 2020). At the same time, the relatively high level of education and perceived cultural closeness to this new group of parents could create an expectation of a more seamless orchestration with the school's doxa and relieve the teachers of their sense of responsibility to initiate more contact. In this case, they will be unlikely to make sufficient room for the new migrant parents to engage their cultural capital. Still, as indicated by the findings reported here, there is an urgent need for a wider professional and political discussion on more equitable and situated forms of engaging

parents with an emphasis on school responsibility for taking the initiative and establishing trust. To accomplish lasting change, additional resources should be made available for contact teachers in the collective labor agreement. As recognized parties in the field's discourse, who possess a certain degree of reflexivity, teacher educators and teachers should take the lead in these discussions and demonstrate resistance to the field's doxa. As this study indicates particularly strong doxic resistance against equitable involvement of parents at the upper-secondary level, further empirical research, including larger quantitative studies at high school, is needed. Change in practice is necessary if the schools are to fully benefit from cultural diversity. School leaders and staff then can appreciate all parents beyond their currently narrow roles of disciplinarians and complainers and to facilitate respectful inclusion of students and families of all backgrounds in educational communities and society.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available in order to maintain participant anonymity. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to JM, julia.melnikova@hivolda.no.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

JM was the only contributor to this article and has designed the study, completed ethical approval process, data collection, analysis, and all writing in the manuscript.

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The role of families in the response of inclusive schools: A case study from teacher's perspectives

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Some families identified as being at risk, including families of immigrant origin, demonstrate a lower degree of participation in school communities. This constitutes a major challenge for educational institutions. In this research, a case study including three public schools affected by school segregation was carried out. The aim was to analyze and disseminate teachers' experiences and contributions around the question of family-school relationships, particularly measures they take to promote the participation of families in the daily life of schools. This included a particular focus on schools characterized by high degree of segregation and pupils with higher levels of social vulnerability. The study was carried out as a multi-local ethnographic project in three schools in the Basque Country, Spain, through participant observation, interviews, and focus groups with teachers, pupils, school leadership teams and psycho-pedagogical teams. The results obtained show that schools condition the participation of families, especially those most at risk, and that this has an impact on the socio-emotional development of children. They also highlight the importance of building communication and relationship channels between families and schools. In the current age of globalization, the need to create a network of collaborative and trusting relationships between families and teachers is more evident than ever. Only by these means can children be properly supported to achieve their maximum potential.

KEYWORDS

family, school segregation, participation, inclusion, qualitative research

Introduction

The family and the school are the two principal spaces for socialization in contemporary education. In our society, the family is the basic unit of social organization and, therefore, a foundational socializing agent. As the root source of socialization, families are responsible for fostering coexistence and promoting healthy relationships based on communication and respect. This, in turn, protects the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable family

members: children (Altarejos et al., 2005; López, 2008a). The establishment of secure and stable affective bonds and the satisfaction of children's basic emotional needs in the family is fundamental to ensuring their well-being and promoting their healthy development (López, 2008b). The above directly influences the development of other personal characteristics including the social skills, attitudes and behaviors that shape their relationships with peers, teachers and the school (Moreno et al., 2009). Therefore, the family acts as a mediator in the relationships that children have with other institutions, their peers and society in general.

In order to satisfy their children's fundamental needs and to protect them from real or imagined dangers, families rely on other social institutions. Through schools, the arena of socialization is expanded and the education and lessons received in the family are complemented. Relationships and learning, initially contained largely within the private sphere of the nucleus of primary coexistence, that is, the family, expand through school participation (Rebolledo and Elosu, 2009; Cambil and Romero, 2018). In this way, it is hoped that families overcome, as far as possible, the communication and relational difficulties of the people who compose them and establish relationships involving two-way interchange with their schools and neighborhoods (SiiS Fundación Eguía-Careaga Fundazioa, 2017).

Research over a period of decades has identified the participation of families in schools as essential for better educational practice and a contributing factor in students' teaching-learning process (Rasbash et al., 2010; Epstein, 2011; Vigo and Soriano, 2015). Bolívar (2006), Escribano and Martínez (2016) and Simón and Barrios (2019) have argued that families should participate in school communities for a number of reasons. Their own knowledge of their children complements that of teachers; they are very invested in their children's learning; they are involved in their children's education throughout their schooling; they can positively influence the quality of educational support offered; and they can and should participate in decisions made by educational teams about their children. For all these reasons, families can contribute enormously in the design of school practices.

However, the role families play is conditioned by the sensitivity of schools to the diversity of the wider school community, including families' needs, opinions and motivations, among other issues (Bryan and Henry, 2012; Valdés and Sánchez, 2016). Depending on the level of involvement required by a school, families can occupy a role ranging from the passive reception of information through to leadership in both the teaching-learning process and the organization and management (Ceballos and Saiz, 2021).

Thus, the practices of a school can facilitate family-school relationships, or promote the opposite. Some practices can inhibit relationships or be exclusionary in the way they generate and manage the relationship with certain families, particularly those belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic groups or other groups at risk of exclusion (Dovemark

and Beach, 2014; Vigo et al., 2016; Vigo-Arrazola and Dieste-Gracia, 2020). Literature from diverse contexts (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Horvat et al., 2003; McNamara et al., 2003; Arnaiz and Parrilla, 2019; Vigo-Arrazola and Dieste-Gracia, 2019) argues that families with more social and cultural capital tend to be more involved in school, while the participation of immigrant families tends to be lower than that of native families. This constitutes a significant challenge. Language difficulties, lack of time, a low educational level and cultural differences between the country of origin and the host country are often cited as causes of this low participation (Moreno, 2017). Ceballos and Saiz (2021) categorize different forms of family participation, which mainly depend on school policy. These are *fictitious participation*, in which the role of families is limited to receiving information from schools; *symbolic participation*, where families are informed and consulted, but they have little influence on school decision-making; *partial participation*, when a coalition is established between schools and families but participation is guided by the school and, finally, *full participation*, when schools and families are fully co-responsible, collaborating equally.

In the context of this complex reality, education professionals also share the perspective that families have a significant influence on scholastic performance and the probability that children will progress in their academic trajectories (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010). This impact is expressed in terms of *primary effects*, that is school results and the effect of social class on academic performance, and *secondary effects*, that is, the effect of social class on decision making processes which determine educational trajectories through the transmission of values and expectations about education that children internalize (Bernardi and Cebolla, 2014, p.4; Nusche, 2009). A number of international studies have observed that an economically unstable family environment influences both the level of academic expectations and the degree of initial educational inequality due to social origin (Laureau and Cox, 2011; Weininger et al., 2015; Cebolla-Boado et al., 2016). Along these lines, different authors engage with the question of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2021). For Cambil and Romero (2018), for example, psychological construction and individual identity are formed and different social roles that enable cultural reproduction are adopted from early childhood. Lahire (2008) notes that several indicators reoccur in research analyzing the reproduction of social class structures in school. These indicators include repetition rates, definitive exit from the school system, school failure, grades achieved and teachers' evaluations, among others. School failure, among other consequences, can put the self-esteem of a student at risk and generate conflict with classmates, and can initiate a string of family and school conflicts, school absenteeism, etc. (Ararteko, 2011; Laureau and Cox, 2011; Texeira, 2016; Smith, 2019).

This article focuses on school segregation and participation in educational contexts and, more specifically, on family participation in three centers located in the Basque Country, Spain. In this

study, the term school segregation refers to the unequal composition of schools and the environment in which they are located. This entails an unequal distribution of students in schools based on their personal or social characteristics (Bonal, 2018; Martínez and Ferrer, 2018; Murillo and Martínez-Garrido, 2018). This research is centered on the views of teachers who participated in this research. We present a detailed analysis of three public schools in which the student body includes a high proportion of immigrants (Rapley, 2014; Bisquerra, 2016). As well as being immigrants, the families participating in these schools have a high incidence of unemployment, and many receive financial support to cover school expenses including the purchase of teaching materials and the monthly school canteen fee.

Regarding the Gorard index, which is used to quantify school segregation in Spain, and taking into consideration only first-generation immigrant pupils, the Basque Country overall, together with Extremadura, is hypersegregated (more than 0.5 on the Gorard index; Murillo et al., 2017). Almost all other regions in Spain have a lower index and thus, while not limited to the Basque Country, school segregation is of particular concern here. It should also be noted that school segregation by socio-economic level in the Basque Country is also fairly unique. As highlighted by Murillo and Martínez-Garrido (2019), school segregation is very high for pupils from low socio-economic families, but only moderate for high socio-economic families. Alkorta and Shershneva (2021) have identified two factors as among the main causes of school segregation in the region. The first is the large proportion of students enrolled in private schools. The second is the separation of education into two linguistic streams, either Basque or Spanish. These streams are delivered in separate classes or separate institutions, creating a physical separation between students enrolled in each model. The overall outcome is that pupils of foreign origin and reduced economic status tend to be concentrated in specific public schools.

Consequently, it is of vital importance to build an education network based on collaboration and trusting relationships between all participating actors, in which families and teachers interact, with special attention focused on spaces that are stigmatized or subject to disadvantage (Ararteko, 2011; Santizo, 2011; Etxebarria and Sagastume, 2013; Carneros and Murillo, 2017; Vigo and Dieste, 2017).

School practices that contribute to recognizing family identity could help include disadvantaged groups and those at risk of marginalization (Vigo-Arrazola and Dieste-Gracia, 2019). However, at least as far as we are aware, there is little existing research on family participation in Spain and very little that goes into detail as to how this participation is managed (Vigo and Dieste, 2017). Therefore, in order to fill this gap in the literature, the aim of this paper is to analyze and disseminate how family-school relationships are seen from the perspective of teachers who promote the participation of families in the daily life of schools, placing an emphasis on schools characterized by a high degree of segregation and the overrepresentation of students characterized by higher levels of social vulnerability.

Materials and methods

In this qualitative research we used multi-local school ethnography (Marcus, 2001; Maturana and Garzón, 2015) in which three public schools affected by school segregation participated (Flick, 2018).

The particularity of educational ethnography is that it investigates the meanings present in social reality that emerge in schools through interpersonal relations (Cotán, 2020). Seen from this point of view, ethnography is an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practices, their involvement and their situated and connected knowledge, thus facilitating their professional evolution. Questioning the beliefs implicit in their educational practice and becoming aware of their repercussions on student's teaching-learning process contributes to their professional development (Vigo et al., 2016).

This study describes social phenomena related to the inclusion and exclusion of 150 children due to the social segregation experienced by their families. In addition, the different initiatives carried out in favor of inclusivity by the schools in collaboration with families were also assessed.

Context and participants

This paper focuses on teachers in three public schools in the Basque Country (Spain), including their practices and discourses in relation to the issues of segregation. The Basque Country is a Spanish autonomous community located in the north of Spain, bordering France. It has a total population of 2.16 million across three provinces, Álava, Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya. Vitoria-Gasteiz is the region's second largest city and also the capital and seat of the main governmental institutions. The Basque Country has one of the most dynamic regional economies in Spain, which acts as an attractor for migrants.

Three public primary schools located in Vitoria Gasteiz were included in this research. These three schools were selected because the proportion of immigrants in the student body is very high. Apart from being migrants, the families involved in the schools' community have higher levels of economic vulnerability. While the public education system in the Basque Country is free, on the basis of a needs-based assessment families can also be eligible for financial aid to cover school expenses including teaching materials and the monthly school canteen fee. The proportion of families receiving these benefits can thus serve as a proxy indicator of the economic wellbeing of a school community. In the three schools included in this research the proportion of families receiving financial aid was very high which suggests endemic economic hardship including low wages, irregular and precarious employment and unemployment. All three schools were located in peripheral, working-class neighborhoods, and were built in the seventies and eighties (Laureau and Cox, 2011, Chapter 6). The choice of informants was therefore intentional and not probabilistic (Otzen and Materola, 2017).

Finally, before starting the field work, several meetings were held with school management and teaching teams to explain the research goals and process. In these preliminary meetings, school staff reported that these centers had an established trajectory of responding to ethno-cultural diversity and were currently carrying out different inclusion projects. Thus, another factor in selecting these three specific schools was that their management and educational teams claimed to be engaging in systematic efforts to encourage the participation of families through their educational projects.

The collaborative and participatory nature of this research project favored the emergence of meanings related to the role played by families in the teaching-learning process (Flick, 2012).

Participants in this study included 3rd and 4th grade students from the 3 schools, as well as educational staff. More specifically, 150 primary school students aged 9–10 and 17 adults belonging to the management and teaching teams participated.

Research ethics

To ensure that the research was conducted ethically, the project was presented to the Human Ethics Research Committee, CEISH-UPV/EHU, BOPV32, 2/17/2014, code M10_209_134, where it received a favorable assessment.

Following approval by the committee, the 3 schools selected were informed about the objectives of the research. Once these schools confirmed their institutional support, informed consent was granted by participating staff and families (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). The anonymity and confidentiality of both the individuals and the schools was preserved at all times (Gibbs, 2012).

Instruments and procedures for data collection

The research addressed here was carried out between October 2019 and December 2021. Data was gathered from a total of 90 sessions of participant observation across the three schools. In order to guarantee a wider base of observational data, in all three centers different spaces of a diverse nature were chosen, that is, more regulated spaces such as classrooms and less regulated spaces including the patio and the students' lunchroom space. During this participant observation process observations were collected through field notes (Angrosino, 2012).

Apart from observation, 17 semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with staff from the school management and teaching teams. The objective of the interviews, carried out horizontally (Flick, 2014), was to more deeply understand teachers' knowledge from their own perspectives (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018) around the main questions of interest in this study. The interviews were audio recorded with prior consent.

Finally, two discussion groups were held with the people who had earlier participated in the individual interviews. The questions asked in both interviews and the discussion groups were related to the daily educational practices in the schools and the types of collaboration between the different agents involved in the teaching-learning process (teachers, families, external professionals, etc.).

Information analysis procedures

Once the field notes and interviews were transcribed, the data was analyzed from a hermeneutical perspective (Fuster, 2019). For the analysis of this information, the data obtained from both observation and interviews was examined and a thematic content analysis was carried out using inductive-deductive categorization strategies (Leon and Montero, 2015). The Nvivo-12 software package was used to facilitate the analysis of the categories obtained.

Subsequently, the information gathered in different categories was organized by subject matter into different groupings, called dimensions, as shown in Table 1. These dimensions in turn coincide with the thematic content used in the interviews and observations (Rapley, 2014).

Additionally, a system of identification codes was used. To preserve anonymity, despite the fact that the participating education professionals had different roles (principal, head of studies, consultant, tutor, support teacher, etc.), we decided to identify all participants as either teachers (T) or students (S). The three schools were identified as Center A (CA), Center B (CB) and

TABLE 1 Category system.

Dimensions	Categories	Indicators	
Characteristics of the participating families	Systemic family context	Mental health problems, abuse, addictions, etc.	
		Precariousness and socioeconomic instability	
	Cultural impact of migrant families	Discrepancy regarding education criteria	Authoritarian discipline and use of physical punishment
			Absenteeism
			Repeated lateness
	Cultural impact of migrant students	Discomfort at having left culture or origin	
		Ignorance about cultural origins	
		Indifference to origins	
Relationship between families and school	Welcome and integration of families	Activities that promote the participation of families. Coeducational experiences	
		Frequent communication between families and teachers	
	Teacher responses	Naturalness	
		Reluctance	
	Characteristics of the relational style of teachers	Comradery	
		Attention to signs of risk	
		Coordination with external agents	
		Stress	

Center C (CC). Finally, the different tools through which the information was obtained were differentiated: D (field diary); I (interview) and G (discussion group).

Finally, the triangulation of information became very important. This involved the cross-comparison of theory, material compiled through interviews, observations and reflection by the authors (Aguilar and Barroso, 2015; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017; Buetow, 2019).

Results

The two areas addressed focus first on teacher's perception of their student's families and, secondly, their perspectives on the relationship between these families and the school. More specifically, the first area includes issues related to the systemic context in which migrant families are situated and the impact they see this having on them and their children at a cultural level. The second area, the relationship between families and schools, encompasses issues related to the reception of families, the response of teaching staff to diversity and the characteristics of the relational style of the teaching staff.

Teachers' perceptions of their student's families

A significant proportion of the participating children came from dysfunctional households. Thus, the specific systemic context of these families was conditioned by indicators related to mental health problems, abuse, addictions, etc.

> The tutor approached me and conveyed her concern for a student, Andrés. She explained "he does nothing." She added that he had a tough situation at home: his mother was undergoing psychiatric treatment for depression. [T, CA, D]

> In a quiet moment, the teacher gave me information about the class. She explained that two people had recently left and two new people, who were repeating the year, had just arrived: Ibrahim and one of the African girls, Johari. She explained that the girl's mother had a restraining order against the father. She continued to give more information about the students. She told me about Henry. He was the second of three brothers and his mother attempted suicide when Henry was in preschool. [T, CB, D]

Relatedly, according to some of the people interviewed, the socioeconomic profile of the families in these schools was characterized by precariousness and socioeconomic instability. In general, the families with students enrolled in these schools faced economic difficulties. This can condition both educational styles and parenting models as well as children's behavioral responses:

> They are survivor families; they live one day at a time and they are just surviving. And that leaves its mark on their lifestyles and the educational style of each family. Their main concern is "what's going to happen tomorrow?." This also ends up being "school-bus school," as they say. Today they live in this area, but Alokabide[1] might allocate them a different flat and send them to Lakua or Bremen Street, so tomorrow they'll be gone. Nobody handles uncertainty well, but if your life is already out of balance, uncertainty can sink you. In the end, the kids experience constant uncertainty at home and that doesn't help them. The reason isn't that the families are… No, no… the reason is existential instability, that their lives in this society are in a fragile balance. [T, CC, G2]

> It's the conditions, what surrounds them, it's very difficult. We have examples of single mothers who are at their absolute limit, that is, they do what they can, but it's not easy. I think that at school the children are fine, they are taken care of, but the kids act out the fears that their families transmit to them in different ways. [T, CA, G1]

With respect to the existing ethnic-cultural diversity in these schools, some school staff pointed out the impact at a cultural level that both families and students experienced, especially immediately following their arrival. On some occasions, cultural elements of some families conflicted with the teaching and education criteria, value systems, discipline styles, etc. of the school.

> In the school there is a large variety of families and also very different cultures. There are families from cultures that have very strict discipline at home, just like the discipline they used here in the '70s. For example, the Senegalese are very strict.… Punishment is used continually and the rules are very strict. The father above all is the one who has power at home, nobody stands against him. So, they come here, to a totally different context, they come into a society that is not governed by those norms. In class, for example, we try dialog, emotions… that they talk to each other, reason… But it is not always easy with the families. [T, CA, G1]

Moreover, some collectives involved in the different educational communities repeatedly had difficulties with some families because they used physical punishment with their children.

> The tutor explained to me that Khaled was a student with serious behavioral problems. Today there was an internal meeting to assess the case. The student teacher told me with a surprised tone that Khaled's father was very severe and always

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1   An organism of the Basque Government that manages public housing in the Basque Country.

> punished his son very harshly by, for example, making him stand against the wall with his arms open for hours. [T, CC, D]

Some teachers stated that repression exercised in the home could produce adverse effects on children's behavior, such as in the example below.

> For example, with Nigerian families there is a problem. At school the children go haywire, Nigerian children react very strongly. However, when they are with their families, when we have a meeting with the family and the child, the children do not even move, they do not breathe in front of their family. [T, CA, I1]

As the principal of one center states in the following except, another problem was school absenteeism:

> Last year we had a very serious problem. One child didn't come to class for the whole year and I had to do an absenteeism report and in the end the case was taken to the Prosecutor's Office. All this gets passed on to Social Services; things are not isolated. When something like this happens, it's usually a much bigger issue. The boy's family asked if he could change to another school, because he had said he was being bullied here. (…). I said that if it was better for him, then I was in favor of the change. And, well, now he is in another school and it seems that he is doing well. I am very happy. I think the change was good for him. [T, CA, I1]

Another important issue was the repeated lateness of some students, which could, in the opinion of teachers, also be an indicator of another issue, such as family disorganization or lack of supervision by caregivers:

> A new student, Aaron, joined the class late and asked in Spanish "Do we have a new teacher?" Nobody answered him. [S, CA, D]

> Jasim joined the class late, but immediately started doing the activity. [S, CA, D]

Teacher's perspectives on the relationship between families and schools

To promote truly inclusive education, the role played by schools is crucial, as schools are responsible for properly welcoming each family and respecting their idiosyncrasies.

> We are the gateway to society for many families, many families have no other relationship with society than the one they have with us. So, we have to make sure that they feel comfortable here. After all, they are the future of our society. Nowadays,

people here do not have children, and for society to move forward, families from other countries are necessary. And it's also another opportunity to open doors, for them to get to know our culture, because if we don't, they probably won't have any other chance…. They should keep their culture, but we also have to maintain ours. [T, CA, I2]

Hence the importance that schools, and more especially learning communities, should place on their relationships with families by promoting activities that motivate their participation and involvement in the educational project. In these times in which a new school model is being constructed, more and more coeducational experiments are being carried out. In a large proportion of these projects, the participation of families is promoted, an issue that continues to be a challenge for these centers.

> Our families have a an ISEC level[2] that is even lower than it was seven years ago. The disadvantages families confront are becoming more and more marked. So, it is a continuous struggle that these families end up integrating into the school and the neighborhood. Yes, things are being achieved, families are increasingly participating in school activities. All this is thanks to the fact that there is a human team behind it, the commitment of the teachers is amazing, and goes far beyond just being a job. Otherwise… it would be impossible! [T, CC, G2]

One of the main purposes of these activities was to educate through the active participation of families and students, preparing them in turn to live in community under the principles and values of equality, respect for diversity, cooperation and justice (Saldaña, 2018).

> Every year, at the first parents and teachers meeting, I invite them [parents] to come to my class, for example, to play an instrument from their country or to sing a song, or whatever. This year no one has volunteered. Other years there has been some participation and parents have come to class and we have done things: sing lullabies, play an instrument, a song from their country that they like a lot. To share, in the end it's all about sharing and listening to different things because it is always enriching. [T, CB, I11]

To achieve this, frequent communication between teachers and families is essential in order to promote children's socio-emotional development (Garreta-Bochaca, 2015). It was common, for example, for teachers to take advantage of non-teaching moments, such as recess and the lunch hour, to hold meetings with families.

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2   ISEC is the acronym for a socioeconomic and cultural indicator that brings together a variety of information from different sources about students' family and social context, including their parents' professions and level of education, family resources, etc.

The tutor told me that on Wednesdays she is usually on duty in the courtyard, but that day she had asked to change with another teacher to meet with a student's parents. [T, CA, D]

During lunch time, they [the homeroom teacher] took the opportunity to meet a new student's parents for the first time. [T, CA, D]

To contact the families, it was common for teachers to communicate through their students (sending written notes) or through ICT (e-mail, the school online platform, etc.). Sometimes the initiative could also come from families:

The tutor told [the students] that he would send a note to their parents by Gmail. Namir said "my mother doesn't have Gmail". [S, CC, D]

The tutor gave them a note to take home: an invitation to tomorrow's assembly. [S, CC, D]

With respect to the teachers' responses to the ethnic-cultural diversity of their students, this was taken on naturally, recognizing that it is a consequence of the changes in our society caused by globalization:

I think it's a reflection of life, I don't think this diversity is characteristic only of this school. I think that diversity is characteristic of society and I'm not saying it's negative. Most of these children were born here, what happens is that we still identify them as belonging to such and such a family because the family is from, I don't know what country, but most were born in Vitoria. The families are from Africa, Nigeria, I also know that some are from Latin America, from Morocco, from Algeria, from Western Sahara. [T, CB, I3]

It is true that half are the children of migrants. This does not mean that these children weren't born here. Most of them were born in Gasteiz, but the origin of their mothers and fathers or their cultural background is different. Most of all, we have [families] from Arab cultures and from Nigeria and then also from South America and from Burkina Faso, from Pakistan. But mostly, Arabs and Nigerians, apart from the Basques, are the most numerous. [T, CA, I2]

However, as reported in the interviews and discussion groups, for new staff members the initial reactions to this diversity were varied. This also depended on the prior experience and the origin of the individual teacher:

When I arrived, it was from another world. I came here straight from a school in a small town, where there were 17 children in a class that included two year-levels because the limit is 18. They were all blond, white. So, of course, I arrived here to a very different reality, which is Vitoria, where there

were hardly any white people in class. It was weird, it was difficult for me to situate myself and I doubted if this was a place where I really should be. [T, CA, G1]

The first time I taught here I felt a bit uncomfortable because of the diversity. But over time I came to realize that despite the fact that one family is from Pakistan and another from Colombia, at a sociocultural or socioeconomic level they are very similar to each other, whether they have social integration problems or not. [T, CC, G2]

In general, in all three centers, commitment to the educational project, as well as the camaraderie among the teachers, were the main pillars that sustained the relationships established in the schools. It was common for teachers to take on roles and responsibilities that went beyond their job descriptions, prioritizing values such as camaraderie:

About the work environment with colleagues, I, for example, tell everyone in this school that I've never seen management put itself up here [above the teachers]. And I've been in a lot of schools that, well, management… "and that's how it is because I say so and that's it" and I, for example, haven't seen anything like that and that for me is at least one point in favor. Having the school leadership on your side. [T, CC, G2]

I chose this school because when I worked here as a relief teacher, I felt very welcome and, well, that left a big impression, a very positive impression on me and that's why I wanted to come to this school. I have felt very very welcomed, by my colleagues and by the last school leadership team. [T, CA, G1]

The teaching staff identified a constant necessity to respond urgently to the needs of their students. They noticed different signals that provided them with information about the well-being of their students in order to determine if alternative, more specialized approaches were necessary and, in the most serious cases, contacted Social Services for assistance:

The tutor told me that she was also worried about another student, Sonia. This girl had very noticeable dark circles around her eyes. She told me that tomorrow she had a meeting with the mother and added; "She has a Brigitte-esque style rage." She also showed me some drawings she had on her desk drawn by Andrés. They were very aggressive drawings in which there were robots instead of people. [T, AC, D]

Ziad is still very serious and doesn't talk to anyone either. The tutor explained to me that it wasn't the first time something had happened and that, on another occasion, the minor had accessed a page with pornographic content and that is why they [his classmates] made fun of him. She explained to me that teachers often checked everyone's browsing history, to know what they were searching for. [T, CC, D]

Schools frequently carried out work in ongoing coordination with external agents (Social Services, associations…) in order to be able to gather information that facilitated relationships with both students and families.

> I think there are many behavioral problems, increasingly serious behaviors. Behind those behaviors… there is baggage. Those children have baggage and have suffered terribly. Yes, at the time we say: because this child, look what they did, they hit the teacher, they did this, but you see a child who is devastated. We follow up with them, with Social Services, with the families… Many of them are in supervised accommodation… [T, CA, I1]

> We coordinate with external agents. If you belong to or have a relationship with an association or collective, the Afro-American or Gau Lacho Drom….[3] Well, we also get in touch with them to see if the family situation is still ok or if something has changed. [T, CC, G2]

However, this alarming state of affairs generated discomfort and concern for teaching staff. Being fed up, fatigue and stress seemed to be the most frequent and sustained consequences over time. One of the direct repercussions of work overload and the bureaucratization of the system was stress:

> We usually take a lot of work home. More than anything, we have a lot going on in our heads. I quite often talk to teachers who suffer from stress, who don't sleep and I include myself among them. [T, CB, E11]

> I talked briefly with the consultant and she explained to me that she was going to take some days off because she needed it. She talked about the stress she was under and added, "I just can't do everything I'm supposed to." [T, CB, D]

Discussion and conclusions

This paper has analyzed and shared teachers' perspectives on family-school relationships. In general terms, it contributes to the promotion of social justice in education, and schools which are genuinely for all (Echeita, 2018; Corres-Medrano et al., 2022). Specifically, by using an ethnographic research approach, we have sought to build knowledge through the participants by identifying and highlighting the practices and experiences of teachers that promote the participation of families.

As detailed in the emergent categories obtained, schools themselves condition the participation of families, especially more vulnerable families, to a significant degree, and this has

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3 *Gau Lacho Drom* is a Roma association in Vitoria-Gasteiz offering specialized services to its community.

repercussions on children's socio-emotional development. In the three schools addressed in the study, teachers recognized that families had a lot to contribute to the teaching-learning process.

This study has focused on ways in which schools welcome new families. The existing literature (Nusche, 2009; Bernardi and Cebolla, 2014; Moreno, 2017; Arnaiz and Parrilla, 2019; Ceballos and Saiz, 2021, among others) argues that the participation of families in schools is a key element in teaching and learning processes and, consequently, in student's socio-emotional development. Moreover, in the current era of globalization, the need to create educational networks based on collaborative and trusting relationships between all the actors participating in schools, where families, students and teachers interact, has become more evident than ever (Santizo, 2011; Carneros and Murillo, 2017).

We focused on three public schools affected by school segregation that, in order to manage the ethnic-cultural diversity of the families in their school communities and promote the social inclusion of all their students, demonstrated a special sensitivity to collaboration with families. As was shown in the interviews, schools were important as spaces that promoted interpersonal relationships, and this was contingent on a positive vision of ethical-cultural diversity. Participants provided information related to the importance of educational practices from an inclusive perspective. An essential prerequisite to guarantee a real inclusion of migrant children in a way that responds to their basic needs and rights is that their families feel welcomed by schools (Simón and Barrios, 2019). Teacher-family collaboration is therefore indispensable to support children to achieve their maximum potential (Martínez-Garrido and Murillo, 2016).

In the three schools analyzed, constructive relationships between families and school were considered very important and necessary. In this sense, the three participating schools all understood that carrying out educational projects demands that families participate in the initiatives. The work carried out by one of the centers, considered a learning community, stands out. In its educational project it also recognized the primary role of neighborhood associations, neighborhood social services, cultural and social groups, etc. It considered that including all the agents participating in the community was the true guarantee of a real inclusion of migrant children and their families.

Another issue that teachers recognized was that of their involvement, not only professionally but personally, in school projects. A political commitment by staff can promote relationships with families and their participation in the day-to-day running of the school, which in turn enriches the teaching process (Vigo and Deste, 2017).

Teachers' contributions emphasized issues such as the need for training adapted to the specific needs of their schools and for a critical and reflective attitude about professional practice. This critical reflection on professional practice can form part of teachers' professional development (Vigo et al., 2016).

As has been stated repeatedly in this work, the results show that the segregation characteristic of the participating schools does not favor the inclusion of migrant children or the participation of families. Despite good intentions and political will, today the concentration of the most socially vulnerable children in certain schools continues to occur, a fact that violates their right to participate on equal terms (Echeita and Ainscow, 2011; Messiou, 2019). For these reasons, it is necessary to take a step beyond schools and families. As one of participating centers also clearly identified, the results of this paper once again highlight the need to recognize the fundamental role of all the agents involved in the community to which a school belongs (Flecha and García-Yeste, 2004). For this reason, there is an urgent need to build channels of communication and relationships between the community, families and schools in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the rights of all children, but particularly migrant children (Etxebarria and Sagastume, 2013; Hernández-Hernández et al., 2021).

One of the main limitations of this study was due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, as not all the people who initially participated in the observation sessions and individual interviews participated in the discussion groups held later. During the second phase of the research, one of the schools declined the invitation to participate in focus groups, stating that staff were overwhelmed by the process of adaptation to post-pandemic reality. In addition, due to the passage of time and the instability characteristic of employment in public schools in the Basque Country, many people who participated in the initial phases of this research were no longer working at the centers involved in the research. The possible effects caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, especially on disadvantaged families, would be a valuable topic for further research.

On the other hand, while the research presented here is part of a larger school ethnography focused mainly on the impact of school segregation on the socio-emotional development of children at risk, the non-inclusion of families in this paper is another limitation that must be recognized. Not including families' perspectives may have led to a certain bias in the interpretation of the results. Relatedly, not assessing the possible impact of language barriers on families' participation must be considered another limitation. Therefore, with respect to future extension of this research, the perspectives of both families and schools should be taken into account. This would involve adapting to and taking into consideration the impact of linguistic barriers both in terms of analysis and at the practical level of conducting interviews.

In short, we believe that the contributions made by this paper form a useful basis for future projects aimed at teacher training to improve professional practice, especially for staff working in public schools with high levels of segregation. The results show that a great deal of work is still being done on how schools can welcome new students and their families in a way that favors the inclusion of more vulnerable students. However, they also show that responses made from an inclusive perspective are subject to individual idiosyncrasies and the particular educational project of each school. In other words, there does not seem to be a common position regarding the inclusion of families in the response of schools with an inclusive approach. Therefore, it is concluded that further changes must still be made in the educational system to promote academic success and guarantee the real social inclusion of all students and their families and in all schools (Ahad and Benton, 2018).

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Human Ethics Research Committee, CEISH-UPV/EHU, BOPV32, 2/17/2014, code M10_209_134. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

Author contributions

IC-M was the primary author of the manuscript, conceptualization, formal analysis, writing—original draft, preparation, project administration, and funding acquisition. IC-M and IS-G: methodology, investigation, and resources. IC-M, KS-E, and IF-V: writing—review and editing and supervision. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be constructed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Collaboration between schools and museums for inclusive cultural education: Findings from the INARTdis-project

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The increasing heterogeneity in our communities is a reality and a foundational element of modern societies. This article deals with different aspects of political, social and cultural participation, processes of integration and inclusion. The aim of inclusion of all marginalized groups, among others integrating migrant communities, has to be a process of involving all sides—the local communities with publicly funded cultural institutions, the marginalized groups like migrant communities and the educational institutions in the local area. Therefore, the local community and schools have to be willing to make efforts in addressing interests and needs of all people, especially migrants or persons with disabilities. This paper presents the findings of the data collection in the project INARTdis in the countries Austria, Spain, North Macedonia and Portugal. Firstly, educators from the school and extracurricular sector as well as people from the fields of culture were asked to answer the question: *What is inclusive arts education and how can this be promoted through cooperation*? The analysis of inclusive access to cultural institutions and arts education was conducted in 2021 using a mixed-method design. Secondly, during museum visits, results on the learners' perspectives were collected. The aim was to find out w*hat makes it easier for visitors to access the museum*? The results show that, although the institutions and their professionals assume the principles of inclusion, their implementation is complex, either due to a lack of resources or due to the organizational structure of the arts institutions. All professionals consider that arts education promotes inclusive spaces as it allows for the participation and free expression of its participants. Likewise, they consider that accessibility is not really implemented and that the implementation of activities in arts institutions should favor the participation of users. In conclusion, there is a need to train professionals in inclusive arts education, to encourage collaboration between professionals and to implement inclusive strategies to promote participation and social inclusion.

Introduction

In the European Union, it is enshrined in legislation that the values of democracy and human rights play a guiding role in all partner countries. Here, it is ensured that the governments regulate the processes of integration for marginalized groups to enable full (social) membership for all (Hjerm, 2005).

While the term *integration* is still mainly used in socio-political contexts, here in particular also in the migration discourse (Treibel, 2015). It has increasingly been replaced in the school context or in the pedagogical discourse by the term *inclusion*, which promises to be less exclusionary. For some time now, (educational) institutions in particular have understood inclusion as a broad concept in the context of a pedagogy of diversity. A school of diversity explicitly includes various dimensions of heterogeneity, exemplified by disabilities, special starting conditions, e.g., language, social living conditions, cultural and religious orientations, background of migration, gender and special talents and religious orientations (Löser and Werning, 2015). Consequently, this broader understanding of inclusion includes all groups that are threatened by marginalisation within society.

In the school context, the latter basically means individual support within the framework of "learning together" or, in general, a new concept of social participation for all compared to integration–without judgmental labeling (Siedenbiedel, 2015b) or the idea of homogenization. Both terms have a variety of connotations (Werning, 2017) and are used in different ways, depending on whether—in a narrower version (Kuhl et al., 2015) —people with disabilities or—more generally—people with ascribed foreignness (which can also result from migration) are in focus. In any case, its use raises the dilemma of first affirmatively perpetuating classifications of heterogeneity in order to then, in a second step, overcome them through critique and inclusive strategies. Thus, it must be endured "that categories are reproduced through their thematization, but also that no critique of categories is possible without thematization, as early gender research already noted" (Schieferdecker, 2018, p. 197). In order to make the initial picture appear as little polarized as possible in this context, it was suggested to start mentally from a model of manifold overlapping lines of difference (Lutz, 2001) and to conceive of their intersections as intersectional connections (Schieferdecker, 2018) in order to correspond to the multi-layeredness of socially constructed notions of difference.

On the one hand, participation is understood as a precondition for inclusion, on the other hand, inclusion is understood as a means to achieve (political) participation. In general, "inclusion" seems to be more related to educational discourses, while the term participation also refers to a soft method of exercising power (Tiedeken, 2020), which makes the term participation for all a broader one that is more suitable in socio-political contexts. These and further aspects are involved and discussed through the main impulse of this article: The INARTdis EU-project, which reports on opportunities and barriers to social inclusion in the arts from the perspectives of teachers, museum staff and young visitors from inclusive classes in museums. The purpose of this article arises from research being carried out in a European project. "Fostering social inclusion for all through artistic education: developing support for students with disabilities - INARTdis" is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ program. The main purpose of the INARTdis project is to bring art and culture closer to students with disabilities in order to develop social inclusion through artistic creation spaces and to facilitate inclusion processes. This paper presents the findings of the data collection in the project INARTdis in the countries Austria, Spain, North Macedonia and Portugal. Educators, teachers, disabled and non-disabled students from socio-educational and artistic institutions participate in this project. Through a mixed and participatory methodology, the results obtained from the interviews, questionnaires and focus groups are analysed.

Participation in inclusive societies

In the process of participation, schools and other organizations of communities can offer learning experience for developing practical skills of democratic participation on the base of collaborative learning (Lee et al., 2021). Dealing with arts can contribute to this with its language of addressing both affects and knowledge.

Political participation and voter turnout

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contains the central provisions for their political participation. According to these provisions, persons with disabilities must be actively involved in all decision-making processes that affect them through the organizations that represent them on the one hand, and on the other hand, the entire electoral process (including polling stations) must be barrier-free (Forschungsbüro Menschenrechte, 2018). The voter turnout of persons with disabilities in Austria is lower than that of the total population (Forschungsbüro Menschenrechte, 2018). Of those who said they did not always (often, rarely, never) vote, the following reasons were given (multiple answers were possible): there is no interest, too little information, they do not feel represented in politics and the polling stations are not adequately accessible. Accessible information for all also was mentioned: more information, information about politics in simple language—so that everyone understands it, laws in simpler language, easier language in general (Forschungsbüro Menschenrechte, 2018).

Another aspect of political participation is the target group of migrants. According to Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers are included within the term "persons with migrant background." What they have in common is that they set their residence in the new home country for a minimum of 12 months (Eurostat Migration, 2021). People with migrant background are not represented in parliaments and governments; the voter turnout is

low (Bekaj et al., 2018). Since many people with migrant or disability backgrounds are excluded from formal political activities, the need to build non-formal opportunities of participation related to the process of integration is large (Bekaj et al., 2018). Civil society organizations like networks of associations, charities or grassroots initiatives can be alternatives and give voice to marginalized groups (Bekaj et al., 2018).

Social participation in communities

Integration policy as a legal framework that ensures equal treatment and equal participation in political and cultural life not only for people with migrant backgrounds but also for the needs of all groups of society (European Commission, 2018). Civil society organizations can cover a variety of interests of people with migrant or disability backgrounds, from humanitarian movements and environmentalist movements to forms of other neighborhood communities. Here, interaction and building bridges between the local community and the migrant group can be realized through inclusive work in communities. The first step towards realization is information for all about possibilities of non-formal participation, support in learning the language of the new home country and, at the same time, financial resources for integration are relevant (Bekaj et al., 2018).

The European Commission (EC) declares that Europe is built on migration, the heart of the EU is solidarity; therefore, inclusive societies have to be built to ensure equal participation in political and cultural life for everyone (European Commission, 2018). Intersectionality as the interaction of several disadvantageous factors means that, e.g., migrants are more often affected by these risks of social exclusion. Inclusive societies give a "fair share" to excluded groups, including key areas such as education, language learning, building of bridges between and within communities (Huddleston, 2009).

Participation in communities leads to an understanding of values and respect of cultural differences of both sides, so involvement is always a two-way process. The earlier the process of participation and integration starts, the greater the likelihood that people will engage constructively with the community (Huddleston, 2009). Therefore, the local community and schools have to be willing to take efforts in addressing interests and needs of all people, especially migrants or persons with disabilities (Brown et al., 2020).

Young learners' civic learning opportunities and participation in public life relate to structural inequality and to migration (Lee et al., 2021). Through arts-based approaches, young people can be engaged in civic learning in addition to the cognitive approach.

Cultural participation

The terms *participation* and *culture* denote interdependent phenomena or ideas, especially when *culture* is understood as the totality of discourse and *participation* is understood not merely as passive consumption but as active participation. A particularly close link between participation and culture arises when the latter addresses socio-political interests or in the case of those contemporary formats of culture that are to be addressed as "art," especially those that contribute to a disarmament of the concept of art in the sense of a critique of its sublimity, in other words, to a "lower hanging" art (Ullrich, 2003). Especially with the performative turn in the second half of the 20th century, new art forms such as actions, performances or happenings were established, whose focus is process-and action-oriented instead of result-or work-oriented. This has also softened the separation between actors and audience (Fischer-Lichte, 2004), which allows participation to be understood not only as passive participation in the reception of cultural phenomena, but also as participation in their creation, which also makes any humble attitude towards artists and their products, as claimed by Ullrich (2003), superfluous.

Legal framework

Committed to the guiding principle of inclusion, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2019), calls on all states to create socially inclusive measures for persons with disabilities to enable them to "participate fully and effectively in and be included in society" (Art. 3) – e.g., including in the areas of culture, leisure and sport (Art. 30). This first human rights convention of the 21st century was seen as having great potential for innovation (Bielefeldt, 2006). It builds on the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and can be seen not only as a pragmatic adaptation of legal frameworks, but also as a normative guideline for social transformations (Dietze et al., 2020).

Participation barriers and requirements

In the case of people with disabilities, access barriers or discrimination primarily concern the use of the physical environment and communication, but also, of course, access to information, education and culture. Accessibility is thus, as the evaluation of the National Action Plan on Disability in Austria for 2012–2020 states, a cross-cutting issue [BMSGPK (Bundesministerium Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz), 2020)] that needs to be considered in all areas of life and whose focus is mostly limited to physical accessibility without sufficiently considering awareness-raising measures. As far as leisure activities in general are concerned, their accessibility is still described as insufficient.

Cultural institutions are particularly challenged to promote the understanding of cultural diversity in a globalized world and to help break down all barriers and exclusions against the unfamiliar. In accordance with the UNESCO General Declaration on Cultural Diversity, this should be understood more and more as a common heritage of mankind or as a basic principle of the same (UNESCO-Generalkonferenz, 2001). Intercultural openness should be a cross-sectional task of all museums (Rahn, 2016) or cultural institutions.

The exclusion of disabled people leads to relegating them to "special worlds" of ambivalent character – between spaces of protection and integration and structural exclusion (Aichele, 2020). Moreover, this exclusion often results in further discrimination (Ruškus, 2020). With disabled people, people with a migration background share the fate of being considered deficient or the fate of being placed in exclusive spaces and taught in special schools. They achieve lower educational standards (Biffl and Skrivanek, 2011).

As far as cultural participation in museums and exhibitions is concerned, the prerequisites for this are beneficial in view of the fact that, compared to other art forms, accessibility is in principle more broadly effective and multiple, and thus in principle offers more variable possibilities for reception. In addition, however, art and culture are often seen as areas where the integration of migrants is most easily implemented. In general, the communication in artistic forms of expression, which sometimes transcends language barriers, and the creativity that is effective in the cultural sector are seen as having great potential with regard to social integration processes (Ziese and Gritschke, 2016a). In England, for example, the Code of Ethics developed by the Museums Association stipulates that everyone is treated "equally, with honesty and respect" (Museumsassociation, 2014). Checklists that consider different aspects of accessibility can easily be found, for example in the Creability Handbook (Reuter, 2020). A prerequisite for improved inclusion, both with regard to people with disabilities and with regard to people with a migration background, is that representatives from the respective group are involved in the conception of inclusive measures (Metzger, 2016). This shows that accessibility and participation are also mutually dependent. In particular, projects that see themselves as participatory art also aim decidedly at questioning positions of power and reducing prejudices against different identities (Ziese and Gritschke, 2016b).

In school contexts, inclusion implies responding to the heterogeneity of students through specifically adapted learning opportunities, at best in interdisciplinary teams that have factual, didactic and diagnostic competencies (Loffredo, 2016). Unlike the concept of integration, with *inclusion* the attention falls less on homogenization of students and more on their diversity. Thus, the idea of inclusion encompasses everyone, including the highly gifted or those who do not have special needs (Siedenbiedel, 2015a). A synesthetic or poly aesthetic approach, which includes music, dance as well as visual arts, not only promises new spatial or self-experiences, but thus enables learning that builds on bodily experiences (Schnabl-Andritsch et al., 2018). In any case, to consider the inclusion to be realized in art classes as preparation for cultural participation and involvement (Loffredo, 2016) outlines the great responsibility that schools have in the social context.

Cooperation between museums and schools

European museums undertake different efforts to overcome structural barriers and to engage with the diversity of society in

general, also in particular to engage elderly people or disabled persons, migrants or refugees (Sergi, 2021). This includes the museum's work towards meeting needs and interests of all this groups as well as actively working with persons outside of this groups in the contexts of Art (Sergi, 2021). Addressing diverse communities and involving all people in cultural life brings benefit to all persons of communities and can help to increase human and cultural capital (Brown et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the question of how far all groups are represented in products of modern art is relevant in order to help all visitors to rethink prejudices and to promote conversation about marginalized groups. If diversity of our society is visible in collections and artworks, museums meet their responsibilities not to continue generating further mechanisms of exclusion (Sergi, 2021).

The enormous number of migrants also calls upon memory: cultural and historical memory of the countries of birth for themselves and the generations of children born in the new home state (Asri, 2019). Transnational identities and core values of Europe can only be secured if all know about their roots. Therefore, museums should make the identity and memory visible, also for excluded groups, and they should map actual heterogeneity.

Participation in museums and collaborative production of exhibition can be successful if the creation happens at an equal level (Lynch, 2017). This aspect has to be considered also in work with people with disabilities as well as people with migrant backgrounds. Nobody wants to be a "beneficiary"; everyone wants to decide self-determinedly and to be seen as an expert of their own belongings. The experience of exclusion in the neighborhood and community should be made visible within the museum's walls (Brown et al., 2020). If this reality of prejudice is not addressed, the groups will not feel represented.

For schools, collaborations with museums can provide access to the community for all and open up new social spaces for marginalized groups (Sanders-Bustle, 2020). Through the participation of all learners in cultural life, school communities can help to realize the right of all to participate in society and to contribute to the realization of equitable and fair education.

Arts education: Importance in the formation of the person

Understanding art as a holistic element integrates all the possible ways of representing society and oneself, and which bases the critical and ideological value towards culture and visual and artistic education (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2017). Understanding the visual arts as a nucleus of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary training means that a multitude of disciplines are related in the training of people, so that the most common technologies such as painting, sculpture, drawing, photography or video form part of projects closely linked to science, literature, anthropology and sociology including contemporary discourses that will allow us to address the key issues of our present.

Contributions of arts education to the development of personality

The arts play a fundamental role in the education of children and young people, and the role of teachers. For this task, professionals who positively value diversity, who can design inclusive educational interventions, who conduct them with dynamic methodologies that encourage the participation of all and evaluate them formatively, are needed. These competences can be developed through the arts. Arts activities (i.e., visual arts, music, dance, drama) are part of the basic components of the curriculum from an early age and are inherently inclusive because they do not depend, to a large extent, on language proficiency or oral language skills (Barton, 2015).

Through arts, we learn to value the artistic and cultural heritage of all, to know the artistic languages, to understand the visual world from theory and practice and to learn to express ourselves freely with them, to develop critical and creative thinking and teachers learn creative methodologies that use the arts as a transversal axis to develop the competences of all areas (educating through the arts). Arts education (subsequently abbreviated as AE) has two types of justifications: those coming from the contextualist theory, who choose the AE curriculum based on the needs of the target group to achieve benefits at a psychological and social level; and those coming from the essentialist theory, who seek through AE to enhance those contents that contribute towards experience and knowledge, that only art can offer us.

AE, understood as a discipline, promotes the global learning of art: the conceptual, the critical and the productive elements. Thus, artistic or productive creation is an important part of AE that develops a series of competences on a cognitive, personal and social level in human beings, which are essential for the development of individuals. Iwai's report (2002), carried out at the request of UNESCO, *The Contribution of Arts Education to Children's Lives*, sets out the results on the aspects developed by AE: aesthetic development, socio-emotional development, socio-cultural development, cognitive development and academic progress.

Cognitive psychology, which deals with the mental processes involved in knowledge, includes, among others, thinking, problem solving and creation. Psychologists in this field have investigated the importance of AE in the development of the person in these areas and, more specifically, how artistic creation enhances a series of skills in these areas that help the formation of the individual. It follows from these statements that the individual will not be able to generate his or her own knowledge if he or she is not able to think, solve problems and create (Garcés, 2020).

Artistic activities are beginning to be understood as regulating mechanisms of emotional and creative energies that favor a profound contact with oneself and with the world. Through them, human beings can fully realize themselves, without abandoning certain aspects: they are heart and not only reason and feeling, spirit and thought, sensation and language, perception and expression (Freire, 2008). Rorty (2008) explains that education

must cover two processes that seem totally opposed, although they are complementary: socialization (social skills, interpersonal intelligence) and individualization (personal skills, intrapersonal intelligence). The first process, according to Rorty, is the process by which a person learns the customs of his or her environment, while individualization is the ability to separate oneself from the influences received and to assume or reject them from one's own personality. The important thing to underline is that without socialization there can be no individualization.

Below, we set out the capacities, skills, and attitudes that AE develops, both from the point of view of the contributions of cognitive psychology and from the point of view of the processes of individualization and socialization, which are embodied in different types of intelligence according to Gardner's (1994) theory – the cognitive level describes abilities such as perception, analytical thinking and imagination. At the personal level we find self-confidence, aesthetic experience and initiative/decision making: Who am I in the world and where do I stand? The perceptions and attitudes that people have in relation to their possibilities have an impact on their lives; for example, there are people who do not act because they think that they are not capable or that they cannot influence their environment. Artistic creation can contribute to changing these perceptions and attitudes while at the same time increasing their sense of freedom, self-knowledge and self-expression. On the social level, AE enables the development of a series of social skills and attitudes that help the formation of an individual to be able to participate actively in society and to be critical of those aspects that violate human rights (Mesías, 2019). We also consider art as a basic tool for the acquisition of other educational competences, as advocated by education through the arts movement – which considers artistic creation as the engine of the teaching-learning process. An education that uses creative and artistic pedagogies to deliver the whole curriculum is desirable, from an interdisciplinary perspective, with the aim of achieving supra-educational goals, not exclusively instructional ones, which have more to do with improving the quality of people's lives. As Hernández (2003) explains, AE allows us to understand the visual world, which students consider artistic manifestations as part of cultures and societies, because the manifestations are mediators of meanings.

Contributions of arts education to foster an inclusive society

Arts Education contributes to education in general a series of basic elements to favour a democratic, equitable, inclusive, free and critical society. The process of creation shows us that there is more than one solution or answer to a problem, question or conflict, which stimulates divergent thinking; there can be numerous results to a proposal (diversity and variability), all of them are valid if the person has really been involved in it (non-competitiveness). AE is based on a vision of democracy as respect for differences. In this context of democratic participation,

the free expression generated by the artistic creation of one's own individuality is considered a fundamental right of every human being, as it gives an outlet for the intrinsic potentialities of each individual and pursues the full development of his or her singularity, conscience and social reciprocity (Freire, 2008).

In education, there is a tendency to emphasize exactitude, concreteness; to undervalue and minimize the imaginative processes that are so characteristic of children's cognitive life; imagination in artistic creation has a license to fly (Eisner, 2004). It also exalts experience as a way of acquiring knowledge. Experiences must be connected to each other and to the learner's prior knowledge (meaningful learning). The process of creation, seen as a place and a time to freely express people's desires and concerns, brings us closer to a concept that seems to have disappeared from school nowadays: freedom of action and thought, far from conventions, opinions and prejudices. The aim of AE is to offer freedom to develop creativity in all human beings (and not exclusively to geniuses) and to extend it to other areas of education and culture.

In AE, processes are valued as learning spaces; the joy comes more from the journey than from the exclusive fixation on the destination (Eisner, 2008). What is important is the process, the immersion in the activity itself and the quality of life that emerges from the experience (Eisner, 2008). The ability to read artistic languages is a form of literacy that education must develop in order to enable learners to access and express themselves through the content and by promoting ethical values in the sense of a democratic, tolerant and respectful society (Iwai, 2002).

AE is a universal right for all learners, including the most vulnerable groups such as immigrants, cultural minorities and people with disabilities. AE should contribute directly to the solution of social and cultural problems facing the contemporary world, valuing the contribution of AE to health and therapy, strengthening and protecting community identities and cultural heritages, motivating learners to stay in school and curbing school drop-out through the Arts, or taking responsibility for social cohesion by promoting peace and intercultural dialog and mobility (Martínez, 2006).

Inclusive museums

One of the objectives of museums is the conservation of cultural heritage and its communication to the citizenship. Although museums originally had an exclusive character – only for some – advances in the democratization of culture have made it possible for them to establish spaces that seek to allow any citizen to access and to appropriate cultural heritage. This aim – to reach everyone – helps to understand the important changes that have been taking place in cultural and artistic centers for years. Many museums are immersed in an evolutionary process that tries to respond to new social realities.

Several issues are important when we talk about inclusive museums – firstly, accessibility, secondly experience for the visitors and finally, the opening of museums to everyone.

Accessibility and inclusion in museums

Inclusion is a philosophy, a frame of reference or theoretical model based on inclusive values such as sustainability, collaboration, respect for differences, trust and participation (Booth and Ainscow, 2015). It is a way of thinking and being in the world that guides the decisions that are taken in museums, both by professionals – curators, managers, cultural mediators and room supervisors – and visitors and that conditions what happens in this cultural space.

As opposed to the idea of a closed product (i.e., something regulated by law), inclusion refers to a process that each cultural institution carries out with the ultimate goal of reaching all citizens (Rieger et al., 2022). As Asensio et al. (2016) describe, an inclusive museum would be one that is proactively sensitive to diversity in all its areas of action – heritage, collections and their messages; public and educational functions, participants and programs; management of human resources, movable and immovable property and economic resources.

Accordingly, it is possible to think of an open and unfinished plan, extending over time, in which museums reflect on how to bring the contents, structures, services or actions that are valued closer to everyone – regardless of their age or social and economic situation. Therefore, after guaranteeing access, the cultural institutions make successive approaches that allow anyone to appropriate the contents that the museum hosts and to act on the museum environment. In the words of Benente and Minucciani (2020), it is possible to speak of appropriation when physical, cognitive or social and cultural accessibility have been previously satisfied.

Appropriation occurs when an aspect of the exhibition comes into direct and deep contact with the most intimate and personal spheres of the visitor. It is essential to identify what the visitors' wants and needs are, what kind of relationship they are looking for and that it offers them unique and personally valuable experience (Cerdan and Jiménez-Zarco, 2021).

Undoubtedly, this presents important challenges for cultural spaces. Responding to human diversity requires reviewing the ways in which museums promote the encounter and participation of all, while at the same time articulating programs that attract minority groups that still today come little closer to museums.

The inclusive model recognizes that human beings are intersected by many different social organizers – gender, ability, culture, social origin, and economic level – that condition visitors' biographies; therefore, knowledge of their interests or desires cannot be explained primarily or exclusively by one of these organizers. This fact demands that each museum space think about processes that guarantee access to any person and the design of situated responses, as opposed to actions designed and aimed at specific groups of visitors (Benente and Minuacciani, 2020). According to some authors, one should "be very careful about establishing normative guidelines that end up turning against the person and diversity itself" (Asensio et al., 2016, p. 44). Therefore, a balance is needed between the development of activities aimed at recognizing group

identities and building public loyalty, and proposals that focus on designing specific activities to cater to particular social groups, which feeds the development of segregating practices and hinders mutual understanding and social and cultural exchange.

This diversity of audiences and heritage assets invites museums to diversify and become more flexible in their proposals. In addition to traditional forms of dissemination such as exhibitions, workshops, shows or conferences within museums, new proposals are being added thanks to information and communication technologies. According to Fontal (2020), there are two important and innovative areas in the creation of apps: the digitalization of content and the use of virtual reality. These experiences facilitate greater interaction with museums inside and outside them and an increase in communication between visitors and cultural spaces. However, as the author points out, the use of technology in heritage environments has to make sense within an intentional teaching process, and its purpose has to be related to the aims of social science teaching, which are none other than to understand social reality; to train critical and creative thinking; and to intervene socially and transform reality, in a continuous process of improving democratic life (Fontal, 2020).

Museums – Diverse spaces

Museums reinforce social divisions and reflect inequalities in society (Newman, 2013; Vermeulen et al., 2019) or they can be part of change that promotes greater knowledge about human diversity and greater social cohesion. Museums are vital public spaces and should be places that are open to all and committed to physical and cultural access to all, including disadvantaged groups. They can constitute spaces for reflection and debate on historical, social, cultural and scientific issues. Museums should also foster respect for human rights and gender equality. Member States should encourage museums to fulfill all of these roles (UNESCO, 2016).

Undoubtedly, all this poses important challenges in which each museum must identify, review and assess the conditions or processes that promote access and experience for any visitor (called levers or facilitators of museum inclusion), as well as the elements that limit or impede it (barriers). Some of these barriers are easily identifiable because they have to do with physical elements – e.g., absence of ramps at the entrance for people who use wheelchairs to get around or seating areas in the rooms for those who cannot stand for long periods of time – but others have to do with physical elements associated with the type of relationships that are established, e.g., the difficulty for cultural mediators to adjust the language they use or the contents they deal with to the needs of visitors – or with the contents that the museum hosts – e.g., the scarce presence or visibility in permanent or temporary exhibitions of alternative cultural movements or "quoted" artists.

The review process must also include visitors, making them participants in the improvement and transformation of cultural centers. In this process of greater involvement, the role of cultural mediators will be nuclear, tracing paths that emerge from the museum and occupy the streets or are born in the neighborhoods and enter the museums.

About the project

The purpose of this article arises from research being carried out in a European project. "Fostering social inclusion for all through artistic education: developing support for students with disabilities - INARTdis" is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ program, under the Key Action 3: Support for policy reform. Social inclusion and common values: the contribution in the field of education and training. This started in December, 2020 and will finish in November 2023. The consortium of partners includes organizations from five different countries: The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) in Spain is the project coordinator, Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa (Portugal, IPL), Pädagogische Hochschule Steiermark (Austria, PHSt), Association for Promotion of Education, Culture, and Sport EDUCATION FOR ALL Skopje (North Macedonia, EfAS), Universidad de Cantabria (Spain, UC) and Thikwa Werkstatt für Theater und Kunst der Nordberliner Werkgemeinschaft gGmbH / Nordberliner Werkgemeinschaft gGmbH (Germany, NBW) are collaborating on it. The main purpose of the INARTdis project is to bring art and culture closer to students with disabilities in order to develop social inclusion through artistic creation spaces and to facilitate inclusion processes.

This general objective of the INARTdis project is in line with four of the priority areas of the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020: *accessibility* (making goods and services accessible to people); *participatio*n (ensuring that all people enjoy all the benefits of EU citizenship, removing the barriers to equal participation in public life and leisure activities, promoting the provision of quality community-based services); *equality* (combating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities), and *education and training* (promoting inclusive education and lifelong learning for all students). The objective is also in the direction of the new EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, especially related to the point 5.5 on improving access to art and culture, recreation, leisure, sport, and tourism, and it is also aligned with the 2023 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) that promotes building inclusive societies that are open to diversity and offer equal opportunities for all people.

Therefore, the specific objectives pursued by INARTdis project focus on promoting inclusive education and training and fostering education of disadvantaged learners. This is done by supporting educational staff, dissemination and scaling up of inclusive good practices, and developing and implementing inclusive methodologies through AE.

Objectives

This article covers two of the objectives pursued in the project: *What is inclusive arts education and how can this be promoted*

through cooperation and participation? How do we facilitate access and participation Education of all people in arts institutions? According to the research objectives and questions, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. The quantitative methods were used for gathering descriptive and objective data. The qualitative methods were used for in-depth analysis of these characteristics, keeping in mind different points of view (teachers, educators, etc.) in different artistic and socio-educational institutions. A survey, interviews, focus groups, observation (videos), photovoice and field notes were used as data collection methods in the research. However, only the results obtained from the survey, interviews and focus groups are presented in this article.

The research process was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, objectives were identified with the participation of professionals from arts institutions (museums, performance, theater,…) and socio-educational institutions (primary and secondary schools, special education schools and occupational centers). In the second phase, objectives were identified with the participation of professionals from art institutions and students.

Methodology

The selection of the sample was non-probabilistic, purposive. It consisted of professionals in the socio-educational and artistic institutions ($n = 388$) and students ($n = 408$) of the regions to which the partners belong.

In the first phase, three instruments were used to collect data: a survey, interview and focus group. A survey was conducted to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the target audience, professionals of both educational and cultural institutions. The survey used an online questionnaire composed of a set of 10 questions comprising open-and closed-ended questions. The online questionnaire was sent to the management teams of the educational and artistic institutions in the partner countries, who later distributed it to the relevant type of employees/professionals in their institutions. Below is an example of the survey questions related to the concept of inclusion (see Table 1).

In sum, 388 professionals from the five participating countries completed the questionnaire. 78% of the participants were women and the rest were men. Only 15% had backgrounds related to inclusive education and 25% had studied art education. Likewise, 21% had specialized backgrounds in art and inclusion. 35% worked in arts institutions and the rest in socio-educational institutions.

Prior to using it for the survey, the questionnaire underwent a process of inter-judge validation. A total of 37 experts (professors, teachers, educators in educational and cultural institutions, Master's and PhD students in the fields of art and education) from all the project partners' countries revised the questionnaire according to three criteria: important, relevant, and univocal, and then adapted it to each partner's context. The

reliability of the questionnaire was acceptable with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.86.

The interviews were composed of 20 questions that aimed to obtain information regarding inclusive processes related to art: barriers and opportunities and key elements to implement inclusive art projects. Interviews with educational and cultural institution professionals were conducted in all the consortium partner countries either in person or *via* online communication platforms. The length of the interviews ranged from 27 to 80 min and were audio and/or video recorded. In total, 52 interviews were conducted. Below is an example of the interview questions related to the implementation of inclusive arts projects (see Table 2).

The focus groups were organized around the key question: How do you understand an inclusive art project? In total, 8 focus groups were held, with participation from 56 professionals. The focus groups were mixed, including professionals from artistic and socio-cultural institutions. The focus groups were conducted by one or two members of each project partner, they ranged in length from 52 to 90 min and were audio or video recorded.

In the second phase, tours to cultural and arts centers were organized with an aim to explore with visitors – inclusive groups of students accompanied by project partner organizations' representatives – the aspects that could be improved in the cultural or artistic centers regarding the barriers to access and/or the experience of visiting the cultural space and the activities that can be identified as good practices. The visitors were people with and without disabilities from different educational and training stages (primary and secondary school, occupational centers, special schools, self-advocacy movements, co-researcher groups or artists with intellectual disabilities).

Different qualitative techniques were used for data collection. Specifically, two interviews were designed – one for the visitors ($n = 408$, students) and the other for the professionals ($n = 85$). The visitor interview was designed to be used in two ways. For smaller groups of visitors (6–7 persons), the interviews could be conducted during the visit to the cultural center, whereas for larger groups or guided tours, it could be conducted at the end of the visit. The interview script for the visitors included a total of 36 questions. Before the visit to the artistic institution, the visitors and their families were informed about the objectives of the project and the informed consent document was signed. Below is an example of the interview questions related to physical accessibility (see Table 3).

In addition, interviews with professionals affiliated with the cultural/arts centers were performed with an aim to find out what cultural centers do to facilitate access and the participation of all people and what issues they find important. Another goal was to reflect on the good practices and possible improvements in cultural spaces. Each interview consisted of at least 2 or 3 staff members from each of the artistic or cultural spaces visited. The defined duration of the interviews was one and a half hours. The questions were organized around 3 sections: Values and rights related to inclusion; management and organization for inclusive artistic projects; and the experience of inhabiting the cultural

TABLE 1 Example survey questions: concept of inclusion.

2.- <u>CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE PROCESSES LINKED TO ART</u>

9. Please indicate three characteristics/features that you think can boost and facilitate art projects based on the promotion of participation and accessibility for all, in the cooperation between equals and in the recognition and value of the differences between people.

1. _____
____
2. _____
_____
3. _____
_____

10. Please indicate three barriers that you perceive related to the implementation of art projects based on the promotion of participation and accessibility for all, in the cooperation between equals and in the recognition and value of the differences between people.

1. _____
____
2. _____
____
3. _____
_____

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space. The interviews were audio or video recorded and later transcribed. Below is an example of the interview questions related to management and organization (see Table 4).

The statistical analysis of the data obtained by the questionnaire was performed using the SPSS (v24) software. The descriptive analysis of the received quantitative data was carried out: frequency tables and grouped bar plots were used to summarize the data, a description with the mean was obtained for quantitative variables, open-end responses were categorized.

The qualitative analysis of the data gathered from interviews and focus groups carried out the discourse analysis technique through the elaboration of a hermeneutic matrix. Dimensions and categories followed a mixed process, deductive and inductive. The dimensions originated from a theoretical framework and the categories (b.2 and c.4) were emergent from the field research and incorporated to the matrix. The coding of the categories was carried out by the NVivo software (v1.5). The dimensions and categories used for the analysis of the data collected in the research are presented below (see Table 5).

Results

The results presented here do not claim to be representative: The selection of the participants in the questionnaire survey (388 responses) was random (snowball system); for the qualitative survey (52 interviews and 8 focus group discussions), people were chosen in part by being able to contribute experience and knowledge to the subject area. In the course of the project, the institutions and individuals who tended to be addressed and to

be more willing to cooperate were those who did not have substantial deficits in their awareness of and approach to inclusion. Furthermore, the diversity within the two groups focused on here (people with disabilities and/or with a migration background) must also be pointed out, which makes it difficult to give all related problem situations the same attention.

As the results show, arts institutions organize a variety of activities in order to bring art and culture closer to society as a whole and are aware of the transformative power they have in favor of social inclusion. In general, arts institutions are open to suggestions for improvement, putting people and their needs at the center. However, in order to have a more accurate picture, the results have been grouped from the perspective of professionals and from the perspective of students.

Perspective of professionals

Although arts institutions claim that they are making a great effort towards full inclusion, there is still a long way to go. Many of these institutions consider that the concept of inclusion is linked to certain vulnerable groups. Hence, sometimes exhibitions are organized for certain groups of people, e.g., immigrants, people at risk of social exclusion. Moreover, these exhibitions are also conditioned by the perspective of the author of the exhibition, so "*you cannot do anything if the author does not take into consideration all human diversity*" (UAB-FG-05). What does seem evident is the opening of cultural institutions to avant-garde movements that bring these institutions closer to the most vulnerable groups, bringing art and culture closer to society as a whole in order to promote social inclusion, since "*all citizens, regardless of their characteristics and ways of doing things, are therefore entitled to exercise citizenship in an active way as full citizens*" (IPL-interview-04).

In this sense, professionals from cultural and socio-educational institutions consider that inclusion is directly related to the recognition, acceptance, and value of differences between people within society, where everyone is valid and "*all people must be treated equally and included in society itself*" (EfAS-interview-04). It is a matter of law ("*It is actually a human right*") in which society must provide opportunities for the development of each person, regardless of individual characteristics or particularities and the society must provide equal opportunities for life for all of us. So, professionals affirm that inclusion must permeate all levels of society, including the cultural level. They therefore confer on it a status of universality, where all people can actively participate in the development of a more equitable society: "*it suggests openness to me, it suggests two words: openness and sharing (..) inclusion is more than opening and welcoming, it is sharing and understanding*" (UC-interview-06).

Besides, all professionals consider that arts education creates in its essence spaces that promote inclusion as they are spaces where participation is facilitated, and people can express themselves freely. Everyone feels accepted and valued. There are no predetermined

TABLE 2 Example interview questions: implementation of inclusive arts projects.

11. What are the key aspects to consider in the design of an artistic project that promotes inclusion processes? Who benefits? Why?

12. How do you think the beneficiaries, including vulnerable people, of the project should participate in the design, development and evaluation of the inclusive art project?

13. What methodologies should be used in artistic projects to encourage the participation of everyone? Which ones could you use?

14. Do you feel confident in the use of different artistic languages? In what?

15. How do you carry out collaboration between professionals to facilitate inclusive arts projects? Can you explain characteristic features (or main aspects) of a positive collaborative experience regarding inclusive artistic projects?

16. How would you create spaces to work on inclusive artistic projects?

17. Do you feel capable of making inclusive art projects dynamic? Can you explain why?

18. What are the personal traits that limit / empower you in the development of inclusive artistic projects?

TABLE 3 Example interview questions: physical accessibility.

13. Open question: What have you seen at the museum/cultural/artistic space?

14. How is the entrance to the museum/artistic/cultural cultural space? Did you use stairs, lift..?

15. Did you leave your things at the entrance? Why?

16. Did you do things on your own at the museum/artistic/cultural space? Which ones?

17. Was it easy to move around the museum/artistic/cultural cultural space? Why?

18. What were the signs like (to move around the museum/artistic/cultural space or to find the toilets)?

19. Were you able to touch things at the museum/artistic/cultural space? Which ones? What did you think?

20. Was there a place to rest at the museum/artistic/cultural cultural space? Where?

21. Did you use the toilet? Did you have any difficulties? Why?

22. Were there fountains (drinking water) in the museum/artistic/cultural cultural space?

23. Were the museum spaces adequate for the number of visitors?

24. Were the signs easy to read? Were they at your height? Was there enough light?

25. Closing question: What could the museum/artistic/cultural space staff do to improve it?

prejudices. Everyone has a place. All professionals define arts education as "*an activity that promotes an expression that can be shared, and that includes everyone, and leaves no one behind*" (IPL-FG-01). Moreover, arts education promotes the integral development of the person both cognitively, emotionally and socially, as it increases self-confidence, self-esteem, self-knowledge, creativity and the sense of belonging to a group: "*[it] allows for the expression of thoughts, feelings and knowledge, as subjectivity is involved in each of them*" and "*artistic activities often have an enormous impact on their personal identity, on their self-confidence, on their own creativity and on their imagination*" (PHSt-FG-07).

Likewise, professionals believe that arts education allows for the use of different forms of expression, of different languages in a collaborative environment, where each person has the possibility to live, experiment and participate according to his or her abilities in an absolutely free way:

"*People can express themselves in many ways, in many forms, and everyone can have their own opinion, where they can develop better, where they will feel better. One will feel better at drawing, another will feel better at singing. And the point is that we can feel good as people by doing one of these activities, which helps us to grow as people*" (UAB-FG-07).

On the other hand, participation is seen as an opportunity to generate collaborative spaces in which each person with his or her individual characteristics contributes to the integral development of all people, and to the society as a whole. However, it is necessary for people to empathize, be sensitive to and understand the needs and characteristics of their fellow citizens.

Nevertheless, for active participation to be facilitated, it is essential to give people "*a voice and be able to express it in different ways … and that's why I would want everyone to have this voice and be able to show and express what they want to express*" (PHSt-interview-01); professionals consider that the participation and

inclusion of all people do not seem to be clear priorities in several of the institutions analyzed, so the content of the exhibitions or the interaction established with the works does not ensure an inclusive experience for all, and the design of websites, the type of existing brochures or explanatory posters are not fully inclusive.

Professionals at the institutions found it difficult to specify how to incorporate inclusion and/or participation in the cultural activities during the entire process (e.g., design, implementation, dissemination, etc.):

o Resources (material and human) were not always available to ensure that all people feel welcome (e.g., sign language interpreter, videos with subtitles, posters and signage, etc.).

o Some institutions stressed the importance of knowing in advance the specific needs and characteristics of individuals in order to provide the necessary support and ensure that all participants have equal opportunities for access.

o Some institutions highlighted the importance of reviewing ratios for working with small groups to facilitate more personalized support.

In fact, it is a question of "*[making] it accessible to everyone, [being] inclusive is to put the focus on the person, [being] the protagonist of what we want them to develop*" (UC-interview-03).

Although art institutions advocate making accessible spaces, this intention is often subject to the institution's own organization and its awareness of this issue: "*it is important, but not a priority..*

TABLE 4 Example interview questions: management and organization.

The organization and management of the budget is a complex issue. However, we wonder if there is a budget line aimed at accessibility in the center?

Is there a person in charge of accessibility in the center? What kind of actions or functions do they perform?

Is it possible to implement changes or improvements at any time? Who participates in the decisions that are made? How are improvement proposals valued or analyzed? Who are the people involved in these decisions?

Are proposals for citizen participation launched from the center? (e.g., type of events, schedules, organization...) How often are they held? what methods are used?

Specifically, are working groups developed with associations or entities that work with people with disabilities and with other socially vulnerable groups?

Is there a training plan for the staff? How are the contents of the plan selected?

Are collaborations developed with professionals from other disciplines to adopt other approaches?

If so, what is being considered?

If not, why do you think it is missing?

Are exhibitions or cultural proposals that support culture as a tool for social transformation included? (e.g., awareness raising, visibility..) Are there any activities or workshops that address socially relevant topics?

TABLE 5 Dimensions and categories.

Dimensions	Categories
a. Concept of inclusion and the processes linked to art	a.1. Concept of inclusion: values and rights
	a.2. Contribution of art to inclusive processes
	a.3. Opportunities to promote inclusion through arts projects
	a.4. Barriers to promote inclusion through arts projects
b. Key elements to implement inclusive arts projects	b.1. Design of inclusive art projects
	b.2. Identify people's specific needs
	b.3. Methodology in the development of inclusive artistic projects
	b.4. Organizations of the spaces for the development of inclusive artistic projects
	b.5. Support (knowledge, mastery and access to resources and support in the context).
c. Experience of living artistic institutions: Good practices and opportunities for improvement	c.1. Physical accessibility.
	c.2. Access to information.
	c.3. Content.
	c.4. Educational activities
	c.5. Interaction with the professionals.

we go little by little" (UAB-interview-03). As the professionals of the art institutions state, physical accessibility sometimes requires "*a strong economic investment because the museum occupies an old building where this accessibility for all was not contemplated*."

In several cultural institutions, the need for illuminated signs to indicate the way on the floor and/or to relocate exhibited works located in the middle of the rooms has been included in the feedback given by users. In various cultural institutions, users highlighted the need for spaces to sit and/or rest.

In regard to cognitive accessibility, information was not presented in different formats (e.g., tactile models, Braille, font size on signs, easy to read language on posters, etc.), or with audio to accompany the explanatory texts on posters/signs. Besides, in some institutions, there was not an intense interaction with the display material, neither in terms of the presentation of real material, nor in having a sufficient quantity for everyone to interact with.

Some professionals considered that "*sometimes the web or brochures use too much technical language which makes them difficult to understand and makes them less interesting for users*" (EfAS-interview-02). And this is more evident in arts institutions that do not have a specialized accessibility department within their organization. Within institutions with a department specializing in accessibility, they make sure that the content is accessible when designing activities; in institutions that do not have such a department, they do what they can, and it is not a priority.

Professionals recognize that there are a number of barriers as well as facilitators to implementing truly inclusive arts projects. From the results of the questionnaire, the professionals state that the key elements that facilitate the development of inclusive arts projects are the characteristics of the project itself with an inclusive approach and the availability of human and material resources (see Graph 1).

In this sense, professionals consider that for an artistic project to be inclusive, it must be accessible, participatory, person-centered and encourage creativity and experimentation, in such a way that "*it could be of great benefit to all, and the community could provide quality programs, projects where everyone could take an equal part and benefit*" (EfAS-interview-02).

This implies that the activities incorporate appropriate communication systems for all users as well as the use of inclusive language. It is important that methodological strategies and techniques for self-expression through artistic languages as well as educational strategies are used for accessing culture and art (e.g., tactile models, easy to read texts, etc.), including the creation of facilitating resources for cultural inclusion. The use of participatory methodological strategies, both for training and for working with visitors in cultural spaces or using different cultural spaces in the community (e.g., urban gardens or public parks) is essential.

Professionals consider that, through methodological strategies for active participation, inclusive arts projects should be open, flexible and dynamic proposals which recognize the interests of the participants and are flexible according to their needs, identifying and addressing barriers to access and ensuring dissemination is accessible.

However, in order for the development of the inclusive artistic project to be adequate and existent, close collaboration with socio-educational institutions is necessary, and this implies:
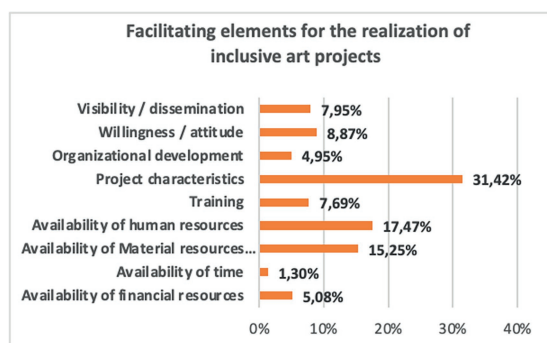
GRAPH 1
Facilitating elements to inclusive art projects.

GRAPH 2
Barriers to implement inclusive art projects.

o   Advance notice would facilitate the preparation of visits and the anticipation of participants' needs.

o   Knowledge of activities would be useful in order to anticipate some elements or prepare students in schools.

o   Finding out from the professionals of the cultural spaces what educational resources would facilitate the group's access to culture.

o   Encouraging the participation of accompanying external professionals in the activity.

o   Preparing closing activities to allow for reflection on the activity (this aspect is emphasized in some sites).

On the other hand, professionals consider that the lack of adequate infrastructure and organization of cultural institutions, as well as a lack of human resources, hinders the implementation of inclusive arts projects (see Graph 2).

It is particularly relevant that professionals also see a lack of consensus in defining inclusion as a barrier to developing inclusive arts projects: *"Unfortunately, when we think of inclusion, we always think of the fact that there are people with disabilities whom we want to integrate in some way or who can participate, but actually inclusion means everyone"* (NBW-interview-01).

Although they all assume that inclusion refers to facilitating the participation and learning of all people, when developing inclusive arts projects, they end up adapting them to a specific vulnerable group.

Without a doubt, developing inclusive processes in society requires a strong belief in the principles of inclusion, social justice and equity. This is not a voluntary, charitable act towards a group of vulnerable people but a firm belief that these principles should permeate society as a whole: *"For me, it is basic that [inclusion] cannot depend on the voluntariness of anyone. There has to be a commitment that facilitates visibility and participation. (..) there has to be commitment, that's fundamental"* (UC-FG-02).

This commitment directly involves the organization and management of arts institutions. According to the professionals, the management teams of these institutions should be aware of the benefits of the inclusion process in their institutions and

offer material and human resources to facilitate it, implementing training plans that include aspects related to the recognition of human diversity and social inclusion and participation. Currently, there is no recognized network of professionals with whom to share information, hold regular meetings or exchange information on promoting inclusion in cultural spaces.

One aspect that professionals consider key is the establishment of collaborative processes between institutions. Some institutions have training spaces for sharing best practices among professionals from different institutions. In some cases, regular meetings are established between the cultural institution and the groups of self-advocates with the purpose of expressing their needs and evaluating exhibitions. Some of the cultural institutions are focused on inclusion with people with disabilities, generating specific lines of work on this. They are conceived as experimental fields for inclusive educational work in museums. Working groups have been developed with different representatives (people with and without disabilities and educational, artistic and cultural institutions) to explore the creative potential of inclusive educational processes and sustainable collaboration between inclusive schools and museums. These are interdisciplinary and action-focused exchanges. They also generate weekly workshops for families and children with and without disabilities. These collaborative experiences between artistic spaces and different organizations working with children and adults with disabilities (e.g., visual impairment, hearing impairment, etc.) improve accessibility and/or participation.

From this collaborative perspective, professionals consider that it is important to:

o   develop teams in cultural spaces with a high awareness of accessibility.

o   create teams with different professionals promoting inclusive cultural projects.

o   involve visitors in the collaborative construction of creative products.

o   generate interdisciplinary and diverse workspaces, with professionals from different fields and with different skills, where artists have a relevant role.

Perspective of students

Undoubtedly, the activities carried out during the visits with the students were the most highly valued by the students. During the visits to the art institutions, the activities prepared for the group of students were spaces for participation where the students felt very empowered doing lots of things, experimenting, manipulating objects: "*I liked the fact that we built the boxes the most. We worked with drills, I liked that very much*" (NBW-interview-03). In fact, the students showed that it was the activities that they liked most about the visit, as "*they let me express myself as I wanted to*" (UC-interview-02). For some students, this means the possibility of exchanging ideas with other classmates, creating with different materials, or "*using their imagination to create things*" (EfAS-interview-03).

In all the art institutions, the educators welcome the participants in the hall of the institution, giving a brief explanation of the art institution and the visit: "*they explained to us what we were going to see, where we should go and the rooms we would see*" (UAB-interview-04). The way in which the educators of the artistic institutions transmit the information has also had a significant influence on the access to it. It has been observed that many of these educators interacted a lot with people, questioned them, gestured a lot and adapted the vocabulary: "*The guided tour was very cool and fun. We were also asked if we liked it*" (PHSt-Interview-03).

Although methodological strategies promote active participation, they should be more open, flexible and dynamic, which recognize the interests of the participants and are flexible according to their needs, identifying and addressing barriers to access. In this sense, some students point out the need to diversify the activities and the methodologies used. There have also been visits in which students have said that they have felt bored at times because the dynamic was not very participatory, with more emphasis on explanations.

"*I would like to spend more time in the museum space, involved in other tasks, different from those that the institution already offers*" (IPL-interview-01).

"*I hate reading and cannot read the small print. Listening would be great, then I understand it. It would be good for those who cannot or do not want to read…be able to touch more works to understand the works better*" (PHSt-interview-02).

"*..they teach few things, and I would have liked them to have taught more… It would have been nice to be able to play and do something more interactive*" (UAB-interview-06).

"*We are children, and we want to touch everything (..)*" (UC-interview-04).

From this point of view, students express the need to adapt the time of activities ("*I was trying to read things, but we were going so fast and between looking, I did not have time*" (UC-interview-05)) and to have spaces for play and interaction ("*More cool things, it's already cool here, but more cool rooms where you can also have fun inside. Like with the carpet room, where you can play as well*" (PHSt-interview-03)).

Accessibility was also considered, although it was not always fully guaranteed (e.g., external access, parking spaces, spaciousness of the rooms, lighting, suitable positioning/hanging height of the works of art, etc.). Artistic and cultural spaces, exhibitions, etc., were often not suitably prepared for the enjoyment of everyone. Some students point out the need for signs to guide them through the museum ("*I would have liked someone to show us the way when we arrived. Or even signs and arrows to know where to go*" (PHSt-interview-05), as well as the use of alternative communication systems, especially for students with sensorial disabilities:

"*They could have someone to explain things using sign language and braille, so we know who it's by (referring to the authorship of the works) (..) I think the first thing is that we put that in for the signing, because we also have a classmate from the other class who's deaf*" (UC-interview-03).

"*..it was not very easy to understand what was being said and the child with hearing aids could not hear well…it would be appropriate that there are guides for blind people to explain and describe the pictures and sensations*" (UAB-interview-06).

"*..the letters were very small, and I could not read them..*" (EfAS-interview-02).

On the other hand, some students say that physical accessibility, although it is very present, needs to be improved, as access to some spaces is complicated: "*At the beginning, the accessibility is very good, but the further you get into the museum, the more it decreases - doors are difficult to open and the guidance system for the blind is missing*;" (PHSt-interview-05) "*I needed support to move to the bathroom*" (IPL-interview-02) and "*..if I am not mistaken, there were only stairs to climb, then, for people who have difficulty walking or in wheelchairs, it would be difficult for them. So, I would change it so that there would be mini ramps*" (UAB-interview-07).

Another aspect highlighted by students is the possibility of having space for rest. In some of the visits, the students expressed that it would have been appropriate to take a break during the activity, mid-morning, to have something to eat: "*I would have liked to take a break for lunch..*" (UAB-interview-05) and "*there were not enough benches to sit and look at the works while on the guided tour*" (NBW-interview-03).

Discussion

Nowadays, inclusion is emerging strongly in societies and inclusion processes are becoming more visible and necessary in order to achieve fairer, more equitable, and ultimately more democratic societies. Inclusion is a continuous and constant process of transformation that includes social awareness-raising behavior aimed at overcoming the barriers that some people

encounter (Echeita, 2016). But such a process requires an inclusive vision shared by the whole community, based on respect for diversity and not homogeneity, eliminating any form of discrimination and respecting the rights of all people, in order to avoid spaces of exclusion and protection (Aichele, 2020).

Despite the commitment of national and international agencies to the development of more inclusive contexts, there is still a long way to go. Inclusion processes are never-ending and undoubtedly complex, as they require significant transformations in the contexts where they take place (Nilholm and Göransson, 2017). It is true that the ethical and moral convictions underpinning the construct of inclusion are largely accepted by society (Etxeberria, 2018), but we cannot ignore the huge global north–south inequalities and the high rates of marginalization, inequality and social exclusion in Western countries (UNESCO, 2020).

From a systemic perspective, the generation of spaces for participation in artistic contexts becomes a key element for the development of social inclusion processes, promoting an improvement in the quality of life also for vulnerable people. It is not only about making contexts accessible, but also about making them participatory. Accessibility and participation are closely linked (Rahn, 2016); a person cannot participate if he or she cannot access the exhibition. However, participation goes beyond accessibility. It is about creating spaces in which people interact with their peers, are accepted and recognized, and can make decisions on issues that affect them. However, this implies that institutions need to be aware of the specific needs of people in order to make them the protagonists of their learning within the dialogic space promoted by artistic expression (Cerdan and Jiménez-Zarco, 2021). In this sense, a key facilitator is directly linked to giving voice and actively listening to the people who participate in the projects, so that their interests, needs and motivations are taken into consideration (Robledo, 2018). This requires, among other things, that the processes of artistic creation take place at the same level between the creator and the beneficiary (Lynch, 2017).

Furthermore, the degree of accessibility of the context prevents people with some kind of limitation, whether physical, sensory or intellectual, from moving around autonomously and on equal terms with the rest of the people, which is why the implementation of the principles of universal design is required to facilitate access and participation (Alonso Arana, 2017). This includes not only facilitating physical access to the museum but also sensory and cognitive access. The diversity of people who access art institutions makes it essential that their proposals are flexible and based on collaborative methodologies. Thus, professionals in art institutions need training related to the conceptualization of inclusive art projects, which means clarifying what inclusion means, what it entails and what characterizes this type of project, from the point of view of the fusion between art and inclusion and how art facilitates the process of socialization of people (Calderón, 2014).

Experiences with art can, additionally help to build social networks that strengthen the links between people, as well as between people and the contexts in which the experiences take place. Art, understood as the set of human creations which express a sensitive vision of the real and imaginary world, and therefore arts education, acquire an extremely relevant role. Arts education not only develops a set of visual, expressive and creative abilities, but also attitudes, habits and behaviors in a means of interaction, communication, expression of feelings and emotions, which allows for an integral formation of the person.

Similarly, as Aparicio (2014) points out, art plays two fundamental roles in this search for social inclusion: on the one hand, it turns people with disabilities into agents of socialization that model and shape the paradigms of understanding disability and promote lifestyles associated with it; and, on the other, it is capable of shaping legitimate spaces of expression of, for and with people with disabilities and the communities of which they are a part.

Finally, experiences through different artistic languages can be a valuable tool for people to express what they feel or to communicate emotions, without predetermined schemes. According to Robledo (2018), in art there is no room for marginalization in expression, processes of identity and belonging to the community are promoted. As Sanders-Bustle (2020) states, collaboration between schools and arts institutions can foster the creation of new social spaces for marginalized groups and become an opportunity to express experiences of exclusion or injustice (Lee et al., 2021).

The next steps within the project presented here will be the completion of the research project and the implementation of several inclusive mediation projects and art actions which will provide the institutions with practical answers for the further development of their inclusion concepts. In addition, a handbook will be created that can accompany the implementation of inclusive projects and the topic will be further disseminated in exhibitions. A guide to the implementation of inclusive art and museum spaces will be available to museums and schools beyond the duration of the project. This is also linked to the hope of being able to sensitize even more people to the topic in the future.

Conclusion

Participation in society and exchange within society are basic human rights; various UN Conventions ensure that participation in cultural life is possible for everyone. *Culture* and *participation* are closely intertwined, but especially in contemporary formats, such as those brought about by the performative turn or a socio-politically interested art. Although there is a real motivation from international and national bodies for the development of inclusive processes in all spheres of society, especially in the social and cultural spheres, there is certainly still some way to go.

Artistic and socio-educational institutions assume inclusion as a process to be implemented in their institutions, as it is a full

exercise of the right, as set out in current legislation. Although professionals consider inclusion as a utopian concept, they state that inclusion recognizes and values the differences between people and can generate spaces for participation. In this sense, arts education contributes to the promotion of participation as it allows that all people can have free expression and develop a perception of usefulness and functionality. The implementation of inclusive artistic projects promotes the creation of spaces of freedom so that participants can choose, think, decide, solve problems, etc., promoting decision-making by the participants and developing a sense of belonging and cohesion in the group. The main element of inclusive artistic projects is the development of participatory processes. In this sense, it is essential to create multidisciplinary teams, as well as vulnerable people to foster the exchange of knowledge.

However, there are some barriers that make their implementation difficult: infrastructure in the institutions, few human resources, poor organizational development, environmental barriers, or training of professionals.

Thus, it is necessary to incorporate educational strategies for access to culture and art: alternative communication systems, universal design for learning, easy reading, information in Braille, models to access information through touch, audio descriptions, signing guides, videos with subtitles.

From a people-centered care perspective, coordination between professionals from the different institutions that accompany people with disabilities is necessary in order to truly articulate inclusive art projects. Likewise, it is essential to develop training projects that raise awareness of the processes of inclusion, which means knowing, experimenting, and experiencing inclusive processes with and for people with disabilities. But it is also essential to advise professionals to incorporate inclusive methodologies in the different artistic languages, in order to minimize the barriers that still exist in cultural contexts.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because of the confidential nature of the data and the restrictions agreed with the respective ethics committees. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to JMS-G, josep.sanahuja@uab.cat.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by UAB Ethics Committee. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

Author contributions

MG is the leading author, planning, and coordinating this contribution. JMS-G is the inventor and coordinator of the project. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Beyond schooling: Push and pull strategies to integrate immigrants in the community

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More than one million immigrants arrive in the United States each year. The diversity of languages and cultures brought by immigrants makes America a more multicultural and inclusive nation, but also presents some challenges as immigrants engage in their socialization process. Schools play a central role in acculturating immigrant families and their children, and they serve as mediators of the relationships between these families and the larger society. This article describes a project in a school district in New Jersey that focuses on integrating immigrant families in the community. The framework we developed includes a number of strategies that were grouped into two categories: "push" and "pull." Push strategies refer to the strategies developed by the school to offer families resources and connect them to an array of services that assist immigrants. Pull strategies focus on bringing families from the community to the school building and creating mechanisms to include them in both curricular and extra-curricular activities to strengthen their sense of belonging and identity.

KEYWORDS

immigrants, families, schools, community, socialization, acculturation, strategies, education

Introduction

According to data from the Pew Research Center, more than one million immigrants arrive in the United States each year (Budiman, 2020). This immigrant population is very diverse, and almost every country in the world is represented among US immigrants. The diversity of immigrants is also represented in the number of languages spoken and the cultures that are present in different communities across the US once these immigrants become part of the American society. The diversity brought by immigrants presents both opportunities and challenges for many communities. The opportunities are usually reflected in terms of the contributions these immigrants make to the American society, such as diversifying the work force by bringing new skills, new ways of thinking and solving problems, and ultimately increasing economic growth, as well as adding aspects of their culture to make America more multicultural. Immigrants contribute to the development of the arts, music, literature, cuisine, among others, and help society become more open, inclusive, and integrated. The challenges immigration

brings are mostly associated with aspects of social life, particularly in areas where people see immigrants as a threat to their language, culture, *status quo*, and identity.

Schools are always at the center of every discussion on immigration. This is because they serve as acculturation centers where children and their families go through language and culture socialization processes. While schools represent the official knowledge of a society (Apple, 2014), they also serve as the place where diversity is authentically experienced by all stakeholders (Ladson-Billings, 2011). As students, teachers, families, and school personnel interact and engage in various pedagogical processes, they also get to know one another and learn from everyone's backgrounds and lived experiences.

In this article, I describe part of a project in a school district in New Jersey that focuses on integrating immigrant families in the community and including their voices and histories as part of the school curricula. Apart from working with the teachers and school personnel to prepare them to understand and address the needs of immigrant students and English Learners (ELs), one of our main concerns was to design effective strategies to work directly with immigrant families to support their socialization and acculturation processes while also learning from them and using their knowledge as part of the work being done in the schools through curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Immigration is a human right and humans have always been on the move. The many and different reasons that lead people to begin an immigration journey need to be understood as a human's basic rights to life with opportunity, dignity, equality, inclusion, security, stability, and respect. Leaving one's homeland can be a hard but necessary decision. Immigration is part of life and the history of humankind. Yet, the discourse surrounding immigration has always been filled with discriminatory, xenophobic, and ignorant arguments that aim to deny people of this basic right.

What is not mentioned in the anti-immigration discourse is that immigration translates into growth and progress. The United States is a nation of immigrants. It has been enriched by the innumerable contributions of its immigrants and the nation is stronger because of their presence. In the work described in this article, we focus on the kinds of support systems that a school and its community can develop to integrate immigrants in the larger society. School communities, while socializing agents, are also incredibly strengthened by welcoming immigrants and inviting their contributions to enhance the educational experiences of all community members.

Background

Immigrating to a new country implies going through a process of socialization. Immigrants go through a series of steps and actions while learning how to act in socially acceptable ways and function based on the norms and values established by their host country.

Little (2016) describes socialization as "the process through which people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes the ways that people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society's beliefs, and to be aware of societal values. It also describes the way people come to be aware of themselves and to reflect on the suitability of their behavior in their interactions with others" (p. 205). Little (2016) goes on to further describe socialization as the way that people learn to play different roles in their lives. This means that roles such as being a man or a woman, a son or a daughter, a teacher or a student, a parent or an administrator are also learned socially and that their meanings and representations will vary depending on the norms and expectations of the society in which we grow up.

When it comes to the life of an immigrant, we can say that they are in fact re-socializing. Robertson (1987) describes four processes people go through in their lives as they socialize to gain membership in different groups: primary socialization, anticipatory socialization, developmental socialization, and re-socialization. Primary socialization is the most basic of the four types, as it means learning and internalizing the norms of the society in which we are born and grow up. The first social group that we belong to is our families and, therefore, the primary socialization occurs within the sphere of family and the close community within which our families circulate. The next step, the anticipatory socialization, occurs when we start navigating new territories and exploring new social groups with the expectation (or anticipation) of joining these groups. This process goes along with developmental socialization which is basically a continuation of the primary and anticipatory processes of socialization. Primary socialization occurs in the early years of life when we are still growing up, forming our identities, and developing a sense of belonging in our families and immediate communities. As we enter adult life, we build on this initial socialization process to develop new skills and knowledge as we navigate new aspects of our life, such as our professional field, new family, and social circles (spouses, partners, co-workers, friends, and acquaintances), and even our participation in social, religious, and sports organizations or activities. These new spheres reflect the roles described by Little (2016). Becoming an adult, gaining more responsibility, getting a job, becoming a spouse and a parent are all roles that come with different expectations and norms that we add on to our socialization repertoire. Finally, re-socialization refers to a process of change or substitution of membership. Many times, in life, because of different circumstances, people need to move or migrate, and this causes a radical shift in their lives. This shift in their life circumstances is accompanied by a shift in perspective. Immigrants need to learn and understand new ways of thinking and acting and new norms, patterns, and values.

Immigrating to a new country means going through the process of re-socialization. You are basically starting over, learning new roles, attitudes, and beliefs, as you claim membership in a new society which may be completely different from the one you know and have lived all your life. It is important to mention, though, that while the concept of re-socialization may sound like a remaking of individuals, I prefer to see it as adding another layer of complexity to these individuals, as they figure out who they are in this new society. Re-socializing does not mean abandoning who you are but adding new markers to an existing identity. It should be understood as an additive (as opposed to a subtractive) process. It is ultimately up to the immigrants to determine how this process will affect their identities.

Apart from socializing into the norms and expectations of the new society in terms of actions and behaviors, immigrants also go through a language socialization process. The field of language socialization examines the relationships between language and culture to understand how communicative practices are defined and enacted within a society and how speakers learn to engage in these practices.

Ochs and Schieffelin (2017) describe how language development is dependent upon a child's early interactions in life and the kinds of linguistic input, types of language and forms of discourses they are exposed to growing up. Immigrants also go through a process of language socialization in their new society. As much as they may want to preserve their linguistic practices, they will also be required to learn new practices and ways of communicating if they truly want to integrate into the life of a community. Once again, for the children of immigrants, schools operate as the mediator of the cultural and linguistic socialization processes, after all, as I have described before, "schools serve as the bastions of a society, as they uphold the principles, the attitudes, the values and the history of a nation and are tasked with socializing the youth into life in the larger society. In this sense, schools are also gatekeepers for they provide access to knowledge and attending school can translate into acceptance and opportunity for its students" (Naiditch, 2021a, p. 3).

Schools provide access to the linguistic and cultural systems of a nation and opportunities for students to engage in communicative practices that will empower and prepare them to become fluent members of the speech community. Ochs and Schieffelin (2017) argue that "language socialization transpires whenever there is an asymmetry in knowledge and power and characterizes our human interactions throughout adulthood as we become socialized into novel activities, identities, and objects relevant to work, family, recreation, civic, religious, and other environments in increasingly globalized communities" (p. 9).

Language, after all, as Sapir (1933/1958) claimed "is a great force of socialization, probably the greatest that exists" (as quoted in Mandelbaum, 1958, p. 15). In fact, learning to communicate meanings and understand messages is a culturally embedded activity and it is one way for immigrants to claim membership in a speech community. As they become more competent at using English and start adhering to the communicative rules established by local language users, they position themselves as capable participants of that community. Language socialization, thus, also results in social competence. Learning the ways of talking and listening in common communicative activities of a community enhances and promotes the social engagement of immigrant families. This is what Ochs and Schieffelin (2014) refer to as "becoming speakers of cultures" (p. 7).

If children can rely on schools to support their socialization process, how about adult immigrants, parents who are not at school age, but still need to socialize into new cultural norms, and linguistic rules? Adult immigrants, unlike children, may need to purposefully search for opportunities to engage in communicative events with people from the community if they want to learn the appropriate cultural and linguistic norms that govern conversations. These norms are unwritten rules that dictate how people exchange ideas, interact with each other, ask and answer questions, share information, take turns, begin and end conversations, and use non-verbal communication, for example. Immigrants can learn these norms as they socialize through different venues–work, classes, shopping, moving around the community, etc., but they may not have as many opportunities as their children to engage in meaningful interactions.

The process of socialization is dependent upon opportunities to integrate in the life of the new society and access to conversational partners who are members of that speech community. Therefore, it can become complicated or problematic, particularly for adult immigrants and parents who, many times, may depend upon the availability of community members to be given access to the speech community. These community members are, in general, native speakers who need to be willing to include immigrants in their social circles and to position them as equally competent interlocutors. For that reason, engaging in the socialization process, both culturally and linguistically, does not always depend on the immigrants themselves. Community members (native speakers and dominant groups) can regulate the socialization process of immigrants by acting as gatekeepers: they establish the norms and control access to opportunity and participation.

There are different reasons why people migrate, but often, immigration is a result of people searching for a better life whether it means greater economic opportunity, religious freedom, freedom of expression, or even for the right to exist, and be who they are. When immigrants are welcomed and supported, they will thrive in their new environment and will participate and contribute to their adopted communities.

From its earliest days, America has been a nation of immigrants and immigration is central to the spirit of American democracy: it is what makes this nation what it is. It is not only

a fundamental aspect of human history, but also an issue of human rights, survival, and social justice.

Undoubtedly, immigration is also a controversial issue from many points of view–whether it is a political, social, economic, or humanitarian issue, there is always disagreement when it comes to the role of immigration in the fabric of American society. In American history, the influx of newcomers has always resulted in anti-immigrant sentiment among certain factions of America. But one thing has never changed: immigration is still part of life in the 21st century and due to war, climate change, poverty, political and social unrest, economic instability, food insecurity, humanitarian refuge, among many other factors, immigration will continue to be at the center of every debate about life in society. Whatever the reason that brought immigrants to our communities, it is our responsibility to support these families and to ensure as smooth a transition as possible to life in the United States.

Learning to work with immigrant families is a necessary and essential aspect of teacher preparation in the US as well as the preparation of all school personnel who are tasked with not only welcoming these families into the school building, but also helping them navigate complex bureaucratic processes and understand the principles and practices that base the work developed in schools.

Schools need to prepare their staff to relate to and respond to people that come from every culture and background and this means developing culturally responsive practices in all aspects of the work. Whether it is in the classroom through culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (Naiditch, 2021b) or in providing services and assistance in culturally appropriate ways, the need to be adequately prepared to work with immigrants includes developing an understanding of the complex issues involved in immigration, knowledge of the specific services and many times, even interventions that immigrant families may need.

In order to fit in and develop a sense of belonging, many immigrant families believe that they need to assimilate so they can be seen as equal partners. This pressure to "Americanize" is understood given our human nature to belong. However, assimilation is not the goal of multicultural societies like ours and we do not want these immigrant families to forget or abandon who they are, which is their identities. On the contrary, we want them to maintain their culture, language, customs, and bring them to light so we can learn from them and include their histories as part of our work. Assimilation is a word that is not part of our work at all. In fact, as Alba and Nee (2005) have rightfully described, assimilation is a contested idea, "an ethnocentric and patronizing imposition on minority peoples struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic integrity" (p. 1).

Working with immigrant families, therefore, many times means walking a fine line between what we expect from these families and what they expect from us. The American Psychological Association (APA) describes the process experienced by immigrants as acculturation, which may seem more appropriate for the kind of work that we do. As the association describes it, "acculturation, a multidimensional process, involves changes in many aspects of immigrants' lives, including language, cultural and ethnic identity, attitudes and values, social customs and relations, gender roles, types of food and music preferred, and media use" (American Psychological Association [APA], and Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012, p. 2). The APA distinguishes between psychological acculturation (which refers to the immigrant adapting to the new culture) and behavioral acculturation (which refers to the extent to which immigrants participate both in the new culture and their culture of origin).

In this view, acculturation takes place in stages and immigrants engage in a learning process to systematically acquire the knowledge and the skills needed to navigate life in the new society. This includes learning the language and culture of the host country without losing their own: "while some settings, such as workplaces or schools, are predominantly culturally American, others, such as an immigrant's ethnic neighborhood and home environment, may be predominantly of the heritage culture. From this perspective, acculturation to both cultures provides access to different kinds of resources that are useful in different settings and is linked, it is hoped, to positive mental health outcomes" (American Psychological Association [APA], and Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012, p. 2).

This is an essential aspect of the work we do–connecting families with their own immigrant communities and to resources within those communities. In every city in America, you will find ethnic enclaves (Edin et al., 2003) and these communities serve as support systems for immigrants by assisting them with jobs, making connections, and creating various opportunities (Munshi, 2003; Beaman, 2012). They can also serve as a third space (Bhabha, 1994) for immigrants who can find a place where people share their language, culture, cuisine, and customs. These networks created by immigrants for immigrants in ethnic enclaves are, ultimately, structured systems of self-organization that focus on survival and protection for immigrants.

In our work, we want to convey to these immigrant families that we want them to maintain their integrity without losing the essence of who they are and without forgetting where they came from while learning how to navigate the American legal, social, economic, educational, and health systems in ways that allow them to benefit from the services and support systems in place to help them integrate in society. Schools serve as mediators of these relationships between families and services. While we strive not to create any loss of identity for these families, we also understand that socialization and acculturation require adjustments and adaptations.

Immigration is a dynamic process that does not end when a family arrives in a new country. Immigration is an ongoing

movement and for many families who embark on this journey, they may feel that they are still immigrating, even after years of being in a new land.

The project

The work described in this article is part of a large professional development project developed in a school district in the state of New Jersey. While the project focused on teacher preparation and development, we quickly realized the need to also work with immigrant students' families and create mechanisms to support their socialization process, particularly as they learned to navigate complex bureaucratic structures, new cultural ways of doing business, and a new language.

While considering how to integrate immigrant families in the community and the schools their children would be attending, our main aim was to create the necessary conditions for these families to be welcomed in their new country while supporting their acclimation, acculturation, and socialization processes. This included working within the school building, but also moving beyond the four walls of the school and reaching out to the community by fostering relationships and embedding immigrant families in the life and fabric of the larger society.

This was a collaborative project which included all stakeholders–the university researcher, the school staff, parents, community members, and the immigrant families. Studies that focus on pedagogy and education in school settings usually focus on teachers and students, but because this was a participatory and community-based project, we engaged all school community in the activities and in all the steps taken as the work was being planned and developed.

In the larger research project (see Naiditch, 2021a for a detailed description of the study), practitioner action research was used as both the data gathering technique and the method of inquiry to engage all stakeholders to examine our practice critically and to improve it (Anderson et al., 2007). Because the work was done mostly in the classrooms and school buildings and it involved mainly educators, we focused on practitioner action research: the work developed by teachers who were engaged in a systematic, careful, and critical examination of their practice.

For this part of the project, we are considering and including more participants, both inside and outside the school building and, therefore, we are using the acronym PAR to refer to participatory action research (PAR). Action research is a participatory form of inquiry, which can be conducted by an individual or a group of people who intend to advance their practice. The different types of action research reflect the purposes and the participants involved: "a plan of research can involve a single teacher investigating an issue in his or her classroom, a group of teachers working on a common problem, or a team of teachers and others focusing on a school- or district-wide issue" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 3). Often associated with research done by teachers looking to improve their pedagogy, PAR can also involve the whole school building and beyond, as in the case of this particular project.

For this project, we wanted to involve the larger community and combine the collective knowledge of all participants to affect change in the way schools represent and are represented by their communities to provide services and practices that facilitate the integration of immigrant families as new members in the community. PAR requires all people involved in the project to engage in a collaborative inquiry process while implementing the strategies to support immigrant families. PAR allows us to regularly reflect on our strategies and activities by assessing, reassessing and transforming them. Because PAR is a systematic and developmental tool which allows participants to engage in a critical analysis of their practices by identifying aspects that need to be changed and improved, it results in professional and organizational learning that adds to our repertoire of best practices.

By strengthening the relationship between inquiry and action, PAR allows participants to better understand how to plan, create and implement more equitable actions within the school building (Anderson and Herr, 2009). Because it is done in cycles, PAR allows us to reflect on the activities and practices planned and act in order to improve them and make them more effective to meet the needs of our school community.

In this article, we focus on the framework to be implemented in the school building where the project originated. Because this particular aspect of the project is part of a larger study which focuses on preparing teachers and school personnel to understand and address the needs of immigrant students and ELs, it is essential to understand that there are multiple parts to it and, in the next section, we describe our vision–the way we created, planned, developed, and will implement different strategies to facilitate the socialization process of immigrant families in the school and the larger community. It is important to highlight here that this is a process that is relatively new and ongoing and that we are still working on implementing the project as immigrant families arrive in the community and as we develop new strategies and collaborations. Because of its cyclical nature, PAR will allow us to study our strategies and assess, revise and restructure the work concomitantly, as we search for better alternatives and more effective strategies and practices.

Not all the activities listed and described in this paper have been implemented due in part to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic which interrupted much of the in-person work being developed and moved everyone to a virtual reality that prevented us from fully developing the project. Unfortunately, the global pandemic had a severe impact on immigrant communities which usually already have fewer resources, less access to the internet and are still developing their digital

literacy. Therefore, as we discuss our framework, we focus on the kind of work that is yet to come, the rationale for developing it and the likely positive effects it can have on the acculturation and socialization processes of immigrant families starting new lives in our community.

The framework

According to data from the United States Census Bureau (2019), immigrants represent 13.7% of the total population in the United States. These numbers only tend to grow and, as a result, schools today see their student population becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse. Children born to immigrant parents are growing up in a more diverse America, not only in terms of culture and language. As society evolves, we see more inclusive expressions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, education levels, and beliefs, which are also reflected in the political and socioeconomic aspects of life in society. Immigrant families and their children also tend to be in a more vulnerable socio-economic situation when compared to US-born citizens (Hernandez and Charney, 1998). They are more likely to experience economic hardship, which translates into instability and insecurity when it comes to attending to basic needs, such as food and shelter as well as finding work and caring for their health and emotional wellbeing. This, in turn, may affect their children's development and their physical and socio-emotional health. The adversities experienced by immigrant families will also be seen in many aspects of the school life–children's ability to attend school regularly, focus on their studies, form relationships, and, ultimately, succeed academically.

Immigrating is not an easy decision for any family. The process of uprooting and resettlement involves many steps and can affect a family for generations to come. Acclimating and adjusting to a new reality are processes that need to be supported and scaffolded. Among the many challenges immigrants experience, there is access to services, opportunities to socialize and integrate in the new society, as well as linguistic and cultural barriers that may prevent them from communicating their needs and understanding the norms they are now expected to follow. Immigrants need assistance on many levels, from fulfilling the most basic human needs to caring for their welfare.

A closer look at Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs helped us understand the necessary strategies we had to develop in order to not only bring these families to work with us in the schools, but to ensure that their needs were being met and that they felt comfortable enough, so they could feel a sense of belonging and security. Just like a child who will not be able to focus on learning in school if they are hungry, a family that is experiencing food insecurity will not be able to participate in the life of a school or educational community until their most basic needs are met.

The need to belong and connect is also a basic social and emotional need and this is, undoubtedly, an essential part of the process. Immigrant families need to perceive the school as an ally and as a support system, but we realized that simply welcoming them into the building was not enough. We needed to develop a broader understanding of what "welcoming" someone into your community means and to consider the central role that schools play in the socialization process of both immigrant students and their families. The wellbeing promoted by being accepted and socialized into a new community and school translates into what many today refer to as social-emotional learning (Allensworth et al., 2018). Social-emotional learning (or SEL) is the process through which individuals develop the skills needed to recognize and manage their emotions in order to self-regulate and develop positive interpersonal relationships. Durlak et al. (2011) identify five sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that need to be fostered as people develop SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

Being in the process of developing SEL and wellbeing will lead to an increased feeling of esteem, which is the next level in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy. In our project, we focused on the idea of esteem by making sure we included the families' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) into the school curricula and we brought their voices, histories, and immigrant journeys to light by discussing them in the classrooms, by inviting the families to be guest speakers, and by including them in the social life of the school building, parent-teacher association (PTA), and different committees that rely on parental involvement and participation. By making use of their personal experiences and their life stories, languages and cultures, immigrant families see how valuable their contributions are and how important we consider them for everyone's education. This, in turn, will help create the idea of self-actualization described by Maslow (1943).

We understand that the process is not linear, and that the hierarchy might be looked at as a continuum. We may not be able to fulfill one need in order to move to the next level. The idea was to use Maslow's (1943) research as part of our framework to remind us that, as a school, it is our responsibility to serve the families and the communities where we are situated. It is a two-way street. We understand their needs and try to help them and support them. As a result, immigrant students will also develop healthy lives and identities which will ultimately result in them thriving in the new environment.

One of the purposes of the school is to serve as a liaison between the families and the larger community. Because of the role of schools in serving the children and caring for all their needs, there is a trust that needs to be developed between schools and the families that they serve. Trust is only developed through forming strong and lasting relationships, creating

conditions for accepting differences and building an inclusive and open-minded environment. Clear and straightforward communication leads to an understanding of the expectations from all parties involved. In addition, it is necessary to demonstrate commitment to the work and be honest about it. This will result in transparency in the discussions and encourage collective decision-making processes.

Based on the work we have been developing by working closely with immigrant families and students throughout the years, we have developed a framework that groups the strategies described here into two categories: "push" and "pull."

Push strategies refer to the strategies developed by the school to offer families resources and connect them to an array of services that assist immigrants, especially the ones that attend to their immediate needs. Anyone who is new to a country needs to be given support systems in order to navigate routine aspects of life in society. This includes making them aware of their rights and providing access to services which will help them acclimate in the community. Push strategies distribute resources, information, and support, but may not require further participation or additional involvement on the part of the school. This means that the school functions as an agent that connects families and resources but does not necessarily provide those resources. It is up to the recipient to act upon the information and support suggested by the school.

The reason they are push strategies is because, although initiated by school personnel, they are not related to work done within the school building. They move (or push) the immigrant families from the school to the outside world. The school operates as a mediator that scaffolds the relationship between immigrant families and the larger community.

Pull strategies, on the other hand, focus on actively bringing families from the community to the school building and creating mechanisms to include them in both curricular and extra-curricular activities to strengthen their sense of belonging and identity. By creating opportunities for families to participate in the life of a school building and to engage with teachers and administrators, we are pulling them into the everyday life of the school structure and including their voices in the educational decisions. Table 1 summarizes our framework and gives examples of the kinds of activities and initiatives developed under each category.

When immigrant families arrive at the community, they immediately contact the school to enroll their children. This is when we start the process of welcoming them into our school community and offer to mediate communication and interaction between the families and the resources and services available to them. By connecting them to the services offered for immigrants and the many resources available to them that they are not usually aware of or do not know how to navigate, we aim at supporting their acculturation and facilitating their socialization process.

One of the strategies that seems to be effective when working with immigrant parents is creating opportunities for them to come to the school building for some training and guidance. These sessions work as orientation for a parent who is new to the country and does not know how to get started.

Parent night is a common event in American schools. They differ in terms of purpose and frequency and how much individualized attention parents get. In general, parents come to their children's classrooms to get to know the teacher, to learn about school policies, expectations, and procedures, and to receive information about how their child is progressing socially and academically while also having the opportunity to interact with the teacher and school personnel, ask questions and express their opinions.

The parent nights planned for this project are events that will bring immigrant parents to the school building several times for both push and pull strategies. The parent nights that focus on push strategies serve as orientation in several workshop style meetings that aim at informing them of the services and resources available to them, as well as guide them through the process of navigating these services. The focus of these sessions will vary depending on the needs of the immigrant families. Sometimes we will bring an immigration lawyer or staff of legal aid societies who can offer free legal support for these families. Other times we will connect them with the local food bank and food pantries, so they know who to reach out to when they need food. Immigrant families also need to be connected to housing authorities and go over the process of applying for public housing. What may seem like simple tasks, such as filling out forms, making sure you have all the documents required by different agencies and being able to communicate your needs can actually be a daunting and intimidating undertaking for families that are new to the country and that are trying to make

TABLE 1 Push and pull strategies at a glance.

Engaging immigrant families

Push strategies	Pull strategies
Resources	**Belonging**
● Websites	● Participatory experiences
● Lists	● Buddies/Mentors
● Books	● Parent nights/School functions
● Free classes/Clubs	● Experiential training
● Social media posts	● Social events
Services	**Participation**
● Legal aid	● Visiting classrooms
● Interpretation services	● Day at school
● Food and shelter	● Parent/Teacher associations

sense of the environment around them while also having to make decisions and take actions that will affect their lives.

As part of the push strategies, we also want to make sure immigrant families know about free classes they can take (like English as a second language, ESL), and clubs and organizations they can join. We will provide them with lists of names, contact information, useful websites, and books for them to read. Everything is available both in their native language and in English and we will always bring a translator to these sessions so they can have access to the information and feel comfortable to ask questions in their native languages.

For families who do not have internet access and who do not know how to use a computer, there are a lot of free classes offered in local institutions, such as public libraries, where they can also go to have free internet access. The school building also offers internet and computer access and we have even recruited some parents to help immigrant families develop their digital literacy. Some of the workshops include guiding immigrants on how to look for and apply for jobs online, how to write resumés, and even mock interviews to prepare them for the real job interviews.

These parent nights and training sessions help immigrants organize their lives in the new country. The workshops can also vary in terms of the kinds of services provided and skills being honed. They can be used to teach immigrant parents strategies that they can use at home to support the education of their children while also developing and practicing skills that can be directly applied to their lives. For example, helping parents and students with literacy skills is always a topic that draws everyone's attention because all school activities require the use of literacy skills. One of the workshops that we already had a chance to offer was developed by the ESL teachers and the homeroom teachers to instruct parents on how to develop literacy at home. Because we do have parents who are considered academically illiterate, i.e., they speak their native language but cannot read or write it, we will also have sessions focusing on oral literacy and ways the family can contribute to cultivating literacy at home. The idea for these sessions was adapted from the work described in Naiditch (2013). Teachers encourage parents to tell stories to the children in their native language and to ask questions about these stories. Even if they cannot read in their native language, they can still engage their children in learning about narrative and its elements (plot, character, setting, etc.). This knowledge is essential for teachers to build on in their classes as they teach students the written word. Another strategy is to bring parents to the school for a "day at school." They can visit classrooms to tell stories about their home countries so that everyone becomes familiar with the students' cultural background and are also exposed to different approaches to storytelling. In this "day at school," they can also engage in play and plan other activities to do with the students. They can assist teachers in and outside the classroom and work more closely

with all the different professionals that are part of the school community.

As a pull strategy, parent nights are also social events which allow immigrant families to get to know one another and the other members of the school community. They are an opportunity to develop relationships and learn from one another. Teachers engage with the families and learn about the family's history and their funds of knowledge. Social conversations can work as informal interviews where the families are the experts and the teachers become the learners as they acquire important information about the family's culture, history, and lived experiences that can be used by teachers to make more informed decisions about pedagogy and ways of relating to and interacting with immigrant students.

In order for these meetings to be effective, it is always important to bear in mind the significance of community and its role in promoting and sustaining a sense of belonging, which is what we ultimately want for these families to feel. Not only that they belong, but that they are also valued and have a contribution to make. They need to understand that we truly care and want to learn from them as much as they want to learn from us. Their lived experiences inform the work we do as educators and in order to be responsive to their needs, we have to understand and learn who they are, what they think and feel, how they see the world. Because, initially, we need to make use of translators, we have also reached out to other families in the community who have immigrated before and have been through the same process to serve as translators. We hope this will make the process even more personal and bring all families closer.

Parent night is also an opportunity to get to know and interact with other families in the community, not only the immigrant families, and start to learn about their ways of thinking and doing. We designed a set of activities to be done with the parents when they come to parent night. These are various "getting-to-know-you" activities, which involve everyone–parents and school staff. Sharing is a big part of these activities. Everyone is encouraged to share their names and meanings (if applicable), countries of origin, languages spoken, anything they consider relevant. We will also ask them to share one success, one accomplishment that has been achieved since the previous meeting. Acknowledging small wins is a way to boost their esteem, increase their motivation and recognize that progress is being made meaningfully.

These activities and gatherings are (and always need to be) intentional, i.e., they are planned with a specific purpose, which is to integrate the families into the larger school community, develop a sense of belonging and empower them so they can develop agency. This last aspect is particularly important because many immigrant families believe that they do not have any agency over their lives and that they depend on the host country as a benefactor. Once they are in the country, though, they need to understand that they are members of the community who should participate in the life of our society by

learning about their rights as much as their responsibilities and learning to advocate for their needs and wants.

While mediating the process of socialization for these families, the school becomes a safe space for these families to form relationships, exchange and share experiences, and learn from one another's challenges and successes. Agency is power. As immigrant families begin to understand how to navigate bureaucracies and as they begin to understand the social norms that regulate the kinds of transactions that they need to participate in, they start becoming more visible both for us as a school community and for themselves, as they recognize the power of engagement in the democratic spirit that permeates our actions and our ways of living.

The same is true about teaching and learning relationships. Agency is a goal we want to achieve both with the families and the students. Agency allows people to understand that they have a voice and choice. Immigrant families must constantly make decisions about how to meet their needs and students face decisions about their learning. As they develop agency, students will understand they have choice over their learning and families will learn how to go about their lives and the challenges they are presented with–all the while, hopefully, learning to make more informed decisions.

From our experience working with immigrant families and students over the years, once they start developing agency, they are more likely to engage in school functions and participate in all aspects of their community both inside and outside the school building.

Family engagement is always at the core of every discussion involving our responsibilities as educators. Schools understand that educating a child depends on the home environment and that, therefore, they need to work with the families. Many schools that are not prepared or do not have qualified personnel to engage immigrants end up blaming the parents for not getting involved in their children's education. This is a consequence of the deficit model that looks at immigrants as lacking cultural capital without realizing that they just operate from a different perspective which is not the normalized or widely accepted view of our society. Our model is an asset-based approach to working with immigrant families. We need to learn about their ways of communicating, interacting, thinking, and doing, so that we can develop proactive strategies that are intentionally built on their strengths and the knowledge that they bring.

We try to create a safe space where all members are equal participants who have different things to offer without judgment or comparisons. Diversity in this case is about understanding differences, and differences are what inspires us to grow and develop as educators and citizens engaged in the lives of our schools and communities.

As immigrant families become more comfortable interacting with the large school community and as they move from the push to the pull strategies, we will also encourage them to join the PTA. The PTA is an association that brings together teachers and parents to discuss all matters that affect the educational work done in the school, which includes teaching, learning and the wellbeing of the students. This association is an opportunity for parents to participate actively in the decision-making process along with teachers and school personnel and to address any issues that may arise, such as bullying or school safety. Many PTAs also work as fund-raising entities that plan events to raise money for different activities, such as field trips, buying equipment and material. In the case of immigrant families, the PTA can also serve as another liaison between immigrants and the community.

The way we conceive of the PTA is twofold: activism and advocacy. Activism refers to families being actively engaged in the life of the school building and community. Their constant presence in the building reinforces the connection between the schools and the families that they serve and sends a message about the role of parents in the education of their children not only at home, but also in the formal education setting.

Advocacy refers to supporting a cause or an idea, but also to problem-solving. Through advocacy, parents can not only voice their opinions, but also make recommendations and plan courses of action, and take action to make real changes. For example, they can engage in fund raising activities that support and extend the work of the school. Many of the parents, especially immigrants, work full-time jobs with different schedules and hours and not all of them are available and able to pick up their child at 3 pm, which is when the school day usually ends. Through advocacy, they can develop programs, especially after-school activities and can provide free resources and food for the children that need to have extended school hours.

Another example of advocacy and activism is when the school organizes food or clothing drives to benefit the vulnerable members of its community. People are encouraged to donate food, items of clothing and other useful items that families might need, such as toiletries, cleaning products, and even furniture.

An important aspect of acculturation is that immigrant families are usually willing to learn about the so-called American way of life and participate in local and national holidays and celebrations. Some programs we have planned address issues of cultural differences through experience. The *Family Adoption Program*, for example, places immigrant families with American families and this gives them a chance to experience family life in America. It also gives them a place to spend the holidays and learn about American culture in a more informal setting. A similar experience can be developed through a *Partnership Program*, sometimes referred to as a "buddy system," which places immigrant students with American students for social purposes, such as play dates, going out for an activity, studying together, or watching a movie. The idea is for immigrant students to experience as many and varied social situations as possible in order to learn about the culture and make friends. Encouraging immigrant students to participate

in volunteering programs and in student clubs can also be effective tools in socializing them beyond the classroom so that the knowledge gained informally can be translated to the relationships established in the classroom to enrich and maximize their educational experiences. Participating in these activities minimizes the effect of culture shock and allows people to get to know one another without being misunderstood and even mislabeled. The more opportunities immigrant and American families have to interact with one another, the more we strengthen the partnership between schools, families and community. These activities also aim at empowering immigrant families. Their participation and engagement can help them develop their agency and their ability to see themselves as capable and contributing members of the community.

An important outcome of developing push and pull strategies is that by being proactive and immediately reaching out to immigrant families, we expect to prevent them from being othered or stereotyped by the rest of the community. The idea of othering is very prevalent in the anti-immigration discourse, which portrays immigrants as not belonging in a community because they do not adhere to the socially, culturally and linguistically established norms. This is an idea also embedded in the "us vs. them" argument, which separates people in affinity groups and segregates those who are seen as "not like us" or "not one of ours." Othering is a direct result of prejudice and xenophobia. It marginalizes immigrants and blames them for socio-economic problems that existed much before they arrived in the country. The blame-placing rhetoric is a way of justifying a racist attitude and dehumanizing certain groups of people. Education is the only way of combating these discriminatory attitudes and intolerant thinking.

By including immigrant families in all aspects of the school life from the moment they arrive in our community through push strategies that connect them to services, resources, and support systems, and through pull strategies that give them visibility and a sense of belonging and security through inclusion, we aim at integrating immigrant families in the larger community in an intentional, deliberate, scaffolded and safe way.

While we initially thought that we had to start with the push strategies and then work on the pull strategies, our experience has shown us that they do not have to operate separately. On the contrary, schools can work on developing both push and pull strategies concomitantly depending on the individual needs of the families and their level of preparedness and readiness to engage.

Preparedness refers to how much their immediate needs are being met. If an immigrant family feels that they still need to tend to their basic needs and address issues of food or housing, they will need to focus on those first and will only be able and prepared to engage with the school after taking care of those needs.

Readiness has to do with where they stand in their socialization process, i.e., their level of comfort both interacting with new people and participating in school activities. This will also depend on their level of acculturation–whether they want to acculturate or not, how they negotiate their bilingual bicultural identities, as well as their linguistic proficiency. Even though translators are always available, some families feel that they want to be able to communicate without aid and want to try and develop their language skills before coming into the school building. Other families regulate their level of participation by choosing when and how they will engage, what activities they want to join and how ready they feel to join certain groups, committees, and activities. We need to respect their level of readiness. We cannot forge a relationship when immigrant families feel that they are not ready or prepared for it yet.

The idea is to have these push and pull strategies always available for immigrant families and there are people constantly working to ensure that all the resources are being updated and that families know how to access the services that they need. It is an ever-evolving process of communication and outreach. By making these strategies available to immigrant families, we hope to integrate them more easily into the school community (both inside and outside the school building) and to become full participating members of life in the new society.

Conclusion

Immigrants are an integral part of American society, and their contributions are making the country more diverse, more inclusive, and more multicultural. Socializing immigrants successfully into the life of society is an important aspect of the process of acculturation, which invites them to learn about the new society while also encouraging them to maintain their language, culture, customs, and traditions.

One of the challenges of working with immigrant families is the lack of knowledge and preparation of different professionals and organizations, which causes this population to be underserved, and many times, ignored. As educators who deal with immigrant families daily, it is our moral and ethical responsibility to understand who these families are, their histories, and their needs.

Schools have an important social responsibility that goes beyond what is usually expressed in the dyad teaching and learning. Apart from the traditional educational purpose of teaching content and developing skills, schools should strive to meet the needs of the students, the families, and the larger community that they serve. While forming and informing new generations, schools also need to care for individuals' physical, social, and emotional wellbeing.

Having worked with immigrant families and students for many years, we have developed an approach that puts schools at the center of the socialization process. Navigating governmental

agencies and services can be a daunting task for immigrants who may or may not speak the language and who do not understand the systems of bureaucracy established by public services and power structures. The initial focus of an immigrant and a parent is on meeting the immediate needs of their family, but at the same time, they also need to make sense of a new culture, a different language, and a set of rules and conventions that differ from their native norms.

In our work supporting immigrant families and their children, schools have become mediators of the relationships between families and the larger community, and they facilitate the socialization process of parents by educating them and guiding them as they explore and learn about a new environment.

Having developed a framework with push and pull strategies, we hope to be able to create a system that functions seamlessly. Everyone has a role–teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, community members–and everyone feels responsible for the larger goal of supporting the immigrant families, which will ultimately translate into supporting immigrant students. The stress of integrating in a new school, with classmates who do not always look like them, act like them or speak like them can directly affect the wellbeing of a child and their subsequent academic achievement. By making sure we identify and address the needs of the families and their children as soon as possible, we are being proactive in ensuring that the child is fully supported and can therefore thrive in the new society.

As mentioned earlier, this is an ongoing project and a number of the strategies described in this article are still being (or have not yet been) implemented. This is part of a larger project, so the relationships with immigrant families, the outreach, and many of the support systems have already been in place and we have had an opportunity to engage in those strategies (such as workshops and connecting with services). Developing this framework of push and pull strategies was a way to help us organize our work and systematize it, so it can function as part of the school life permanently. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to interrupt most of the in-person work, which only now is being reinitiated. Our hope is to continue studying the strategies described here and their effect on the socialization and acculturation processes of immigrant families.

Due to current migration movements that are affecting the geography and the distribution of population in the world, communities across the United States will continue to welcome immigrants that will need to be socialized into the life of their new society. In our community in New Jersey, the schools will take a central role in working closely with these families and support them as they engage and proceed in their socialization process.

Push and pull strategies will operate on an ongoing basis and we intend to develop a sustainable process within this framework. Families can always choose to join any of the strategies at any time and they can also regulate their level of involvement, the intensity and the duration of the services, and their participation. The important thing is to create and maintain a channel of communication between the families and the school. The school creates the conditions for immigrant families to feel welcomed and supported in an environment that promotes inclusion and a sense of belonging This, in turn, will strengthen the relationships between the school and the community that it serves.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was not provided for this study on human participants because the article does not present the results of human subject research. It describes a framework we developed to be implemented with human subjects in the next academic year. The article describes our proposed strategies and procedures, but the program evaluation has not been conducted yet. The ethics committee will be reviewing our proposal for a study. Written informed consent was not provided because it will be provided after the ethics committee reviews our proposal for the upcoming study.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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The teacher's self-constructed approaches to collaborate with newcomer parents in the Norwegian elementary reception class

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In Norway, newly arrived immigrant children often start their schooling in special groups called reception classes. This study aims to examine one Norwegian reception teacher's perceptions and practices of collaborating with the children's parents. The empirical analyses are based on a qualitative approach with interviews and video observations of the teacher. Affirming earlier research about parent–teacher collaboration in Norway, the study shows that the teacher has developed her own practices of parent–teacher collaboration. Contradicting earlier research, the findings highlight that despite challenges, the teacher experiences collaboration with newcomer parents positively. This article presents activities the teacher engages in within and outside the classroom to foster mutual learning and parental involvement. In the discussion, the teacher's approaches are not judged as right or wrong, perfect or imperfect, but rather appreciated as self-constructed and self-initiated approaches to collaborating with newcomer parents. The main result is that despite challenges, if the teacher appears to be motivated and has positive/pluralistic perceptions of immigrant pupils and their parents, then s/he finds ways to collaborate with newcomer parents. This article concludes with teachers' practice recommendations for schools and some directions for future research.

KEYWORDS

immigrant parental involvement, new comer pupils' education, parent-teacher collaboration, teacher practices, new comer parents

Introduction

Parental involvement in pupils' education is important, and parent–teacher collaboration (PTC) is emphasized more in recent years as both teachers and researchers have become increasingly aware of the effect parental involvement has on children's education (Bæck, 2015). However, this factor becomes inevitable

when it comes to immigrant parents (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017) particularly newly arrived ones (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Short and Boyson, 2012; Bajaj and Suresh, 2018). Thus, the introductory section of this paper presents the following two subsections.

Increased attention to parent-teacher collaboration

In recent years, parental involvement in school has been more emphasized than ever internationally and nationally (in Norway). The relationship between parents, schools, and teachers can be referred to with many terms, for example, parental involvement, parent–teacher cooperation, and partnership between schools and families (Epstein's, 2010; Willemse et al., 2016). All these terms refer to the diverse ways in which parents and teachers are involved in pupils' education. The term parent–teacher collaboration (PTC) will be used in this paper. PTC is one of the most important factors in a child's education (Bæck, 2010, 2015; Epstein, 2013, Epstein, 2018b). Due to the proven contribution of PTC to pupils' wellbeing, academic achievement, and socio-behavioral development, parents' general rights have been extended through the type of formal rights and the degree of parental authority in school differ in different countries (Bæck, 2015; Willemse et al., 2016). In Norway, parents' formal rights are stated in the Education Act (Opplaeringsloven §1-1) and the national curriculum. Till 2006, only primary and lower secondary schools had to establish home-school collaboration. In 2006, home-school collaboration in upper secondary education was included for the first time. Primary and lower secondary schools are obliged to arrange two student–parent–teacher conferences each academic year. In upper secondary schools, parents have the right to at least one structured conversation with the teacher. The content of the student–parent–teacher conferences is the same for primary and secondary schools. It shall include the pupils' daily work and performance in the different subjects, and pupils' development is seen in the light of the Education Act and National Curriculum. Furthermore, in the conferences, both parents and teachers shall clarify how the school, pupil, and parents will collaborate in the development of the pupil. Increased awareness about the importance of PTC has pushed forward this topic at all levels of education. It is also clear that the responsibility to arrange for good home-school cooperation lies within the school. The Norwegian policy shows a will for PTC, and the inclusion of PTC in central policy documents makes it an important part of schools' mandate in Norway. The formal part of home-school cooperation is thus well institutionalized, and it is an established part of the school activities. Parent–teacher conferences make up the cornerstones of formalized home-school cooperation (Bæck, 2015; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019).

Why parent–teacher collaboration in welcoming/reception classes?

Norway has a long history of minorities. With the flux of immigration in the early 70s, schools transformed into multicultural contexts. Increased immigrant populations in the educational system demanded the shift from the cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous and national minorities to the integration of immigrants. With the recent Ukrainian refugees, almost all municipalities in Norway have immigrants. These municipalities are responsible for providing equal education opportunities for all children. In the face of the constantly increasing number of newcomer pupils in Norwegian schools, it is important to know how PTC functions in reception classes. Migrant parents and particularly newcomer parents often struggle with challenges related to the host country's language, culture, economy, and adjusting to a new and different society. According to UNESCO, education for all aims to develop the pupil's personality, which includes respect for the language, parents, cultural identity, and values of one's own and other countries (UNICEF, 1989, §29). In Norway, despite educational efforts aimed at supporting immigrant pupils, they continue to perform poorly compared to ethnic Norwegian pupils (Rambøll, 2016). There is a consensus in research that a successful PTC has a positive effect on newcomer pupils' academic and cognitive development (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Short and Boyson, 2012; Calzada et al., 2015; Bajaj et al., 2017; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Bajaj and Suresh, 2018). Research also shows that PTC has a positive effect on immigrant pupils' motivation, social competence, wellbeing, and quality of teaching (Lea, 2012; Trzcinska-Krol, 2020). Successful PTC also provides teachers with better insight into pupils' strengths and needs and a basis for adapting teaching to pupils' needs (Jenssen, 2012).

According to the Norwegian Education Act, §1-1, parents are mainly responsible for children's upbringing at home, and schools are responsible for children's learning. Learning in schools needs to happen in close collaboration and understanding with parents (LovDATA, 1998). The statutory guidelines are to be understood as a minimum requirement, and the individual teacher and school can choose a more comprehensive collaboration. Although the official documents set some framework factors, the same requirements can be both interpreted and perceived differently. Teachers and parents share responsibilities for collaboration, which is a prerequisite to creating a safe and good learning environment. The PTC will find its form in the astriction of different expectations, interpretations, and the teachers' ability and competency to establish a comprehensive and successful PTC. Teachers' ability and competency are one of the most important factors in successful PTC (Westergård, 2013). Most teachers do not have the required competency to work with multicultural pupils and their parents (OECD, 2021). Bæck's (2010) study,

conducted with Norwegian teachers from elementary and lower secondary schools, shows insecurity among the teachers when it comes to PTC. In another study, Bæck (2015) focused on understanding teachers' points of view about PTC, and she highlights that relating to parents be difficult, demanding, and stressful for teachers. Faugstad and Jenssen (2019) point out that Norwegian teachers, to a large extent, rely on their own experiences in developing practices for PTC. They further mention that teachers receive little support from the education system and their schools. Parent–teacher conferences are largely characterized by formalities that seem to hinder genuine collaboration. Research (e.g., Westergård, 2013; Walker and Legg, 2018; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019) confirms that teachers are ill-prepared for PTC. Another reason for a challenging PTC with newcomer parents is teachers' perceptions about diversity and minority children and their families. Lea (2012) perceives Portuguese teachers' expectations and behavior toward immigrant parents as the main reason for "where cooperation does not function" (p. 112). According to Lea, teachers generally have the stereotypical idea that migrant parents are dysfunctional. From teachers' point of view, PTC with newcomer parents is often difficult and stressful (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). For example, most of the parents cannot speak the host country's language. Many newcomer parents have either no formal education or are less-educated with limited marketable skills (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Norozi, 2019). Immigration tends to have a destabilizing effect on the family (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Norozi, 2019), and parents are confronted with the simultaneous tasks of adapting to new land while still fulfilling traditionally expected familial roles.

Immigrant parents want their children to become well-educated for future prosperity in a new society (Lea, 2012; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). At the same time immigrant parents, particularly newcomers, may be skeptical of some values in their host countries, especially regarding religion as part of their identity and culture (Barry, 2001; Vogt, 2016; Spernes, 2018). The process to acquire and develop their own identity has many facets. Even in a majority culture, there are tendencies to reject some and include other influences. This dynamism, which we may call "acculturation" is found in both national and minority cultures. However, a minority will always have identity challenges and have less power than a majority (Cummins, 2001). Cummins calls this "a process of negotiating identities" (p. 653). This is an ongoing process for immigrant pupils and families. It is important to acknowledge the culture, language, identity, and creative and intellectual resources immigrant parents bring with them (Mena, 2011; Lea, 2012). The teacher must have openness and awareness of this aspect in PTC with newcomer parents. This also demands the teacher be well acquainted with immigrant pupils and their cultural backgrounds. In Norway, reception classes are designed specifically for newcomer pupils. For

newcomer pupils, reception classes are the first contact with the host culture, school system, and socialization as Dewilde and Skrefsrud (2016) call these transition classes "contact zones" for newcomer pupils and their parents. On the other hand, parents also must be aware of which differences the school represents to accept the way forward for their children in the host society (Lea, 2012). It is paramount that we deepen our understanding of the processes that contribute to newcomer pupils' education. As the landscape of our schools continues to change, the key role of teachers (particularly those who work with newcomer pupils) in facilitating healthy and successful transitions for the immigrant population has become ever more pronounced. This article is focused on one Norwegian teacher's perceptions and practices of collaborating with newcomer parents in the reception class.

This study

This study is part of a larger qualitative classroom study of how one Norwegian teacher, Anne (pseudonym), deals with the complexity of teaching newcomer pupils in a reception class. During the data collection period, Anne's class had pupils from second to fourth grades. The 16 pupils came from Iraq, Syria, Thailand, Somalia, Ethiopia, Philippines, and Russia and spoke Arabic, Thai, Somali, Tigrinya, Filipino, and Russian. Anne, herself is a native Norwegian speaker who was born and raised in the country. She speaks Norwegian and English. One throughgoing pattern that appeared during the data collection period and consequently also in the data material was Ann's emphasis on PTC. As there is a lack of studies on teachers' collaboration with newcomer immigrant parents, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on newcomer parent involvement. The research question is:

> *What are the teacher's perceptions and experiences of collaborating with newcomer parents in the Norwegian elementary reception class?*

This paper aims first to contribute to the literature on PTC when it comes to newly arrived immigrant pupils, and second, to offer a "thinking tool" (Gudmundsdottir, 2001) for teachers who work with immigrant pupils, especially the newly arrived ones.

Materials and methods

The study is thus situated within a qualitative tradition. Qualitative researchers using a variety of data collection methods, study phenomena in their natural settings and they are interested in how their informants make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. In other words, the main concern is to understand the phenomenon of interest from

the informants' perspectives, which is referred to as the emic or insider's perspective (Erickson, 1986).

Approaching the field

In the process of choosing a teacher for the overall study, several criteria had to be fulfilled. First, the teacher had to have experience from more than 5 years of working with newly arrived immigrant pupils. Second, the teacher would have to be willing to let the researcher, who is the first author of this article, enter the classroom for an indeterminate but most likely long period of time. Third, the teacher would have to be willing to collaborate during the data collection period and, if needed, also after this period to talk about and discuss the data and the interpretations. Fourth, the teacher had to be willing to let the researcher use a video camera to record classroom activities and to participate in conversations that were tape-recorded and transcribed. Implicit in all this is the criterion that the teacher should like her or his work, enjoy talking about teaching, and enjoy reflecting on her or his practice. The gatekeeper (Creswell and Poth, 2018) in the process of selecting a teacher, was the headteacher at a school with reception classes. It appeared that Anne, already introduced, satisfied the above criteria. In addition, she also agreed to use the time to watch video vignettes together with the first author of this article and reflect on them. All newcomer parents also gave their consent for observations and video recordings. The study was prospectively approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and considered to be in accordance with privacy protection laws.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected over a period of one school year and in two phases. Both phases involved observations, interviews, video recordings, and informal conversations with the teacher. The analysis of this huge amount of qualitative data was inspired by Creswell and Poth's (2018) "the data analysis spiral" (p. 186). This means that the researchers were engaged in the process of moving in analytical circles rather than using a fixed-liner approach. Forming codes and categories represent the heart of data analysis in the data analysis spiral. In the loop of describing and classifying codes into themes, coding involved aggregating text and video data into small categories of information. A long list of codes emerged from the data corpus. Then, the first author started looking for the codes and patterns that can be used to develop themes. The codes and patterns were "conceptually interesting and unusual for the researcher" (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 193). The recurring patterns (Maxwell, 2013) that were conceptually interesting and unusual for the researchers were identified as categories and themes (Creswell and Poth, 2018). One throughgoing recurring pattern that emerged was Anne's engagement in PTC. This throughgoing pattern occurred in the

transcribed interviews as well as in the informal conversations between Anne and the first author of this study. PTC is not only about rhetoric and fine words but it also involves concrete actions. In the process of data analysis, it became obvious that the teacher in addition to the *Institutionalized Pupil-Parent-Teacher Conferences* also arranged some other self-constructed PTC activities such as *Parents' Walks, Mothers' Evening*, and *Parents become Teachers*. In the result part of this article, these activities including the teacher's reflections upon them are presented.

Verification

Theories on how to ensure the quality of qualitative research suggest several verification procedures and one of these is long engagement and observation in the field (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2018). The first author of the study satisfies this verification procedure as she was in the field for one school year. Another verification procedure is triangulation. Anne's emphasis on PTC appeared in both the observation notes, the transcribed interviews, and some of the video recordings. A third verification procedure is member checking. In member checking, the researcher solicits the research subject's view on the credibility of the findings and interpretations. This technique may be considered "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 314). Throughout the entire research process, the findings and analysis were discussed with Anne, and thus the study is a result of a joint intersubjective understanding that developed during the research process (Moen, 2006).

Results

The data corpus from interviews and video recordings demonstrates Anne's strategies to communicate with newcomer parents. As Anne mentions "it is a process for me to learn how to work, give, and get adequate support from parents." Reflecting on her experiences, Anne finds newcomer parents flexible and cooperative and keen to see their children do well at school. Anne sees hope in newcomer parents. Consistent with the interviews, the video observation data corpus shows that for Anne the relationship with newcomer parents is very important, as is the information the parents share with her. "I truly see them (parents) as a big help for me," states Anne. Anne sees the involvement of parents as crucial, and she experiences the encounter with newcomer parents positively.

Institutionalized pupil–parent–teacher conferences

As mentioned earlier, formal and institutionalized "*Pupil-Parent-Teacher Conferences*" are conducted on regular basis

twice a year. Anne considers these conversations of utmost importance. She states "these conferences are one of the ways to get to know my pupils and their parents. When parents talk about their child in his presence, it tells me a lot about their parenting." For those parents who cannot speak Norwegian, Anne arranges interpreters for pupil–parent–teacher conferences. Yet mostly they are mother tongue teachers who become interpreters. There are several mother tongue teachers one for each language. Anne works closely with mother tongue teachers. Anne perceives them as a huge resource. Furthermore, there is an Arabic-speaking assistant in the reception class. According to Anne, having such resources is also helpful to communicate with newcomer parents who can't speak Norwegian. For the parents who can understand Norwegian, Anne prefers to have meetings without interpreters. In addition to these two formal pupil–parent–teacher conferences per school year, Anne arranges many other meetings with the parents. When asked how Anne communicates with her parents who can't speak Norwegian, she responds by saying that Norwegian is not an obligatory language to communicate with parents. They can speak English or their mother tongues. "We have many ways to communicate with each other. And this I learned from pupils in my class. Children in my class communicate with each other, play together. . . even they don't have a shared language." She further says,

Parents who have been longer in Norway become interpreters for me and help converse with other parents who can't speak Norwegian. I have learned some essential words in the languages I have parents with, for example, Swahili, Arabic, and Farsi. . . google translate on my mobile helps sometimes. . . I also use pictures to communicate. . . gestures and body language are always helpful ways to communicate.

The data corpus exhibits that to get the best out of these formal pupil–parent–teacher conferences, Anne combines these with diverse other self-initiated and self-constructed PTC activities. According to Anne, even reading simple Norwegian text in class is encouraging for newcomer parents and their children. Such sessions place parents and their strengths at the heart of these activities making it a great moment for PTC. According to Anne, successful PTC cannot be established through solely formal pupil–parent–teacher conferences. Combination with other activities makes pupil–parent–teacher conferences successful.

Parents walks

To better connect with diverse newcomer parents, Anne arranges a "*Parents Walk*" for the whole school day. Designed by parents and pupils, the whole group walks together to the destination point, which can be a forest, library, or downtown. The forest walk is a popular activity for all ages of people and throughout the year in Norway. During the parents-led walks, the whole group sits and eats their lunches together and discusses families' questions, concerns and hopes for their children and the reception class. Reflecting on her experience of Parents Walks, Anne says "it is amazing to see parents in such roles. I think, owning such activities make parents feel more responsible for the whole reception class." During winter, parents join in for ice skating and skiing. Anne considers activities like these a great source to be educated about her pupils' backgrounds, challenges, and cultural assets. According to Anne, one of the objectives of such initiatives is also to empower parents by providing them the opportunities to plan, arrange, and lead such activities. Activities such as ice-skating and skiing are new for many parents, Anne supports parents to learn the new culture. Ice skating and skiing are part of Norwegian culture. While reflecting on one of the video vignettes, Anne states ". . . when parents have a positive experience of such Norwegian sports then they start taking interest in them, then they encourage and help their children. . . this helps both parents and their children to positively experience the new culture." Anne gets help from mother tongue teachers and the classroom assistant for such activities. Anne appreciates that she always has one assistant with her. "Some parents, in the beginning, are skeptical for such activities due to cold, lots of snow and they are not used to of it . . .. However, when they find other parents as organizers and keenly involved, it helps them to join" alludes Anne. It appears that Anne has several reasons for parent lead walks. Parents' representatives are responsible to arrange Parents Walks in the first week of every month.

Mothers' evening

Another regular activity organized by mothers is "*Mothers' Evening*." Anne arranges *Mothers' Evening* once a month where mothers are engaged in cooking traditional food from their home countries. Having dinner together in a relaxing environment, provides an opportunity for her, according to Anne, to get to better know her pupils. They eat together and discuss different topics. Anne reflects "sometimes mothers become so engaged in a discussion that they start talking fast in their mother tongues and forget my presence. Then, I must ask for help from those mothers who can speak Norwegian." Newcomer mothers talk about their experiences of migration, homelands, family, cultural practices, challenges in Norway, and most importantly their children. According to Anne, "I knowingly make them (mothers) feel that I am not here to judge them; rather I am interested in learning about them. And the idea that they (mothers) are not judged, helps them to be themselves and share their thoughts and experiences. This does not happen at once, ... In the beginning, I found them (e.g., mothers) to be careful. But with time, they become open about their experiences in Norway." Mothers' evening activity

also serves to immerse in the home environment of the pupils. According to Anne, the purpose of having only mothers has two factors. First, Anne believes that newcomer mothers know better about their children. Second, Anne experienced mostly newcomer fathers coming to school if there is any concern even though mothers know more about their children. Anne considers that it can be due to cultural practices in homelands.

Parents become teachers

For Anne, the most cherished experience is when "*Parents become Teachers*" in her class. Elaborating on this activity, Anne explains that parents can arrange such sessions in pairs, groups, or even individually. Parents also have the choice of which day, yet most parents choose the national holidays of their countries for such sessions. According to Anne, parents can choose the topic; however, parents often (in groups or pairs) prefer to choose their country as a topic. Parents lead the session with whatever they have planned. Sometimes they show videos or just talk about their country and cultures showing some pictures, their national clothes, singing songs, playing music, and sometimes bringing traditional food. Reflecting on her role in the activity, she states "I tell them that they can ask me for help. And I help them with providing pictures (prints), arranging mother tongue teachers, helping with technology (smart board for showing videos, etc.), and providing stuff if they need to make their national food. They know it is our session and we work together.... though I am not in the leading role." Sometimes parents choose to present a "role play" then Anne arranges mother tongue/bilingual teachers' support for parents. Additionally, parents read stories from their countries in their languages accompanied by a translation by their mother tongue teachers. Some parents who are learning or can read Norwegian contribute by reading Norwegian books. Anne states "I help them (parents) to read the book first with me or with the mother tongue teacher if they want. The purpose is not only to help them read a Norwegian book but also be confident and do it happily with pupils." According to Anne, this simple activity of reading a Norwegian text is encouraging for both newcomer parents and their children. This practice has a permanent slot in every second week of Friday's lesson plan. Video observations indicate flexibility in terms of time for this activity ranging from 45 min to one and half hours. According to the teacher, parents can be invited to their children's educational and social activities such as listening to their children read, even when parents are non-literate and can't speak the language. Given the increasing number of newcomers in the Norwegian education system (particularly in the current situation of Ukrainian refugees), it is both timely and necessary to address how teachers can work with and involve parents by offering an education that supports newcomer pupils' holistic needs.

Discussion

The key precepts of Anne's perceptions and self-constructed practices are discussed as the teacher's pluralistic/positive perceptions of newcomer parents. The discussion also includes the tenets of Anne's priorities and challenges regarding PTC.

The teacher's pluralistic/positive perceptions of newcomer parents

Teachers' personal views and beliefs on values and learning affect their practices and assessment of collaboration (Biesta et al., 2015). Teachers' perceptions of diversity, minority pupils, and their families guide their practices and attitude. Teachers' positive attitudes toward families, their invitations to parents, and effective communication strategies contribute to a successful collaboration (Willemse et al., 2016). If teachers are motivated and have a pluralistic ideology of diversity, then they think of minority parents as resources (Horenczyk and Tatar, 2002; Tatar and Horenczyk, 2003; Cummins, 2014; Dubbeld et al., 2017; Norozi, 2019). Some research (Cummins, 1986; Mena, 2011; Lea, 2012) shows that even illiterate parents can support their children's education. Regardless of family background and student achievement level, pupils do better in schools if their families are engaged in their education (Sheldon, 2019; Epstein and Boone, 2022). Positive PTC has a positive influence on pupils' academic achievements (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Nunez et al., 2015; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017), with increased thriving, wellbeing, and decreased behavioral problems (Fan and Chen, 2001; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). When school becomes a safe place of support for newcomer parents and their children, pupils' trajectories can be significantly improved. The representative activities presented in this paper of newcomer parents' involvement are a few ways in which we may meet newcomer pupils and their parents where they are, fostering integration and success as they navigate life in Norway. When parents become teachers and facilitators, this creates formal and informal avenues for reciprocal learning between parents and the teacher. This refers to Epstein's (2010, 2018a) model for parents' involvement. The data show that Anne implicitly supports newcomer parents in parenting by helping them to understand their children and their development. This takes place by involving parents in what Epstein calls "volunteering" activities inside and outside the classroom. Such activities help Anne to understand families and their cultures. This is a key component of pluralistic ideology (Horenczyk and Tatar, 2002; Tatar and Horenczyk, 2003; Dubbeld et al., 2017, 2019) as demonstrated by Anne in her perceptions and practices. According to Anne, making the classroom welcoming, and safe and creating reciprocity is the goal of Anne's self-constructed practices including the

teaching sessions. PTC should be an essential component of every teacher's professional work (Bæck, 2015; Epstein, 2018b).

Newcomer parents are often considered a challenge (Lea, 2012; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). According to Bajaj and Suresh (2018), it is well known that many newcomer parents do not speak the host language. Realizing that parents might not understand all conversations but at least the teacher involves them by being open and trying to understand what they think and experience about their children in the new context. Listening and caring appear to be significant aspects of Anne's self-constructed pedagogical orientation. Anne appears to see the positive in them as she has a pluralistic perception of newcomer pupils and their parents. For example, Anne sees newcomer parents as extraordinarily strong (psychological), and these strengths are conveyed to their children in ways that can positively affect newcomers' education through PTC. Many immigrant families demonstrate considerable resilience, which is the capacity to survive physically and psychologically in pre-migration, *trans*-migration, and post-migration (Hamilton and Moore, 2004) circumstances requiring strength and determination. Anne appreciates newcomer parents' ability to adapt to a new lifestyle. Despite their challenges and limitations, the teacher can see parents' want for their children to do well in school and she counts this as a driving source for parents' flexibility and cooperation. Anne leverages this opportunity to create a safe place of hope, trust, and achievement for her pupils through PTC, and this can influence pupils' attainment (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Sheldon, 2019; Epstein and Boone, 2022). The examples of PTC presented above draw from parents' knowledge and rich cultural wealth empowers newcomer parents to be resources and facilitators. Anne's practices exemplify how parents can be involved whether in reception classes or mainstream conventional classes. Bæck (2015) mentions that the focus should be on the kind of involvement that takes place in PTC. Then only PTC contributes to improving school achievements, diminishing absence, and increasing pupils' wellbeing in schools. This kind of involvement and pedagogies has the power to make education, as Freire (2000) says "become the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women . . . discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (p. 34). Most of the newcomers' cultural norms and values emphasize family obligation, warmth and reciprocity, and strong connection with others, and this may act as a buffer against the negative effects of migration (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). According to Sibley and Brabeck, most newcomers are more likely to live in two-parent households, which have positive effects on children's education.

Despite the language issue, it is interesting that communication between Anne and the parents becomes a form of information exchange about school programs, culture, expectations, and children's progress. Anne sees parent–teacher conferences as a significant way to strengthen PTC. Contrary, Faugstad and Jenssen (2019) mention that parent–teacher conferences are largely formalities that seem to hinder genuine

collaboration. Anne combines parent–teacher conferences with many other activities, and this might help Anne to perceive parent–teacher conferences as a form of information exchange. If only parent–teacher conferences become PTC, then it makes it what Faugstad and Jenssen call a hindrance to genuine collaboration. This paper affirms earlier research about PTC in Norway that teachers develop their own practices of PTC (Bæck, 2015; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). However, this research (e.g., Bæck, 2015; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019) was conducted in mainstream Norwegian classes, while this study was undertaken in a reception class. The contradicting finding with the earlier research is that Anne is positive about PTC, while the earlier research indicate that PTC may be demanding and difficult for Norwegian teachers. This can be understood in terms of Anne's positive/pluralistic perceptions of immigrant pupils and their parents. Another aspect through which Anne's positive perceptions and experiences of PTC can be understood in the context of reception class is discussed in the following part.

Challenges and priorities

Usually, there is more focus on newcomer parents' sources of risk than their strengths. Newcomer parents are often marginalized due to their differences, lack of language skills, stereotypes, and ignorance of host culture and society (Trzcinska-Krol, 2020). However, the data show that Anne appears to be aware of the parents' strengths as well as sources of risk, and this is especially critical for PTC. Anne mentions "lack of time" as the biggest challenge in PTC. This finding affirms Bæck (2015) in Norwegian schools even though teachers acknowledge the importance of PTC, yet this part of their job is often deprioritized due to a lack of time and resources. Since Anne uses lots of time for PTC activities, she has less time for subject-content teaching. However, Anne states "once I am successful in creating a good relationship with parents, then I think it is a good investment . . . and this way it compensates in terms of time." This can be understood in reference to Epstein's (2010, 2018a) model of parents' involvement where parents are encouraged to help their children at home in their studies and other activities. However, it is not clear how much newcomer parents help their children at home since it is not part of the study. Yet, Anne admits that most of the newcomer pupils in her class are lacking behind in terms of subject content learning when compared with Norwegian pupils in mainstream classes. In reception classes, less focus on subject content teaching provides an opportunity for Anne to have more time for PTC. Yet, this leads Anne to uncertainty where she wonders if her self-constructed practices are right for the holistic education of newcomer pupils. It seems that Anne finds this demanding because she stands alone in her choices without the support of a professional community. This uncertainty and lack of professional support can be a barrier to successful PTC (Bæck, 2015; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017;

Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). This study also confirms findings from Bæck's (2015) study that PTC appears to be a privatized part of a teacher's job in the sense that it seems to be the responsibility of the individual teacher.

Consistent with video observations, when Anne was asked how parents could contribute to their children's schooling, aspects connected to the supporting role of parents were emphasized. Anne views it as vital that parents express support and encouragement regarding their children's schoolwork. According to Anne, academic support is not the most important form of support from parents, rather general encouragement is more significant. Anne appreciates that the parents do not have opinions on teaching or pedagogical questions. This is aligned with what Bæck (2010) found that the Norwegian teachers find it annoying if parents tried to "meddle" in things that in their view were not parents' business. Another factor is the parents' education level. As Baeck mentions, Norwegian teachers who need to deal with less-educated parents do not seem to feel a need to create or maintain professionalism. On the other hand, well-educated parents seem to trigger a need among teachers to demonstrate authority. The data corpus from interviews is consistent with observations where Anne demonstrates a level of comfort with newcomer parents and does not need to maintain a certain professional distance from the parents. Anne says "most of the parents themselves are new and they look up to me not only for their children's education but also knowing about Norwegian culture and society. My every word is so important to them." This establishes the power dimension in two ways. First, teachers have a more powerful status in schools compared to parents (Bæck, 2010). Secondly, being from a host (majority) culture Anne holds an additional power status in relation to newcomer parents. When asked whether Anne has involved the parents to discuss her PTC approaches and practices, she expressed "no need for this." Acknowledging her all good intentions, Anne may appear demanding to parents by setting the standards for the PTC. This may increase pressure on newcomer parents. This leads us to ask how newcomer parents experience the encounter with such practices of PTC. What has characterized Anne's PTC practices and approaches are only Norwegian-oriented understandings. PTC can be of different forms in different countries and cultures (Spernes, 2018) and even different for different teachers in the same school (Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). It appears that Anne involves the parents in "decision-making" to a limited extent. According to Epstein's (2010, 2018a) model of parental involvement, decision-making is a crucial part of PTC. All activities allow parents to plan, arrange, and lead the activities, yet Anne alone decides about the activity itself. For example, all the above exemplary activities shown in the data are Anne's self-constructed and self-initiated approaches based on her ideas. Yet, participation is volunteer based, for example, who will read books this month? Who will accompany the reception class for a walk? In addition, mothers can choose the theme for Mothers' Evening, etc.

According to Bæck (2010), teachers perceive well-educated parents who share the common cultural capital as wanting to engage more actively in their children's schoolwork. Well-educated parents keep an eye on the teachers and tend to question pedagogy and teaching methods. Baeck mentions that such challenges come from active, resourceful, and well-educated parents who share the common cultural capital. Baeck further emphasizes that teachers tend to attempt to distance themselves from well-educated parents through the insistence on their professionalism. On the other hand, teachers who relate to less well-educated parents are not in the same vulnerable position when it comes to authority. It is because teachers' academic superiority over these parents is unquestionable, and teachers feel that such parents do not have sufficient contact with teachers. Less-educated parents are reluctant to contact the school and the teachers are confident to protect their position. Newcomer parents do not share common cultural capital, some of them are less educated or have no formal education, yet they are considered a resource by Anne. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that behavior is the result of complex cognitive dispositions and perceptions. The development of positive perceptions and understanding of newcomer pupils and their parents is, therefore, prerequisite for achieving positive behavioral changes (Horenczyk and Tatar, 2002; Tatar and Horenczyk, 2003; Dubbeld et al., 2017, 2019). Taking this into account, we propose that teachers' perceptions of immigrant pupils and their families should be primarily focused on positive PTC.

This study suggests that if the teacher is motivated and has positive/pluralistic perceptions of immigrant pupils, then s/he finds ways to PTC that are of utmost importance in newcomer education. Anne's intentional practices are aimed to allow greater reciprocity between the school and newcomer parents. Though one teacher can make a big difference in the lives of many pupils, yet this vital component requires consideration at all levels of education for sustainability. It certainly needs a whole school approach and support from the Norwegian education system. The emphasis in Norwegian policy on PTC is not enough, but the implementation of the policy can be improved (Lea, 2012) by providing ongoing professional support to teachers who work with immigrant pupils, particularly newcomers. PTC will surely help to better understand and meet the needs of newcomer pupils in reception schools. PTC can bring about dramatic changes in newcomers' academic progress (Bajaj and Suresh, 2018).

Conclusion

Given that newcomer pupils are a growing segment of Norwegian schools, we emphasize that PTC is of utmost importance in newcomer pupils' education. The findings of this study contradict previous studies that show most teachers

are not competent enough to work with newcomer and their parents. This study shows that if the teacher is motivated and has positive/pluralistic perceptions of newcomer pupils, she finds ways to collaborate with newcomer parents. The teacher's approaches to PTC are not referred to as right or wrong but rather appreciated as self-constructed and self-initiated. Anne's intentional practices are aimed to allow greater reciprocity between the school and the newcomer's parents. Even though we have focused on one teacher in this study, we strongly suggest a whole school approach for a sustainable better education of newcomer pupils. PTC will surely help to better understand and meet the needs of newcomers in reception schools. Though the Norwegian policy emphasizes PTC, the implementation of the policy can always be improved (Lea, 2012) by providing ongoing professional support to teachers who work with newcomer pupils (Short and Boyson, 2012; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Bajaj and Suresh, 2018). From the perspective embraced in this paper, ongoing professional support is explicitly suggested for reception teachers. In such professional support and other teacher education programs, a concerted effort should be made the promotion of PTC with newcomer parents. Offering valuable insights, the findings of this study must be viewed considering two limitations. First, focusing on only one reception teacher's perceptions and practices limits inferences and generalizations drawn from this study. Yet, the purpose of the study has been to inspire educators and researchers to consider the topic for further research with larger samples and in different contexts. Secondly, the study does not include parents' perceptions of and experiences with Anne's collaboration. Future studies can focus on newcomer parents' experiences of collaboration with reception teachers.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Norwegian Social Science Data Services. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

SN conducted data collection, oversaw data analysis, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. TM contributed to the data analysis and wrote the method section of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the manuscript revision, read, and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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What about the family? The role and meaning of family in the integration of migrant children: Evidence from Slovenian schools

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Based on field research in Slovenian schools, the article examines the role of the family in the integration process of migrant children. While migrant children perceive the family as the most important factor influencing their overall well-being and life satisfaction, research shows that parents of migrant children are often not involved in school activities and life. The article explores how the role of parents in the integration process of migrant children in the school environment is understood at the policy level and how it is perceived by migrant children and the educational community. It also explores what are the main barriers to the involvement of migrant parents in schools and what are the existing practices and experiences in Slovenian schools. The analysis is based on qualitative research in Slovenian schools with children and the educational community conducted as part of the Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) project.

KEYWORDS

migrant children, integration, schools, family, well-being

Introduction

Parental involvement in education of migrant children is paramount for their integration. Several studies have demonstrated the positive impact of parental and family engagement in school on children's academic performance and success, and subsequently on their (future) participation in society. A general trend observed in Western societies is that parental involvement is very intense and engaged, "so that good parents are expected not just to provide material and emotional support and check homework, but also to participate in school choice and even help their teenage children apply to universities" (Weis, Cipollone and Jenkins in Antony-Newman, 2019: 2). The strong involvement of parents in schoolwork and the educational process is a new factor in the social differentiation of children (Ule, 2015: 25), because the children whose parents do not know how to participate in school or who are not able to provide support in school matters are worse off compared to the children who are supported by their parents.

However, analyses of the school engagement of migrant parents show that the ability to actively participate in their children's education is significantly influenced by the parents'

class, race, gender, and migrant status (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). Migrant parents face particular challenges due to language barriers (Antony-Newman, 2019), unfamiliarity with the host country's education system, socio-economic status (Tang, 2014), and cultural differences (Denessen et al., 2007; Calzada et al. 2015). While some migrant parents manage to overcome these obstacles and build relationship with teachers (Turney and Kao, 2009), parental engagement is still lower in schools with a high proportion of students who do not speak the language of instruction at home than in schools with fewer migrant students (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019: 26). In this context, it is encouraging that in Europe, the vast majority of governments have put in place top-level regulations to promote schools' efforts to inform and actively involve parents of migrant children in the educational process (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019: 26), with the aim of supporting relationships between teachers and migrant parents and facilitating the benefits of involving parents in their children's education.

The Slovenian context is noteworthy and calls for analytical attention for two main reasons: first, because, as Ule (2015) shows, compared to other European countries, Slovenian parents are among those who are most engaged in their children's school, educational pathways, and school work and have high educational aspirations, which are also adopted by the children themselves; and second, because Slovenia is one of the few countries with educational policies that cover the areas of parental involvement in a holistic way. As reported in the Eurydice report, Slovenian policy puts emphasis on the potential of parents to contribute to the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of their children as well as to address any psychosocial difficulties (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019: 26). However, as studies show, there are significant discrepancies between what is envisaged in policy and what is implemented in school practice (Dežan and Sedmak, 2020; Medarić et al., 2021).

There is a paucity of the literature on parental involvement in relation to the integration of migrant children within school environment. The research on migrant parents has been growing in the last years, but they are still an under-researched group (Antony-Newman, 2019). The article aims to fill this gap by examining the role of parents in the integration process within school environment, how it is conceived at the policy level and how it is perceived by migrant children and teachers. With regard to the latter, the article discusses how teachers perceive and promote the engagement of migrant parents in school (what are the practices of parental involvement, what are the reasons for non-involvement) and how migrant children see the role of their parents in relation to the integration process. The article brings new insights into the role of parents and the family in the integration of migrant children within educational setting and the obstacles to their involvement.

The analysis is based on qualitative research with teachers and migrant children from Slovenian primary and secondary schools,

conducted as part of the Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) project.

The article begins with a theoretical framing of the relationship between family, school, and integration of migrant children, drawing attention to the challenges parents face in their engagement with school. Then the methodological approach of the field study is briefly presented and the empirical results are analyzed. The empirical part first describes the main policy documents and support measures aimed at bridging the gaps in cooperation between teachers and parents of migrant children. Thereafter, it pursues with presentation of fieldwork results, ending with a brief discussion and conclusion.

Theoretical framework

The role of family and school for the integration of migrant children

At the level of policy studies, migrant integration has typically meant measuring the degree to which immigrant groups equally participate in the economic and social institutions of the host society, taking into consideration structural aspects such as educational achievement, access to the labor market and discrimination (Schneider and Crul, 2010). Sociological and anthropological studies in this field have additionally placed emphasis on the processes of transition, construction of hybrid identities (Boland, 2020), and emerging modes of belonging (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016, 2017; Laoire et al., 2016). With the topicality and growing interest in the process of integrating migrant children, the role of parents and the family and school has become more important in this regard. There is a broad consensus on the importance of the family and schooling for the overall well-being and life satisfaction of children. However, as this section shows, the relationship between family, school and integration of migrant children is complex and multi-layered.

In view of integration processes and migrant children, the family is of key importance. Its supportive role is particularly important for newly arrived migrant children as it provides them with a sense of anchorage connection, security, and identity. Previous research on the anchoring (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016, 2017), of Slovenian migrant youth, i.e., research in how migrants connect to a new society and the process of psychological and social stabilization within it, shows that in connecting with the new society family plays a significant role that enables them to feel well, safe, and secure (Sedmak and Medarić, 2022). Indeed, children who have family members living in the same country are better able to cope with the daily challenges that migration brings (Sedmak and Dežan, 2021). Evidence from Danish school studies (Piekut et al., 2021), moreover, show that acceptance of migrant families and ethnic groups of children by teachers, the school, and the local community enhances the integration process of migrant children and, conversely, if children feel that their families are exposed to discrimination and negative prejudice, this has a negative impact on their readiness to adapt.

In addition to family, school is also one of the most important social institutions when it comes to the challenges of migrant children's integration; it functions as a vehicle for promoting tolerance, intercultural dialogue, inclusion, and acceptance (Medarić and Sedmak, 2012) and serves as a place of social inclusion for children who are new to the local environment. From this perspective, schools play a role in meeting migrants' needs in terms of language acquisition, developing relationships with peers and teachers (Due et al., 2015; Soriano and Cala, 2018) and providing a safe and stable environment for migrant children (Block et al., 2014; Seker and Sirkeci, 2015; Aydin et al., 2019). Moreover, through education, migrant children acquire new skills and knowledge that increase the chances of their future economic inclusion and upward mobility (Suárez-Orozco, 2017), thus combating the risks of socio-economic marginalization and exclusion.

School-family nexus has attracted interest of many academics in migration studies, who generated many important findings. Some found that migrant parents may perceive values of the host society incompatible with their parenting traditions, therefore they may try to preserve traditional cultural and religious values, thus reinforcing their migrant identity (Johannesen and Appoh, 2016; Bowie et al., 2017). Other shows that, if possible, parents choose a particular school where other members of the same ethnic community are already enrolled. This was the case in the study of Polish parents in the United Kingdom, who often choose schools already attended by other Polish children in the hope that their children will be supported by Polish peers. However, in some cases, this lead to slower language acquisition and a reduction in children's social networks, slowing integration (Trevena et al., 2016).

Furthermore, in the context of school and family relations, studies demonstrate that parent and family engagement in school have an impact on migrant children's academic achievement and success (Jung and Zhang, 2016). Moskal and Sime (2016) in this respect observe that children's academic engagement and achievement is strengthened by supportive family relationships, while children's motivation to learn is also related to parents' recognition of the sacrifices they make to provide better opportunities for their children. Jung and Zhang (2016) moreover highlight that parental host society's language proficiency and involvement in school are related to children's cognitive development, directly as well as indirectly, through children's educational aspirations. Finally, parental involvement in schools is important, as Turney and Kao (2009) suggest, also because in this way children recognize that education is important and because it provide parents with means of control, and access to information about their children, making them in a better position to intervene if their children are struggling.

Barriers to parental involvement in school/children education

Parental involvement in education is broadly defined as the resources parents invest in their child's learning experience

(Calzada et al., 2015) with the goal of supporting children's academic and/or behavioral success. These include help with homework at home, communication with teachers and attendance at school, such as participation in parent-teacher conferences, involvement in parent organizations, attendance at school events, and volunteering at school (Turney and Kao, 2009; Young et al., 2013), as well as involvement in broader learning environments and extracurricular learning activities (Jung and Zhang, 2016).

The findings on racial and ethnic differences in parental involvement practices are fairly inconsistent, and sometimes even contradictory. Turney and Kao (2009), for example, indicate that Black and Hispanic parents are more involved in parent-teacher organizations than White parents and those Asian parents are less involved. In contrast, report of European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice (2019) finds that headmasters in schools with a high proportion of migrant students report lower parental engagement (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019: 47). Jung and Zhang (2016) say that their findings do not confirm that ethnic background differentiates parental help with homework. Therefore, as Turney and Kao (2009) point out, it is important to note that parental engagement in school is a multidimensional and intersectional phenomenon. Differences in parental engagement exist not only between different ethnic groups, but also within these groups. The most common factors affecting engagement include time spent in the country (e.g., differences between foreign-born and native-born members of a particular ethnic group), language skills of migrant parents, socio-economic status of the migrant family, demographic characteristics of the family, and cultural proximity to the host society (Turney and Kao, 2009; Jung and Zhang, 2016).

Nevertheless, studies show quite consistently that the ability to actively participate in children's education is significantly influenced by parents' migration status (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). According to data from longitudinal Early Childhood Study from National Center for Educational Statistics 2001 from United States, which examined racial and immigrant differences in barriers to parental involvement in school, immigrant parents report more barriers to their children's participation and engagement in school life compared to native parents (Turney and Kao, 2009).

Overall, studies confirm that language skills are important predictors of parental involvement and engagement in school (Turney and Kao, 2009). In a comparative synthesis of 40 qualitative and quantitative studies on parental engagement using migrant families in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia as examples, Antony-Newman's analysis has shown that migrant parents face significant challenges primarily due to language barriers (Antony-Newman, 2019), which significantly affect parental engagement in the case of migrant families (Sohn and Wang, 2006; Denessen et al., 2007). On the one hand, migrant parents may not be able to assist their children with homework and learning due to their limited knowledge of educational concepts and insufficient language skills (Colombo, 2006); on the other hand, language barriers also worsen the relationship and

communication between them and teachers. Some studies report that parents often feel less confident because they do not speak the language and therefore do not feel comfortable in direct oral communication, preferring written communication with teachers (Sohn and Wang, 2006). Parents who do not speak the host country's language are also more likely to report that they do not feel welcome at school (Turney and Kao, 2009). Children often act as translators or interpreters for parents who cannot communicate in the host country language. This can also promote children's willingness to integrate, as they feel responsible for supporting their families (Moskal and Sime, 2016).

Lack of familiarity with the education system and the role of host schools is another barrier to parental involvement in schools (Antony-Newman, 2019). Some studies suggest that the lower level of support is due to migrant parents' unfamiliarity with the school culture, organizational structure, educational standards, and requirements of the national school system (Crosnoe, 2010; OECD Education and Skills Today, 2020). This unfamiliarity with the school system can lead to a lack of confidence in their ability to guide their children's educational trajectory (Peña, 2000), avoidance of helping their child achieve educational success through participation in school activities (Tang, 2014), and being in a worse position when advising their children on their educational path (Kristen, 2005).

Parental engagement is also influenced by the socio-economic status of the family. Tang (2014) highlights that migrant parents are more likely to report that meeting times suggested by teachers are unsuitable; this may be particularly true of low-income migrant families, whose adult members are more likely to face long working days, unstable working hours, and jobs far from their homes (Tang, 2014). In addition, some studies suggest that the parents of migrant children have, on average, lower levels of education (OECD Education and Skills Today, 2020: 16) and are therefore less able to support the child's learning and improve their academic performance (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996: 26). Depending on socio-economic status, the family may also support and enable their child's participation in extracurricular activities, where social networks are built that contribute to inclusion (Rerak-Zampou, 2014).

Studies show that cultural differences in many ways hinder cooperation and communicating between teachers and parents. Families have different attitudes toward schooling and interaction with school staff, and that these attitudes may be related to their experiences of schooling, religion, and cultural values. Cultural differences make parental involvement more difficult for teachers and school administrators. For example, Denessen et al. (2007) explain that parents may not know how to get involved; while Calzada et al. (2015) stress that they may not see involvement in their children's schooling as their role or responsibility. Some studies have found that immigrant families are less likely to participate in certain school activities because they do not perceive the activity as directly linked to their child's educational success (Hill and Torres, 2010). Not knowing each other's culture, lifestyles and values (among both teachers and parents) negatively affect

relationships and direct parental involvement. A study of Somali parents shows that parents need parental support for a successful transition into parenthood. Schools and social services can overcome barriers that prevent a lack of knowledge about the new country's systems in relation to parenting (Osman et al., 2016).

The lack of information faced by migrant families due to language limitations often leads to a lack of integration of migrant children. In the school context, children from migrant families may also act as closed gates to the flow of information due to concerns about their family's public image and consciously try not to impose additional burdens on their parents while resisting pressure from their parents (Säävälä et al., 2017). Existing school integration policies and practices in European schools often do not automatically include the dissemination of information about school rules and daily routines in migrant languages. On the other hand, a comparative study in six European countries has clearly shown that there is a need for such support (Sedmak and Dežan, 2021). A lack of information for migrant families was also revealed at a time of pandemic, when the disadvantage of migrant children became even more apparent and an integration process was seriously questioned (Gornik et al., 2020).

Finally, teachers and educational staff play a key role in building a cooperative relationship with parents. Licardo and Leite (2022) emphasize that teachers' interpersonal and professional skills are important predictors of perceived cooperation with migrant parents. Migrant families may perceive the school climate as intimidating and dismissive or feel uncomfortable and disrespected due to teachers' judgmental attitudes and communication style (Peña, 2000; Turney and Kao, 2009). While teachers acknowledge that barriers to parental involvement are due to a lack of school policies and ineffective communication strategies, they also frequently report barriers on the part of families, such as parents not attending school events, not responding to teacher communication, not having the resources to engage with the school, and being reluctant to engage with the school due to mandated screening procedures (Soutullo et al., 2016). In addition, Van Daal et al. (in Denessen et al., 2007) point out that teachers often feel that migrant parents lack language skills to communicate with teachers, hold school (exclusively) responsible for their child's education and have a low interest in school matters.

Existing studies indicate that parents need to be supported by school authorities in order to promote the integration process of children. Expectations of appropriate involvement and how the family should cooperate with the school vary. This is especially true when intercultural differences are involved, i.e., in the case of migrant children and their families. López et al. (2001) also acknowledge in their study the difficulty of American schools to cope with the lower achievement and dropout of migrant children and the difficulty to effectively overcome the terrain of parental involvement and promote the academic success of migrant children. They found that the schools that were successful in parental involvement were successful because they placed the needs of parents above all other considerations for involvement.

The schools were successful not because they were committed to a particular definition of parent involvement, but because they were committed to meeting the diverse needs of migrant parents on a daily and ongoing basis.

Methodology and methodological approach

The analysis is based on field research among migrant children and members of the education community in Slovenia, conducted as part of the *MiCREATE - Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe* project, funded by the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Action.

Research among members of the educational community in primary and secondary schools was conducted in the period from June to December 2019. A total of 54 interviews and 14 focus groups were conducted in 16 Slovenian primary and secondary schools. The selection criteria were to include elementary schools, vocational schools, and upper secondary schools in cities with a large migrant population and resulting cultural and ethnic diversity, and to achieve the most diversified sample in terms of migrant children's experiences. First, background information on school life was obtained from a school representative, usually principals and school counselors in 16 schools. Afterwards, seven schools, three primary and four secondary, were selected for more in-depth research. In these schools, additional 38 interviews and focus groups were conducted with teachers and other educational staff in order to attain their perceptions, attitudes and opinions regarding approaches, measures, and the overall process of the integration of migrant children.

In the same seven schools, a multi-method research among children was conducted among migrant and local children and youth (aged 10–17 years) between October 2019 and March 2021. Initially, the participant observation phase was organized for at least 15 days per school. The participant observation days were conducted as the "field entry" phase. A combination of passive and moderate participation approaches (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988) was used. In the former, we passively participated as uninvolved observers in daily school activities to gather information about the general climate, daily routines, interactions, class and peer relationships, and general social dynamics in the schools. Later, a moderate observation approach was used to develop a rapport and establish a level of familiarity and trust that helped us to conduct the collection of autobiographical life stories with children and young people and focus groups. A total of 99 autobiographical life stories were collected, 60 of which with newly—arrived or long-term migrant children+. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed according to the rules of qualitative data analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) using NVivo software.

What followed was the application of focus groups with 3–6 children/young people where participants discussed selected topics, e.g., migration, multiculturalism and cultural diversity in school, discrimination, racism, well-being, issues of identity and

belonging, everyday school life, family etc. In research the child—centered approach was applied that sees children as relevant actors in society whose views should be taken into account in the matters that affect them (Clark and Moss, 2008; Fattore et al., 2008; Qvortrup et al., 2011; Volonakis, 2019; Gornik, 2020). Altogether, 11 focus groups were conducted with either the same or different children that already participated in the individual interviews (Tables 1, 2).[1]

Results

Migrant children and their families

In their narratives, migrant children and youth often emphasized the central role of the family through statements, such as: "*The family means everything to me*" or "*The family means life to me*," and parents are frequently seen as confidants, who are the only ones who can be trusted. The emotional role of parents in the process of adjusting to the new environment is significant for many migrant children. As one teenager (16) who migrated from Bosnia 4 years ago explains, their support was crucial in the first period after migrating to the new country:

> *"Also, my family, my parents always talked to me and everything./…/It meant a lot to me, we talked every day, they told me that everything would be fine, that I would slowly get used to life here, that they would be there for me and things like that."*

While parents provide emotional support to their children, not all of them are able to support them in their school activities because of language barriers or intersection of different issues, such as knowledge gaps and lack of time due to work and the like. On the contrary, the children often reported that they were the ones supporting younger siblings with school, because their parents could not support them due to lack of language skills. A

TABLE 1 Methodology: Phase 1—interviews with school representatives (June 2019—December 2019).

	No of schools	Regional coverage	No of interviews
Primary schools	9	Jesenice (1), Piran (1), Izola (1), Celje (1), Maribor (1), Ljubljana (1), Koper (2), and Trebnje (1)	9
Secondary schools	7	Ljubljana (1), Postojna (1), Trbovlje (1), Maribor (2), and Koper (2)	7
Total	16		16

1 For more information about methodology and results of study among children and young people see Dežan and Sedmak (2021).

TABLE 2 Methodology: Phase 2—In depth research in selected seven schools (October 2019−March 2021).

	No of schools	Regional coverage	Participant observation	Interviews and focus groups with teachers and other educational staff		Interviews and focus groups with children	
			No of days	No of interviews	No of focus groups	No of interviews	No of focus groups
Primary schools	3	Izola (1), Ljubljana (1), and Maribor (1)	15 participant observation days in each school	17	6	41	4
Secondary schools	4	Koper (2), Ljubljana (1), and Maribor (1)	15 participant observation days in each school	21	8	58	7
Total	7			38	14	99	11

13-year-old girl from Kosovo who came to Slovenia less than 3 years ago explains:

> For me it was difficult, because my mother does not understand the language, and when I did not start school early at 7 or 7.30 I had to help my brothers and translate if they did not understand.

So migrant children often find themselves in the role of helper, interpreter, mediator for family members, and feel responsible to support them. In their narratives, children sometimes also expressed that their parents sacrificed a lot to assure better future for them, so they felt they had to adapt quickly and do their best.

> It's hard, no one can be indifferent in such a situation, you leave, for example, your grandma and you go to some unknown place. The system is different and it's not easy, but we have to make efforts because our parents did this for our own good. Not because they want something bad for us, but because they wish great things for us. We have to adapt, and we have to remain strong. (girl, 16 y/o, newly arrived)

Migrant parents and school

Documents and guidelines

The most relevant documents that address the integration of migrant children in Slovenia are the following: Strategy for Integrating Migrant Children, Pupils, and Students in the Education System in the Republic of Slovenia (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2017),[2] Guidelines for the Education of Alien Children in Kindergartens and Schools (2009), and National Education Institute Slovenia (2012), and the most recent Proposal for a program of work with immigrant children

in the field of pre-school, primary, and secondary education (Rutar et al., 2018). In these documents, the parents are recognized as an essential element for the integration of children, moreover, the Proposal (Rutar et al., 2018) aims for the partnership between children, the school community, parents, and the local community.

The Strategy from 2017 identified problems, which need to be addressed in order to improve migrant integration in education system, including cooperation with migrant parents. More specifically, the document identified lack of recommendations and guidelines for working with migrant parents (strategies for communicating with migrant parents, strategies for integrating migrant parents in kindergarten and school settings, etc.). It also highlighted the need for teachers to learn basic elements of migrants' language and culture and to gain skills of intercultural communication in order to avoid possible misunderstandings or facilitate contact with parents and encourage them to participate in school. Finally, lack of adequate financial support to assist in communicating with migrant parents (lack of financial resources for the translator, preparation of bilingual invitations, instructions, messages…) was mentioned as one of the obstacles that need to be addressed.

Cooperation with parents is addressed already in the Guidelines for the Education of Alien Children in Kindergartens and Schools (2009) that propose a collaboration of schools, parents, and local communities through confidants (for example, teachers responsible for migrant children) who coordinate the interaction between the three parties. Additionally, during enrolment process, the schools are also encouraged to assist the parents with information about the school system, school's expectations, and documents, but also providing translators and the like. According to guidelines, school should also organize welcome days and similar activities before the beginning of the school year. Furthermore, schools are encouraged to offer language courses for migrant parents and thus contribute to the development of their language skills. Moreover, professionals in schools should gain competences to address communication challenges that might arise between the school and migrant parents (Rutar et al., 2018). While individual schools do offer such activities and courses for parents and their employees, the main problem is they are often project—funded and thus often only temporary.

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2   The first version of this document was issued in 2007 and presents the foundations for the integration of migrant children in the school environment in Slovenia.

According to these policy documents parents should be involved at different stages of migrant child's educational process, however, as the documents are not binding, the implementation differs across schools. Parents should be involved in the preparation of individual plans for migrant learners that define the learning goals, strategies for teaching and individual plan of activities for each migrant child on a yearly basis. Additionally, following the guideline that for the first 2 years of schooling, migrant children are entitled to several adjustments in relation to their assessment, parents should also be involved in the decisions on the evaluation process, number of grades, time extension etc. The documents show a rather holistic perspective to tackling the issue of integration of migrant children in education that also involves parents at different stages. However, there is a significant gap between the existing policy documents and the everyday practices in Slovenian school. One of the main problems is that the documents are not binding and there are significant differences in their implementation across schools (see also Dežan and Sedmak, 2020; Medarič, 2020; Medarić et al., 2021).

Perceptions of educational staff

Involvements of parents of migrant children differ significantly across Slovenian schools. There is a large discrepancy between primary and secondary schools in terms of cooperation with parents, including parents with a migrant background. In primary schools, contact with parents is more intensive, as teachers meet with them at the beginning of the school year and cooperation usually continues throughout the year. In the secondary schools, parental involvement of parents is less intensive, partly because children aged 15 and over are considered young adults and are therefore more independent.

However, even at the primary school level, there are major differences between schools in terms of cooperation with migrant parents. Some schools see integration as a holistic process involving not only migrant children and their families but also local children, members of the educational community as well as local community, but many schools do not. Currently, there are no commonly accepted guidelines or systemic approach to the inclusion of migrant children in schools and the relationship between their parents and schools. Each school organizes its own way of connecting with parents, drawing on past experiences, and common practices. This means that the integration of migrant children and relationship with their parents in practice depend on the individual school and often on individual teachers, principals, counselors, etc. who play the most important role in the integration processes of children within school. Some schools that are located in traditionally more multicultural areas with a higher presence of ethnic minorities or economic migrants, or that generally recognize cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity as an important issue and value, have developed internal rules and informal procedures that promote acceptance, inclusion, and a general multicultural school ethos. These schools understand the importance of reaching out to the whole family and engaging with parents for successful integration of children. As presented by a school representative

from such a multicultural area, the needs of migrant children and parents are addressed not only in schools, but in cooperation with different stakeholders in the whole local area:

> Somehow, according to the needs, certain practices were established in this area. These include the coordinator for helping foreigners, education in the form of courses, Slovenian language courses offered by the Adult education center, workshop to which we direct our children and families. So basically, we try to equip these families as much as possible, and at the same time we explore through evaluation and monitoring what additional needs they have and what could be organized additionally for these families and children (Primary school representative)

In such schools parent's well-being in the cooperation between parents and school is seen as significantly affecting the well-being of migrant children:

> It is important that the parents feel safe and accepted in the first place. Because if the parents feel safe and accepted, then this affects the children, so the children feel better too (Primary school counselor).

In our research, however, this is not the norm, as there are many schools that do not specifically address migrant parents. For example, when a school principal was asked whether they get in touch with the parents of migrant children, if they organize any meetings and the like, he replied: *No more than anyone else. We do not differentiate here* highlighting the equality and the 'ethnically blind approach' as the reason for not approaching migrant parents.

On the other hand, some school representatives stressed that it is the parents of migrant children who cannot be reached, cannot speak the language and are generally non-responsive. In a case when a high school girl was missing school for longer periods of time and they could not reach the parents, their unresponsiveness was presented as "typical" for migrant parents:

> And then you find yourself in a kind of a hole, where you don't know what to do and how, because you don't have parents to talk to, because they are unresponsive. As a rule they don't read e-mails, they don't answer your phone, because they don't speak the language, they don't come to school, and this is where the problem lies (Secondary school representative).

This discourse has often been used in reference to the Albanian migrant community that has been migrating as economic migrants in recent decades, especially from Kosovo and some parts of Northern Macedonia and is perceived as the ultimate "other," i.e., "closed," "self-sufficient," and "culturally different," with strong ethnic boundaries (Sedmak and Medarić, 2022). Since they speak the language of non-Slavic origin, they are more difficult to communicate to than, for example parents of

children who come from other former republics of Yugoslavia like Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, or even Northern Macedonia.

Migrant parents thus face specific challenges in their cooperation with schools. The issue of (the lack of) parent's language knowledge was often raised by the teachers and other educational staff. The example below shows that there do not exist systemic solutions in solving the issue of communication with migrant parents, such as using interpreters or intercultural mediators. On the contrary, often *ad hoc* solutions, such as of children taking the role of translators are implemented:

> *A problem in communicating with the parents arises when, for example, they do not speak Slovenian. Last year, for example, there was a situation where the mother only spoke Albanian, not even English. Communication was not possible, and then the girl translated herself. It's funny because the child we are talking about translates for the parents and since you do not know the language, you cannot follow and you do not know if it was translated correctly* (Secondary school principal).

The first contact between migrant families and the school environment usually happens in the process of the enrolment of children to school. Especially before the first visit to the school, sometimes parents bring relatives or friends who already speak the language, or even translators to help communicate with the school. In secondary schools children often enroll alone. Administrative officers explained that migrant students who have been in Slovenia for several years are frequently asked to help with translation in communication with parents, although none of them is satisfied with such solution.

The lack of information for migrant parents was recognized as an important issue in some schools; therefore, they try to address it by preparing the most relevant information for migrant parents about the necessities in their schools. For example, a primary school principal explained a recently implemented change in order to address this issue:

> *So, now I have to say that this school year, as a novelty, we held a joint parents' meeting intended for migrant parents, to which we also invited a translator. So, we provided the parents with all the information, with all the contacts, where they can go, when they can come to the consultation hours, even outside the ones that are for everyone, because they are overcrowded, simply for that reason.*

Again, this is not a norm in all schools and some schools do not provide any additional information for migrant parents, even though in the narratives of teachers and counselors this was recognized as relevant.

Another important issue that arose from the interviews with educational staff is that intersectionality should be taken into account when discussing parental involvement in schools, thus their socio-economic status, educational background etc. As noted by a teacher from a multicultural school, parental educational background and language knowledge play an important role in their support and general involvement in education of their children:

> *Well, if you look at Slovenian children, it is the same issue: if the parents are more educated, they also support them with their work at home. I would not say this is specific for migrant children, but it is the same with Slovenian ones. If Slovenian children come from the families with lower educational background, they have less support at home and they have to do more on their own. It is the same with migrant parents, except that they are in a worse position, because they don't master the language /…/.* (Primary school Slovenian language teacher).

In the view of educational staff, if parents perceive education as an important value, this is also reflected in the attitudes of migrant children: *I think that the attitude of parents is very important. If school, education is important for them, if they take it seriously, than they pass it on to children* (Primary school counselor).

Educational staff also link children's academic performance and willingness to integrate to a lack of motivation due to family circumstances, family values, and possibly low parental expectations. One primary school principal noted that children of economic migrants from the former Yugoslav republics whose parents are low-skilled workers do not have high academic aspirations and are also less willing to integrate:

> *Those who move from the formed e former Yugoslav republics… it is interesting that they have been for long time, but are less willing to advance, because they see their parents who are builders, shop assistants, and they say…ok, it is enough for me just to pass, to get the satisfactory grade, I don't need better grades. And the teachers understand me, why would I learn Slovenian language, I speak Southern at home, my parents speak Southern between themselves or at school, so why would I speak Slovenian in school. "She understands me anyway". They are very poorly motivated* (Primary school principal).

Existing school practices

In the following, the existing practices for integration and support of migrant parents in Slovenian schools are presented. Such practices exist only in some schools, especially those that generally recognize multiculturality as a relevant issue, and more often in primary schools. Schools that generally recognize cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity also recognize the importance of reaching out to migrant parents and involving them in the school process. These schools address some of the barriers parents face and were already presented.

Supporting parents through the enrolment procedure

In some schools, migrant parents are supported in various ways during enrolment, e.g., with the necessary information in

their mother tongue and the like. In one school, for example, a leaflet is produced in different languages containing basic information about the school, including the most important telephone numbers, office hours, holidays, information about school meals, subsidies, school books, and the like. It is distributed at the first parents' meeting.

Communication problems are not systematically addressed with interpreters and/or cultural mediators, so the educators find their own ways. Sometimes other parents, teachers, friends or even children take on the role of translator for the parents of the newly arrived children; rarely but in some cases, the schools also engage authorized translators.

> *I organize someone within the school, if the language is spoken by someone. Like a teacher or a parent. For example, I do not speak Russian, but there is a mother from Russia who has offered to help. Or Albanian. We have quite a few children from Kosovo who speak Albanian. And the parents volunteer. /…/ Or we ask them to bring someone with them, or the parents of the migrants bring someone themselves who speaks the language* (primary school, counselor).

Language courses for parents

In order to address the communication problems, some schools organize language courses for both migrant children and their parents. One of the main problems is that these courses are only run in some schools, are often project-based and funded, and are therefore often limited in time.

Cooperation of parents with the local community

The involvement of community resources to support migrant parents by schools is not common. Nevertheless, in some areas there is cooperation with non-governmental organizations that provide various activities for both children and parents, usually language acquisition support, information, etc.

> *We have very close contacts with the Slovenian philanthropy, Cene Štupar - Institute for Language Learning. They offer a language course also for the parents of children. For both, children, and parents. We have these courses in our school. So this is what we have … But we also cooperate with the Faculty of Philosophy, which sends its students to our schools as volunteers.*

Schools rarely perceive the integration of migrant children as a process that needs to involve not only migrant children but also local children and families as well as the whole educational and local community. Nevertheless, individual schools recognize it as such:

> *In our school we really thought about it, because when we talk about inclusion, and acceptance, we have to think about everything. It's not just about migrant families adapting to the new environment, it's about all of us living together.*

Training of educators in intercultural awareness

During their studies, Slovenian teachers usually do not receive training that deals with issues of cultural diversity and interculturality, and at the school level there is no compulsory training for active teachers. Nevertheless, in recent years various courses, short-term trainings and the like have been organized for teachers to improve their skills. The organization of such activities depends on the individual school and participation in such trainings is voluntary. Therefore, there are also differences between schools and individuals who participate in such courses. Usually, schools that generally recognize multiculturality as a relevant issue, also more often organize such trainings or workshops. Often, participants are educators who already have affinity for the issues of intercultural coexistence, management of cultural diversity and similar.

> *There were some external trainings that we could attend, I also went myself. The workshop was about the integration of migrants into the school system* (primary school teacher).

Despite the good examples presented, one of the main problems remains that the existing guidelines concerning migrant parents are not systematically implemented in practice in all Slovenian schools. The experiences of schools that have reached out to migrant parents show that this can be very positive, but the often temporary nature of these good practices is problematic.

Discussion and conclusion

The article examined the role of parents in the integration process from the perspectives of policy, migrant children, and educational staff. It takes as its starting point existing observations of studies that confirm positive effects of parental and family engagement in school on migrant children's academic performance, general well-being, and integration.

The results of the research within Slovenian schools show that the family is central to the well-being of migrant children and youth. Their supportive role is particularly important for newly arrived migrant children as it provides them with a sense of support, security, and psychological and social stabilization. This has also been recognized by individual schools and their educational staff, who specifically addresses migrant parents and their needs and enhances their cooperation with schools. The analysis showed that language barriers and lack of information are among the most common obstacles to the participation of migrant parents in school and their children's education as perceived by the educational staff, however, cultural differences or the confluence of various issues were also mentioned. This is in line with previous research that see language barriers and lack of information as a significant barrier in migrant children's family and school cooperation (Crozier and Davies, 2007;

Turney and Kao, 2009; Antony-Newman, 2019; Macia and Llevot Calvet, 2019). As Ule (2015) points out, the (non) participation of parents represents an important new element of social differentiation and it covertly sanctions those who cannot support their children, who are less involved in schoolwork and educational trajectories of children due to various reasons. The support of parents is crucial also for the prevention of school dropouts and successful transition from education to employment (Macia and Llevot Calvet, 2019; Bojnec, 2021). Some schools are addressing these issues by supporting migrant parents in enrolment, addressing the linguistic barriers, organizing support in the local community, and focusing on training their educators, however, these measures are not equally or systematically addressed in all school. Analysis uncovered that schools from traditionally more culturally diverse environments manifest higher affinity to the issues of multiculturalism and management of cultural diversity as well as higher level of awareness about the specific needs of migrant children and cooperation with their parents. Discrepancies have also been noted between primary and secondary schools, with the primary schools being more successful and attentive in maintaining contacts with migrant parents.

Slovenia was among the first in the European Union to develop an integration strategy for migrant integration in education (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019: 58). The documents are based on a comprehensive approach to the integration of migrant children in schools and set targets that stem from gaps identified in the field and, more importantly, address all relevant elements and actors, i.e., teachers, policy makers, the local and national community, language support, school curricula as well as migrant parents. However, these policy documents are not successfully implemented in practice and there is still a significant gap between existing policy documents and daily practice in Slovenian schools (see also Dežan and Sedmak, 2020; Medarič, 2020; Medarić et al., 2021). The analysis has also shown that non-binding policy documents do not provide satisfactory results. As a systemic governmental approach is still missing, the vague framework of integration policy leads to large differences between schools. In relation to the supporting the cooperation of migrant children's parents and schools, the analysis shows there is a need to adopt a legally and financially supported approach that would for example, address the language barriers through official translators or cultural mediators, but also organize regular trainings for educational staff. The study shows that extensive knowledge already exists in Slovenia and that there are policy models that could enable greater parental involvement and cooperation with schools for migrant parents. However, there is a need for additional focus on better implementation by ensuring adequate and stable funding and comprehensive solutions. Although Slovenia being specific as it is one of the few countries that address parental involvement of migrant children in a very holistic way, the results show that it still faces similar challenges as other European countries such as Spain, Italy, or Luxembourg

regarding parental involvement of migrant children in school (Macia and Llevot Calvet, 2019). This study is based on the perspective of educational staff and children and does not include the perspective of parents, which is its main limitation. Future research should also focus on their experiences, views, and opinions.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The Commission for Ethical Issues of ZRS Koper. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

Author contributions

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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I do the best i can: The role of immigrant parents in their children's educational inclusion

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The research highlights the importance of immigrant parents assuming a leading and mediating role in the processes of school adjustment and their children's educational inclusion. However, the difficulties that parents have to face as a consequence of the migration process are not always taken into account. These families have to face their own acculturation processes and reorganize their roles in the host society. This study analyses the functions that immigrant parents carry out in the new school context in order to favor the educational inclusion of their children. The analysis is approached from the parents' perspective, in order to understand the way in which families live and try to favor their children's access, participation and success at school. Ethnographic research and the use of qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews are used. The perceptions of three immigrant fathers and seven immigrant mothers with different backgrounds and nationalities in a public school in Huelva (Andalusia, Spain) are analyzed. The results point to the great fragility and difficulty experienced by these parents in exercising their parental functions in the new context. Women, especially those from Poland, Lithuania, and Romania, compared to their husbands or partners, seem to suffer greater stress due to their dual role as guarantors of the culture of origin and facilitators of the host culture. In order to favor the educational inclusion of their children, parents prioritize – primarily – access to resources, but also the monitoring of their children's homework and emotional support. However, a relationship model based on cultural assimilation prevails. Among the factors that condition the behavior of parents are their economic vulnerability, lack of knowledge of the language, limited social support, cultural differences and prejudices. The importance of the school supporting parents, and especially mothers, in their acculturation processes and their relationship with the school is underlined. In this endeavor, it is essential to count on the collaboration of different agents, such as intercultural counselors or other parents in the school.

Introduction

The schooling and educational inclusion of immigrant students is clearly a complex and difficult process. The literature highlights additional risks on the part of immigrant students to face educational challenges such as "linguistic and cultural differences or the loss of classes" (Cutmore et al., 2018, p. 10). There are frequent studies that point out high dropout and school failure rates of immigrant students (Bernardi and Cebolla, 2014; González, 2022). As well as those that highlight the lack of recognition, non-acceptance, rejection and loneliness experienced by immigrant students at different times during their passage through school (Sedmak et al., 2021). Even among immigrant students who are successful and behave resiliently, tensions, stressful situations, and conflicts related to their adaptation to the new school context are detected (Dusi and González-Falcón, 2019).

As Berry (2005) has already pointed out, all these tensions are linked to acculturation, understood as a two-dimensional process in which, in addition to the sociocultural aspects of the different groups -both majority and minority-, the psychological aspects of specific individuals also come into play in their adaptation or adjustment to the new host context. In other words, psychological adaptation, which involves individual psychological and physical well-being, and sociocultural adaptation, which refers to the immigrants' success in coping with daily life in the new cultural environment of the host country, are combined. And, in addition, there is a great deal of variability. "Not every individual enters into, and participates in, or changes in the same way; here are vast individual differences in psychological acculturation, even among individuals who live in the same acculturative arena" (Berry, 2005, p. 702).

Contact with another culture is an important and stressful life event that can provoke "culture shock" (Ward et al., 2001) or "acculturative stress" (Sam and Berry, 2006) and that, in school, can have an impact on having greater or lesser opportunities for academic success (Dusi and Gonzalez-Falcón, 2021). Therefore, the cultural context cannot be ignored in order to understand the factors that affect the academic success of immigrant students, understood from a holistic understanding. As Makarova and Birman (2016) mention, current research focuses not only on students' outcomes, but also on their psychological adjustment and highlights both risk factors and individual and contextual resources to explain individual resilience in the acculturation process. Educational inclusion of immigrant pupils is therefore conceived as a global and systemic process aimed at improving access options; relationship and participation; and school success of immigrant students (Booth and Ainscow, 2015; Naraian et al., 2020) from a contextual or community intercultural approach (Birman and Simon, 2014; Goenechea and Gallego-Noche, 2021), and not only individual. The context is therefore recognized as a condition that will influence the acculturation and school adjustment processes of immigrant students (Castro and Murray, 2010).

From this perspective, the expectations, attitudes, practices and support of teachers and families are fundamental for the educational inclusion of immigrant students. Students who perceive social support for their schoolwork have, in fact, a better conception of school and greater motivation toward study (Demir and Leyendecker, 2018). Research rightly highlights the value of the coordination and understanding of both systems (family and school) for the academic success and promotion of immigrant students (Carrasco et al., 2009; Garreta, 2009; Turney and Kao, 2009; Brown et al., 2022). Similarly, it stresses the importance of families, understood in the framework of this article as the parents of the pupils, assuming a leading and mediating role in the school and acculturation processes of their sons and daughters (Makarova et al., 2021). As Suárez-Orozco et al. (2018) indicate, parents play a critical role in students' lives. Their local circumstances, their relationships in the context of reception and participation in school, parents' expectations about their children's academic achievement, their social capital, and their ways of understanding and reacting to the majority culture will influence, to a large extent, the educational processes of their sons and daughters.

The parents' background (educational level, socioeconomic status, job insecurity, social capital and social ties, and language barriers) have been identified as conditioning factors -among others- for the active participation of immigrant families in school (Santos-Rego and Lorenzo-Moledo, 2009; García Coll and Marks, 2012) and as risk or resource factors for the educational inclusion of immigrant students (Castro and Murray, 2010). According to Arun et al. (2021) the socioeconomic status of families is directly related to the low school results of many immigrant students, among other reasons, due to the less time (Alonso-Carmona and Martín-Criado, 2022) that parents dedicate to them because they have to spend more time working. Likewise, poor children are frequently excluded from participating in activities and deprived of fundamental economic, social, cultural, and political rights (Forbes and Sime, 2016).

Expectations linked to the migration project of families (aimed at increasing the educational success of the students or at getting a better job for the parents) have an impact on the expectations of academic achievement and performance of their children, with the former correlating with a greater chance of success than the latter (Capote and Fernández, 2021). Although, as Lubián and Rosado (2022) and Terrén and Carrasco (2007) show, high expectations of school success on the part of parents without sufficient support for their children to have opportunities for success may also influence lower self-esteem and higher levels of school failure among immigrant students.

On the other hand, acculturation discrepancies between parents and their children may hinder the adjustment of minority youth in the school context (Makarova et al., 2021). The called culture gap (Bornstein and Cote, 2006), which

occurs when children are more likely than their parents to adopt the host culture and the latter remain faithful to their original culture, correlates positively with greater parent-child conflict and poorer student adjustment to school. In this sense, when parents adopt strategies related to integration or assimilation, children's well-being and their chances of academic success increase (Berry, 2005; Birman, 2006). Other variables linked to the socio-cultural context, such as, for example, the prejudices detected toward immigrant families, also influence the performance of their parental roles and their own acculturation processes. Berry and Dasen (2019) highlight that in contexts of greater hostility it is more common for families to respond by avoiding relationships and constructing response models based on segregation.

A particularly important aspect of understanding the ways in which immigrant parents try to support their children in their school adjustment and educational inclusion processes is the upheaval that migrations often generate in the very articulation of families. As Suárez-Orozco et al. (2018) specify, migrating family members have to reorganize the roles, functions and responsibilities that each had in the country of origin. Parents need to discuss their own parenting competences according to the new circumstances and cultural and educational patterns of the host society. Affiliation relationships have to be rewritten (Dusi, 2008), as well as belonging to the home and host cultures (Strasser et al., 2009; Dusi and Gonzalez-Falcón, 2021). However, they do not always feel empowered to do so and, in general, families experience these processes with great tension, loneliness, and stress (Vatz et al., 2008; González-Falcón, 2021). The consequences are unequal for each family and student but undeniably affect their children's opportunities for educational inclusion.

Even so, and as Makarova et al. (2021) and López et al. (2001) highlight, the literature has not given a prominent role to the analysis of the support that immigrant parents offer their children in their school adjustment processes in the new host context. For all these reasons, it seems interesting to delve deeper into how immigrant parents live their role in the host educational community and in what way they influence to favor the educational inclusion processes of their children. The analysis is approached from the perspective and vision of the parents themselves, in order to better understand the keys that, in their opinion, mediate these processes.

Materials and methods

This study is linked to two broader research projects. The first[1] focuses on the processes of inclusion of immigrant students and models of cultural diversity management in schools in Andalusia (Spain). The second[2] one analyses the conditioning factors of immigrant families' participation in schools in Huelva (Andalusia). In both cases, the trajectories of immigrant students in their passage through schools and the role that teachers and parents play in these processes are analyzed. For this purpose, we advocate the use of qualitative methodology by means of case studies in educational centers.

This work is contextualized in one of the case studies in Huelva. It delves into the role that immigrant parents play in the host educational context. The objective is to analyze the role of these parents in the school adjustment processes of their sons and daughters and the support they provide to achieve their academic and social success. The research questions guiding the study are the following:

1) How do immigrant parents perceive their role in the new educational context?
2) How do they try to favor access, participation in school and academic success of their children?

To answer these questions, the positions of inclusive education (Naraian et al., 2020) and intercultural education (Goenechea and Gallego-Noche, 2021) are taken as epistemological references to highlight the importance that acculturation processes (Berry and Dasen, 2019) can exert on the opportunities for access, participation and academic success of immigrant students in school. The school adjustment of immigrant students is therefore understood as a process inherent to educational inclusion and the development of intercultural education understood as a positive encounter, exchange, interrelation, learning and stable dialogue between people from different cultures. From this position, the systemic perspective or context approach is also emphasized (Castro and Murray, 2010; Birman and Simon, 2014), and the responsibility that the family and the school institution have as mediators of such processes.

In this work we were interested in investigating the opinions, perceptions, assessments, and meanings that immigrant parents themselves construct about their role as such. Consequently, an ethnographic approach was adopted. From the use of qualitative instruments such as semi-structured interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018), the accounts of these actors were collected and it was possible to deepen the analysis. To this end, one of the educational centers in Huelva in which a case study was being conducted was selected. Specifically, a public pre-school and primary school located in one of the towns dedicated to the intensive cultivation of strawberries and which had a high

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number of immigrant students (20% of the total number of students). The countries of origin present in the center, in order of highest proportion, are the following: Morocco, Algeria Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Ecuador, and Netherlands.

A motivated sampling was carried out, without any statistical pretension, in which eight families were selected from the school. The selection of informants was motivated by the following criteria: (1) diversity of origin and nationality of the parents, (2) presence of fathers and mothers, (3) different trajectories (with different migratory processes and years in Spain), (4) diversity of stages (sons and daughters in kindergarten and primary education), (5) knowledge of Spanish (at least by one of the two parents) and (6) predisposition to collaborate and participate in the research.

The aim was to have the greatest plurality of voices in order to enrich the analysis with different points of view and taking into account situations and experiences that could be affected by issues of identity, gender, cultural elements, or transnational links. In this sense, and although parents are also selected according to their country or origin, the mention of different countries should not be interpreted as synonymous with a state, a nation, a language, (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003), but as an element that is also present in the migrant parents' own perceptions and experiences.

Although a greater number of parents were invited, three fathers and seven mothers (eight families) finally participated. The voices of families from the following countries were collected: Morocco (one married couple and a mother), Algeria (a father), Lithuania (a mother), Poland (a mother), Romania (a married couple and a mother), and Ecuador (a mother). The limitations linked to the families' working hours and access to the educational center (as many of them live in the strawberry fields, far from the village) limited, among other factors, the participation of the other families.

Most of the families interviewed have a low-medium cultural level, although there are some exceptions. Four of the seven women have basic studies or did not complete them, while other mothers have medium or higher studies. Two of the three men interviewed have medium studies and another has basic studies. In general, the economic level of these families is low, as they have access to precarious and seasonal jobs linked mainly to the strawberry agricultural campaigns or to the service sector (hotel and catering and house cleaning). One of the Moroccan mothers is the one with the highest economic level. Her migration process was different from that of the other families because he came to complete university studies. The rest of the families emigrated for economic reasons and in search of a better future for their sons and daughters. The average age is 37 for men and 32 for women. Men tend to have been in Spain longer than women. Some of them migrate after their husbands and, at the same time or shortly after, regroup with their sons and daughters or marry in their country

of origin and have their children in Spain. However, there is a diversity of migratory processes and there are also cases in which it is the woman who emigrates first or settles in the village after a period of seasonal contract in the strawberry campaign. As is usually in the study region, some women from the East form mixed families; starting relationships with Spanish couples and in some cases their children are born in Spain. All the families have been living in the village for more than 3 years, being the fathers and mothers coming from Morocco and Romania the ones who have been in Spain the longest. In general, the families' level of understanding of Spanish is high, although some women have difficulty understanding certain issues and tend to have more problems when it comes to expressing themselves orally. It is the women who have been in Spain for less time and have a lower level of education who have more difficulty expressing themselves in Spanish. Some families and women have not yet been able to regularize their situation in Spain, although most of them have already done so. All families have one to two children enrolled in Primary Education. In some cases, families also have younger children attending the village nursery school (babies from 0 to 3 years old) or older children attending Secondary Education (from 12 to 18 years old).

The interviews were planned and applied with all the scientific, technical, and ethical guarantees usually recommended by experts (Flick, 2022; Taquette and Borges da Matta Souza, 2022). Care was taken to ensure that the interviewees understood the questions, with prior clarification of the meaning of the interview and the terms used. Care was taken in all aspects related to the preparation, development and recording (consent to the recording, room without noise or interference, climate of trust.) and the data were reviewed with the families at the end of the interviews. All interviews were conducted at the school, recorded and transcribed. The Spanish teachers were the ones who facilitated the contact with the parentsalthough in almost all cases the interviews had to be postponed and postponed on several occasions due to different needs of the families. The interviews began with an introduction in which some identification data, the migratory process carried out until arriving at their places of residence and their first impressions of the school were asked. Subsequently, the two research questions were investigated. Two interviews were conducted with each family. The interviews lasted an average of 60 min, being slightly longer in the case of the two couple interviews and the Moroccan mother with a higher level of education.

Once transcribed and numerically coded, they were subjected to an exhaustive study, letting the data speak for themselves according to the guidelines of Grounded Theory (Corbin, 2021). They were then subjected to a double analysis (Simmons, 2010): one by each researcher separately, and a joint exchange and contrast analysis in order to

achieve greater reliability. After these two operations, an overall analysis was performed. The analysis carried out was returned to the families in a group meeting and the parents' comments were taken into account for the final analysis.

Throughout the narrative discourse analysis (Krippendorff, 2013), patterns and themes were concretized through the coding and categorization of the data and the identification of relationships between them. The analysis of the data revealed a series of key categories on which the final discourse of the parents was built. Among them: the conceptions and assessments of their role in the new host context, their priorities and concerns, the functions they perform, the support they provide to their children, the strategies and resources they use, the difficulties encountered or the differences detected with respect to their countries of origin and in relation to their role as parents. In the next section we will analyze each of the categories of analysis, discriminating the information according to the codes assigned to the interviews and interlocutors. These codes are formed according to the person interviewed in each family, immigrant father and/or mother (FA: Father/MO: Mother), the technique used (INT: interviews) and the order in which the interviews were carried out (1, 2, 3, 4.).

Results

The main results according to the research questions and main categories of analysis are presented below.

How do immigrant parents perceive their role as parents in the new educational context?

When parents are asked about their role as such in the new context and host school, they all emphasize that their duty is to ensure that their children have the conditions that allow them to grow up healthy and go to school.

> "We want to take good care of him, take good care of him until he reaches the point where he is ready to go to school and that's it. For example, dressing him, bring them their things, buy their books. right? That they don't lack anything" (FA-INT1: 37).

> "Children have the right to study and we as parents give them a hand to study, not leaving them without school/Study, eat, dress like we used to do with my mother" (FA-INT2: 11 and 12).

The parents' priorities are to ensure the basic needs of food, care, protection, and hygiene so that their children can study, even if it means a great effort.

> "I never liked to ask for a favor or something that might seem like a handout. That is why I preferred to work and give the children everything I can so that they can study" (MO-INT4: 10).

> "There are days when there are a lot of strawberries you work from Monday to Sunday and again from Monday to Sunday, people were crying. And when it's hot you can't and the boss comes at the last minute or calls you on the phone and tells you one more hour. And you can't do it anymore, but since you think you want to some money home for your children, you have to work" (MO-INT5: 26).

Their role and main objective is to ensure that their sons and daughters have the necessary means to build a good future. Parents emphasize that they migrated for that reason and all their efforts make sense in relation to being able to provide a better future for their sons and daughters. For this reason, school plays a very important role for families. They see it as a means to progress socially and economically and, above all, to prevent their sons and daughters from ending up working – as many of them do – in the strawberry fields. Some parents have high expectations about their children's school achievement.

> "Here there are many children who study this and that and in the end pick strawberries, but I don't want her to end up like that. She has to do well in school and study more." (MO-INT5: 16).

> "I like it when they get a career. Studying is good for us and for everyone to get a career, better than working in the fields. To get a good career, a doctor, a teacher, a nurse." (FA-INT2: 11).

The question of schooling is, in fact, one of the main concerns of families. Before living with their children in Spain, parents try to find out how to send their children to school.

> "I wanted to know what to do with the school before bringing the children to Spain. I asked a woman who works in a store and then another mother. And we set things up." (MO-INT3: 9).

> "My husband and I asked some friends about what to do to get the children into school. Then he, who speaks better Spanish, went to a school and talked to the director." (MO-INT8: 16).

Another aspect that worries them the most in relation to their children is to be able to have decent housing. With the arrival of children, the search for a house becomes a priority. The goal is no longer to subsist, but to find a house that can be transformed into a home.

> "At the beginning, I lived in the countryside. That wasn't a house, it was the horse stable. It was a lot of horse stables and the owner took one that was empty and put a little plaster roof on it and put me there. I didn't want to stay there with my wife and child." (FA-INT1: 15).

> "In the countryside, the housing is provided by the owner of the company and they deduct something, not much, from their salary. The problem is that most of these dwellings, to call them that, are very bad. I still remember a Moroccan girl who had to cover herself with plastic at night to avoid getting wet when it rained." (FA-INT7: 2).

The parents are aware that living in the strawberry fields, far from the village, takes away opportunities for their children and themselves. For this reason, finding decent housing in the village that they can rent or buy is one of their greatest aspirations and desires.

> "The other day they sent a paper so that the children and parents can come to study computer science as well/As we don't have a car and we live far away it is a problem" (FA-INT2: 23).

> "because we wanted to have our house. We wanted my son to be well and to live near the school." (MO-INT6: 12).

The house becomes an essential element for the future project of immigrant families and the future of their sons and daughters. However, their economic difficulties hinder such aspirations.

> "Last year we rented a house in Antonio Machado street, 5 months there and I went to the countryside, as I could not pay for water or electricity." (FA-INT2: 5).

The parents do not find significant differences between their role as parents in their countries of origin and Spain. Their commitment continues to be to provide the resources their children need to progress in school and in life. In both cases, they defend a traditional model in the distribution of roles between men and women (with the exception of the Moroccan mother with the highest level of education). They consider that it is the men who should get the economic resources and the mothers who should

take care of household chores, childcare, and school follow-up.

> "My boyfriend does not come to school. He says he doesn't have time and tells me "you are the woman of the house, you have time." "You worry about the children and I worry about the money and you worry about the house." (MO-INT5: 21).

> "The mother always has more obligations with the children/by nature we are more responsible with the children." (MO-INT 4: 8 and 9).

> "The man is not good for those things (school)." (MO-INT5: 21).

What all the parents do point out is that parenting in the host context is much more difficult than in their countries of origin due to fewer resources. Some mothers point out that the relationship with their children changes because they have less time for them.

> "It is more difficult. One is more alone and knows fewer people." (MO-INT6: 19).

> "Parents almost do not know about the children's life at school, but not because they do not want to, but because time does not allow it, the needs and that happens in any country, not only here with immigrants, also in Spain for example. Spanish parents if they don't have a job, if they don't have a stable life." (MO-INT4: 12).

The language issue, economic difficulties, working hours, and lack of social support are other obstacles pointed out by the parents.

> "We don't have our mother-in-law here or our friend to stay with the child for me to go to a meeting and here when the strawberry is the owner is desperate/you have to work overtime and that's it." (MO-INT7: 18).

> "You always have to work. I earn little with the house, because there are few hours of work and you have to look for many houses and I am always busy." (MO-INT4: 10).

The parents emphasize that they do everything they can to help their sons and daughters, but, at the same time, they express that it may not be enough. Faced with this situation,

families react with resignation and, especially mothers, express their discomfort and frustration.

> "I do everything I can. The studies and things like that, he doesn't lack anything and that's it." (FA-INT1: 37).

> "I try to do my best, although sometimes I feel that it is not enough and it makes me very sad." (MO-INT 8: 22).

Nor do they expect the school or teachers to take actions to support them in that sense because the responsibility of watching over their children's school adjustment is theirs.

> "The solution could not be sought by them, because the solution would be for one to have more trust with people. I, for example, come to a meeting but I don't know anyone, I come once and I get to know them, I come again and I get to know them and so, maybe, 1 day I will know everyone and I know how they think and then I can talk/little by little, you gain confidence with the group and the day will come when you will feel the same." (MO-INT3: 25).

How do they try to favor the educational inclusion of their sons and daughters?

As mentioned above, parents focus their efforts on ensuring that their children have the needs covered to enable them to start and continue their studies. Access to school materials and sports clothing is, therefore, another of their main concerns. They recognize that, due to their economic difficulties, they cannot always meet all the demands of school and, therefore, prioritize compulsory and academic tasks. These circumstances sometimes generate tensions with their children, since they would like to participate in more recreational, cultural, and sports activities.

> "The children have to have their books, sports shoes. The backpack has to be bought that's why we work as much as possible" (MO-INT5: 7).

> "The girl gets angry because she can't go on outings or go out with her friends, but sometimes she can't." (MO-INT3: 16).

In order to favor the academic success of their sons and daughters, parents try to solve their children's academic difficulties by supporting them – to the extent of their possibilities – with the homework they have to do at home.

In general, it is women who are responsible for organizing their children's work and leisure time and for ensuring that homework is completed. However, when children have some difficulty or do not understand something, it is usually the fathers who help them to resolve their doubts, or their older siblings (MO-INT3; FA- INT8). The lower educational level of the mothers and lower command of Spanish seems to influence this.

> "I help with almost everything, letters, numbers. Everything the teacher teaches her I tell her look at that's how it is/Her mother doesn't, she doesn't know much. Her mother has studied little, she hasn't studied much." (FA-INT1: 37).

> "The mother sometimes does not understand the language, but I always help my daughter. The boy is still very young and his mother takes care of him, but I help the girl." (FA-INT2: 12).

This circumstance causes discomfort, fundamentally, in the Poland, Lithuania, Romania, and Ecuadorian mothers interviewed. They did exercise these functions in the country of origin and the fact of finding more obstacles and limitations in the host country causes them great uneasiness. In this regard, it should be noted that, despite the fact that almost all the parents defend a traditional model of organization, given the economic difficulties, mothers also work outside the home, having less time to devote to their children.

> "And if you work half an hour more you don't get paid and if you tell the boss why don't you pay me? You don't like it? Then get out. And that's why I'm always nervous because I work half an hour more and more every day and I don't get paid for what I work for? And that half hour I could be at home with my children/When I come home from the field I tell my son: "leave me a little, an hour or two and then we'll talk", because that way, when I'm nervous and tired, I can't hear well what he wants to tell me and then I don't know what I tell him." (FA-INT8: 18).

Mothers, however, are the ones who mostly attend tutorials or meetings with school teachers. Only in Moroccan and Algerian parents are some differences detected. In these cases, it is the fathers who are in charge, although they do not always attend. Difficulties with the mothers' language and cultural differences also play a role.

> "My wife is more embarrassed and if I don't come with her, she doesn't want to come to school." (FA-INT1: 56).

> "The Moroccan educational system is very different from the Spanish educational system, especially the Spanish

one, and one of the fundamental points that has not yet been encouraged is active participation, they only have one objective: they only have to enroll them, end of the conversation, until the end of the course." (MO-INT7: 8).

The parents comment that they do not usually participate in the school. Only the Moroccan mother with the highest level of education and, on occasion, the Ecuadorian mother, attend the meetings of the center parents' association (MO-INT7; MO-INT4). In general, the mothers tend to adopt a passive attitude and come to the center when they are called by the tutor to talk about their children.

"I think what am I doing there, all Spaniards, me a Lithuanian?/And I say "I'd better go talk to the teacher directly and that's it." (MO-INT6: 14).

"When you don't understand well you can't talk to someone or ask where do I go if I don't understand and I'm embarrassed? And I never go to school." (MO-INT5: 18).

Parents usually feel more confident with their children's tutor or teacher who teaches them Spanish at school. For this reason, they usually turn to them when they want to get information or comment on some aspect of their children and they take advantage of the moments of (FA-INT8; FA-INT1; MO-INT4). In general, they only meet with the teaching staff when they consider it really important.

"Man it has to be when you need it. If you don't need it what's it for? For nothing. For example, if the child misbehaves and has done something bad, you have to tell the father to say "look, he has done this." (FA-INT1: 48).

One of the issues on which parents, and especially mothers, insist the most is to know how their sons and daughters feel at school, especially at the beginning of schooling. They are very concerned that their children will be rejected by other children or become the object of bullying because of their immigrant status. Parents want to know what their children's relationship with their classmates and teachers is like. However, they do not usually ask the teachers about it, but go directly to their sons and daughters. The children, however, do not always express what is happening to them.

"We ask him when he comes out of school how he has been doing. And he tells us "I have done this, I have done that" and we go on the way and find out how he is doing, if he has had any problems." (FA-INT 1: 38).

"The child does not want us to suffer anymore. He does not want us to worry. He doesn't want us to be with more headache, no, really. He doesn't tell us his stuff." (MO8-INT: 17-18).

To avoid situations of rejection and conflict, families advise their children to obey their teachers, not to draw attention to themselves or get into trouble. They also try to ensure that their sons and daughters have a good attitude toward school and their teachers.

"I tell my daughter and son: you have a lot of respect for the teacher, and whatever he/she says, so be it, because he/she knows better/If the children tell you something, you don't tell them." (FA-INT8: 16).

In general, the parents are interested in the culture of the host society. They are in favor of their sons and daughters attending complementary and extracurricular activities and participating in their religious and cultural traditions.

"Of course, they are here and they have to learn, they can't be like a stone without knowing anything about the people. On the contrary, they have to know everything about this European world" (FA-INT2: 7).

"Last Christmas we dressed him as a shepherd/He still wants to dress up" (FA-INT1: 41).

Most parents are also interested in local holidays and customs, compare them with their own and show them to their children. In some cases, they also adopt certain customs of the local community and gradually abandon others from their countries of origin.

"Sometimes on Sunday we invite some friends to the cafe at six o'clock, the snack as it is done here" (MO-INT4: 14).

"I can't tell you [when the Muslim year begins] because I don't remember/I don't remember anymore. When I was studying it was 1,413. Now it will be many years." (FA-INT1: 26).

The parents usually make constructive comparisons between their cultural patterns and those of the host country, although in some cases there is also incomprehension or rejection of some of them.

"The Romería can be a very happy party, but everyone just getting drunk. I don't like it and I don't go." (MO-INT6: 7).

"Because to the child the teacher says: "why don't you speak loudly?" Because we are not used to it. When I studied in my school when [the] children screamed, they tell him that he can't scream, because otherwise they would be like animals. You need more slack." (MO-INT5: 9).

The most closed attitudes and behaviors are observed in the Lithuanian mother and, above all, in the Polish mother. The latter, despite being the partner of a Spanish man, does not accept certain values and educational and cultural patterns of the host society. Her attitude toward them is one of rejection, experiencing frustration and discomfort in her relationship with others.

"It makes me angry because in Poland when you have young children you don't go to any bar like here or you can go out in the evening. Poland is like a prison and I have learned from Poland and I don't go anywhere here. Where I go, my baby goes with me and my older daughter goes with me. Of course I would like to go into a bar and order a coffee, but I don't because I am Polish." (MO-INT5: 8).

On other occasions, it is the older children who express discomfort and tension in their acculturation processes and they are closed to the possibility of their siblings incorporating the cultural patterns and habits of the native population.

"The boy says that he does not go to people's houses because it is ugly, he is going to be uncomfortable and fights with the sister because she goes to a friend's house and gets angry because she says that she is not ashamed to go to someone else's house [The mother laughs]. And the girl, if she has to go to a birthday party, she asks me for the money for the gift, she goes to buy it, prepares everything and goes to the party. If I can, I give it to her." (MO-INT3: 24).

Moroccan and Algerian fathers are the ones who are more open to friendly relations with Spanish and other immigrant families, although mothers are more reticent.

"I like everything mixed. They learn among themselves because each one teaches one thing and that is good/Before I used to go to the Romería, but not anymore. The woman came and I haven't gone there anymore because she doesn't want to go." (FA-INT1: 43).

The rest of the families prefer to relate with Spanish families or families of another nationality rather than with Moroccan and Algerian families. Different prejudices toward them and especially toward men are detected.

"For example, [the] Moroccans I don't like either, they say they smell bad too. They don't wash, they don't clean themselves." (MO-INT 6: 7).

"I was working with three Moroccans and one tells me 1 day "Why don't you talk to me?" I answered that the first year I was here I was crying for a month because I was afraid of the Moroccans, and I am not going to talk to you." (MO-INT5: 10).

In fact, families report that neither they nor their children tend to have many friends. The families circumscribe their relationships to their fellow nationals, fundamentally, and in these cases they do not usually have many friends either.

"Friends, no friends, but they are all friends/Greet many people." (FA-INT2: 14).

"Friends I can say no, acquaintances yes, but friends no/And from Lithuanians I have no friends either. I have very good acquaintances, but no friends." (MO-INT6: 19).

What all the parents agree on, even those who are more closely related to the Spanish population (MO-INT3 and MO-INT5), is that they miss the relatives they left behind in their countries of origin. In their speeches, feelings of loneliness and sadness stand out. Most of the parents interviewed maintain links with relatives they left behind or emigrated to other countries thanks to new technologies. Despite this, they miss their homeland and the physical contact with their loved ones.

"I would like to go every year to my country, I miss my family and my traditions, but I can't." (MO-INT3: 12).

"I don't know people or anything/I don't go anywhere. And there are days when I don't want to talk to anyone, I go home I sit and." (MO-INT5: 21 and 22).

Discussion

Immigrant parents bring into play different resources and strategies to try to favor the educational inclusion of their children. The parental involvement of the immigrant families analyzed seems to be oriented, fundamentally, to the attainment of resources (Alcalde and Hernández, 2018). Their discourses and efforts are focused on guaranteeing access to school. Parents prioritize children's schooling, access to school resources and materials and covering the basic needs of protection, care and

hygiene that make it possible for them to grow up healthy and to start and continue their studies. Likewise, parents try to support, within their means, their children's schoolwork in order to positively influence their academic success. Parents want their children to succeed in school, given that, in addition, this is one of the objectives of their own migration project (Lubián and Rosado, 2022). Moreover, as Bernardi and Cebolla (2014) explain, many of them have high or moderate expectations about their children's academic performance. However, they do not always manage to support them in the best possible way. High parental academic expectations without good educational support and follow-up can also lead to lower self-esteem in schoolchildren and higher rates of school failure (Terrén and Carrasco, 2007). In our study, parents are interested in their children's education and in knowing whether they are accepted and welcomed at school. Emotional support is a priority for them (Crozier and Davies, 2006; Dusi, 2008). However, they do not usually go to the school to ask about it, nor do they ask for advice on how to facilitate their children's school adjustment. Some mothers even report communication problems with their children due to the less time they have due to the work overload they face and their own work, economic or social problems. Dusi and González-Falcón (2019) point out that, on occasions, family roles are also reversed and, faced with the discomfort that the children themselves can observe in their fathers and mothers, they try to hide their own problems so as not to increase the frustration or discomfort of the family.

On the other hand, the parents interviewed try, to a lesser extent, to establish mechanisms that ensure a good reception, relationship and active participation of their children at school. Coinciding with Gomáriz et al. (2019) and Turney and Kao (2009), parents families do not usually collaborate the didactic activities organized by the teaching staff or other families in the school. Likewise, actions linked to favoring the cultural adjustment of their children or acculturation processes in the school environment and, therefore, of bringing the cultural keys of the native and immigrant population into dialogue, seem to have less weight in the actions or functions they perform. In fact, in their discourses, parents hardly mention the possibility of favoring intercultural encounters, families hardly mention the possibility of favoring intercultural encounters, understood as the exchange and interrelation of people from different cultural backgrounds from egalitarian and inclusive positions (Goenechea and Gallego-Noche, 2021). The strategies they put into play in this regard are oriented toward encouraging their sons and daughters to have a positive attitude toward school and teachers (McWayne et al., 2022). To this end, they implement various mechanisms such as showing their interest and participating in local festivals and traditions of the town or enabling their children to participate in cultural activities organized by the school. However, although these actions denote openness toward the social and educational community, in their discourse it seems that the intention of avoiding conflict and rejection (Berry et al., 2006) by the native population rather

than intercultural encounters is more prominent. Thus, parents advise their children not to stand out at school, to go unnoticed and to obey the teachers in order not to get into trouble. They try to ensure that their children are not rejected or harassed by their peers and, to this end, they try to encourage their assimilation into the community (Berry, 2005). In this sense, it also highlights the fact that many families abandon or leave behind part of their traditions and, especially, that they consider that the responsibility for facilitating a better cultural and school adjustment for their children falls solely on them. Parents do not expect any kind of action in this regard from the school.

Taking into account the strategies and model of action of immigrant families seem to be closer, therefore, to cultural assimilation than to integration or inclusion (Crul, 2016), although cases are also observed in which they do not share, or even reject, the ways of proceeding of the host society and school. In our study, the greatest tensions are detected on the part of some Polish and Lithuanian mothers. These women expressed great tension, loneliness and frustration in the relationship with the school or community. As Berry and Dasen (2019) indicate these behaviors may also be due to contexts of increased hostility toward the immigrant population. The research by González-Falcón (2021) rightly pointed out prejudices on the part of the native population of this region toward women from the East, considering that they all came with the intention of destroying marriages and marrying Spanish men. However, prejudices are also detected toward Moroccan men, although they seem to react in a more open manner. Individual differences in dealing with acculturation processes will therefore also influence the responses that parents bring into play in their relationship with their environment (Friedmann and Calderón-Grossenbacher, 2002).

In any case, cultural issues seem to affect families' relationships with the school and context and have an impact on the interactions within the family (Carrasco et al., 2009). In some families, fathers and mothers adopt different positions, such as those from North Africa. Women seem to respond conservatively and, in other cases, it is the older siblings who do not accept the "Spanish" behaviors of their younger siblings. As noted by Dusi (2008) and Crul (2016) in these cases there is a tendency to consider that the incorporation of practices and habits of the native population into the day-to-day life of the families is a betrayal of their own culture, country or relatives and friends they left behind. A great emotional conflict is pointed out that, if not resolved and adequately dealt with, can generate great distress and discomfort, increasing disputes and tensions in families (Dusi and González-Falcón, 2019).

Authors such as Wimmer and Schiller (2003) point out the importance of taking into account other factors linked to the processes of exclusion/inclusion of immigrant families and of not interpreting such processes from the monocultural and linear logic that is hidden in the configuration of "one state, one nation, one language, one culture." In this sense, they claim the need to consider culture or cultures from more dynamic

positions and the transnational experiences of migrants. In this regard, Levitt and Schiller (2004) also point out that the same individuals who showed little regard for a parental homeland and culture may activate their connections within a transnational field in search of spouses or values to teach to their children. Thus, the set of relationships linking parents who move and family and friends who stay behind in their places of origin and/or in other countries also influence the way they perceive and respond to different issues, including children's education. Migration, understood as a transnational experience, goes beyond a linear relationship between "the culture/s that should represent each of the countries or territories involved (origin/host)" and calls for the overlapping, interconnection, intersection of different elements in a simultaneous and changing way (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). In relation to the latter, our study also highlights other issues such as gender and social class, or the economic situation of families, in order to understand the role of immigrant parents in relation to the education of their children. Elements that approach the intersectional perspective of migration are highlighted, as it is understood that these variables also have an impact on the identity reconstruction processes of migrants and on the interdependencies that are generated between social structure, symbolic representations, and identity constructs (Bürkner, 2012).

As Vatz et al. (2008) establish, the migration process entails a redefinition of the roles of parents and a reorganization or adjustment in the way they try to respond to the challenges and challenges posed by the schooling of their children. Although the parents interviewed commented that their roles or responsibilities should be the same in the country of origin and the host country, they did observe changes in the way they proceed. In all cases, they also emphasize a greater difficulty in exercising their parental roles in the host context (Garreta, 2009), mainly due to the fewer economic, social and linguistic resources available to them.

One of the main obstacles reported by parents to support their children in their educational inclusion and participate in school is their economic condition (Medaric and Zakelkj, 2014; Forbes and Sime, 2016; González, 2022). The economic needs of families affect the way they perceive and carry out their roles in the host society, prioritizing what is most urgent, basic and necessary. Authors such as Hosnedlová (2020) rightly identify that economic needs can even modify the expectations and objectives of the migration project. Thus, parents whose main aspiration was to improve their children's academic opportunities prioritize, in the host context and in the face of economic needs, the labor issue. The precariousness of the jobs to which they have access also has an impact on this (González-Falcón, 2021). In this sense, parents expect to be able to be more present in their children's lives and support them more when they can enjoy greater economic stability (Medaric and Zakelkj, 2014).

In this context, housing becomes fundamental for them. As González-Falcón (2021) points out, housing symbolizes the space in which to build their future project and is also the scenario of encounter, intimacy, relationship, communication and affectivity in which to weave family ties. For immigrant parents, having a decent home near the school is fundamental, especially in the school context analyzed in this research, given that there is no school transport service outside the compulsory school hours and there is no public transport network connecting the strawberry fields with the town.

On the other hand, parents also have less family and social support. in the host context to reconcile different functions (work, home, school) and to ask for help, advice, counseling or support in relation to the school or cultural and educational keys of the host society. As Bernhard et al. (2005) and Strasser et al. (2009) indicate, when families migrate they lose social capital, as they have less help in the host country and are confronted with other cultural codes that, if not understood, can generate many misunderstandings, misunderstandings and tensions (Garreta, 2009). In our study, almost all of the parents reported feeling lonely and having few friends. When faced with doubts they tend to ask third parties or the teachers themselves, although the more introverted, insecure families or those with less command of Spanish tend to have more difficulties (González-Falcón, 2021).

In this sense, language proficiency is another of the key conditioning factors in the family school relationship and in the school support that parents, and especially women, can provide to their children. As Turney and Kao (2009), García Coll and Marks (2012), and Arroyo-González et al. (2021), among others, pointed out, language is a fundamental factor in the processes of educational inclusion of immigrant students and families. It is the element that makes communication possible or impossible and usually women, and especially Maghreb mothers, are the ones who are more limited in this regard (Santos-Rego and Lorenzo-Moledo, 2009).

The lower participation of parents in school and, in general, their more passive attitude is also conditioned by cultural differences (García Coll and Marks, 2012; Brown et al., 2022; McWayne et al., 2022). In this regard, the more traditional conceptions that, in general, parents have in this regard and the scarce tradition that, in some cases, is observed in terms of active participation, taking the initiative and horizontal collaboration of families in the school stand out. Carrasco et al. (2009) pointed this out, especially in the case of Maghreb parents, noting the differences they also observed in Maghreb mothers with a more passive role.

As mentioned above, migration does produce changes in the roles played by parents or other family members with respect to their countries of origin when it comes to supporting children in their adjustment to school. In some cases, fathers (or older siblings) take on new roles, such as when they support their children with homework because their mothers do not understand Spanish. In others, there is a

greater presence of Maghreb parents and women in the school compared to their countries of origin. According to Crozier and Davies (2006) families are gradually increasing their presence in the school, with women assuming a greater participation. Levitt and Schiller (2004) also point out the importance of taking into account the experiences, links and relationships that parents have with other parents who migrated previously, or to other places of origin, as their examples can also serve as a reference for shaping their educational roles and practices.

In general, and especially in the first years in Spain, there is less monitoring and accompaniment of their sons and daughters. Given the economic needs of families, mothers also have to work outside the home. As Consequently, they see an increase in their working hours inside and outside the home. However, they are the ones who, fundamentally, still have to take care of the younger children, domestic chores, the relationship with the school and the follow-up of the children (Lorenzo-Moledo et al., 2017). As pointed out by Dusi (2008) and González-Falcón (2021), they are also the ones who tend to ensure respect for the cultural codes of origin. However, they have fewer resources and less time to do so. The lesser monitoring by mothers of the completion of schoolwork and less support for the processes of self-regulation of studies by their children (Alcalde and Hernández, 2018) may also have an impact on higher dropout and school failure rates. All these processes generate great discomfort and distress in parents. Especially mothers (Bernhard et al., 2005; Lorenzo-Moledo et al., 2017) feel that they are not fulfilling their roles as they should and need more resources and support to face their own acculturation processes and the cultural and school adjustment of their sons and daughters.

Bürkner (2012) also explains that these processes have to do with the "temporal variability of inequality" (p.5) linked to the changes in the productive system fostered by neoliberal policy and the alteration of work functions – outside and inside the home – along gender lines. This is causing, for example, the problem of diverging productivities between care economies (traditionally taken care of by mothers) and the industrial production (with many migrant women and men now producing under precarious conditions). Similarly, it emphasizes how migrant parents are exposed to different material needs and constraints, creating a dependency on the context which, however, does not have linear consequences, but can vary depending on the setting (home, work, school) or over time and proving more or less bearable or intolerable situations (as we have seen in the case of some migrant mothers in their workplaces).

Conclusion

The research has highlighted the great fragility and vulnerability of immigrant families in carrying out their parental roles and facilitating the educational inclusion of their children.

In spite of their efforts, of doing everything possible and of trying to make the most of the available resources, the parents do not always reach everything and this generates great discomfort for them. Mothers seem to suffer the most from this, as the burden of caring for and educating their children falls on their shoulders and they have to dialogue with different cultures.

Immigrant parents would need more quality time to offer their children and to accompany them in their school adjustment. In this process some areas seem to need more attention, such as those linked to the promotion of welcoming, relationships, participation of their children in school and intercultural encounter. The collaborative and participatory processes of parents in the school should also be improved, in order to establish more links with the educational community, but from an intercultural perspective, and not an assimilationist one.

The school has a fundamental role in these processes. As González (2022) stresses, it is necessary to emphasize its social function in order to guarantee equal opportunities for each and every one of its students, including immigrant students. It should not be forgotten that in the face of declining student performance, immigrant families with school capital and support are better able to neutralize filial resistance (Alonso-Carmona and Martín-Criado, 2022). It is essential to attend to the needs of parents and offer responses from the school that enable their participation (López et al., 2001; Vatz et al., 2008). In this sense, the development of social and educational policies that help immigrant children and their families to have the basic resources (decent housing, food) that make access to school possible (support for schooling, etc.) is essential, school transportation for compulsory and voluntary activities, school materials, scholarships.). In this way, parents will be in a better position to attend to other processes linked to the educational inclusion of their sons and daughters, supporting academic tasks, their active participation and the promotion of intercultural education. To this end, the school must also offer measures that facilitate such functions, promoting, among others, Spanish classes for immigrant families and women, the detection and elimination of prejudices, the incorporation of intercultural content in the curriculum and different areas of the school. In other words, the school must be capable of managing diversity from an inclusive and intercultural approach. In short, it is a matter of establishing different actions that change the policies, culture and practices (Booth and Ainscow, 2015) of the school in order to ensure that all members of the educational community recognize themselves as fundamental and essential parts of it.

In the meeting with families, it is essential to give priority to counseling and dialogue with mothers. For this, key elements of the educational organization with which immigrant parents have a greater bond or proximity can be recovered: other families, tutors and Spanish teachers. In addition to encouraging the actions of other key agents for their role as a hinge

(González-Falcón et al., 2022) between the environment and the school: intercultural mediators, social educators or school counselors. As Igual-Calvo (2021, p. 260) indicates, there is a need for "methodologies and imaginative proposals to reinforce the accompaniment, presence and involvement of families. Knowing what is meant by increasing family participation is necessary, as is working and creating reciprocal expectations in the school context". It is especially important to advise parents on the process of acculturation. Identifying keys to better understand and respond to the cultural and educational reality of the host context will allow parents to have more tools and resources to support their children in their school adjustment and to reduce the insecurity and uneasiness that many of them experience. In working with immigrant students and parents, "guidance and counseling can support paths to self-sufficiency, better wellbeing and provide stability by addressing trauma, displacement and transitional readjustment, or simply opening up access to opportunities, and creating new ones" (Hughes et al., 2019, p. 33).

Although the results of this research must be limited to the ethnographic research conducted, and its findings cannot be generalized, we consider that it has allowed us to generate a series of reflections and final considerations, such as those presented, which have an impact on educational policy and the role of the school. In the face of greater vulnerability of families and their children, greater social and educational involvement and commitment is required. It is still necessary, in any case, to continue with new studies that delve into the role of immigrant mothers, in the acculturation processes of these mothers and their children and in the responses that schools offer to try to attend to, manage and celebrate cultural diversity.

The research carried out has highlighted the simultaneity of processes that intervene and influence the perceptions and experiences that immigrant parents have in relation to their role as caregivers and educators of their children. Factors such as social class or economic situation, gender, working conditions and relations with the school influence all of this. In this sense, the study opens up avenues for further research from an intersectional, interlevel and transnational perspective that delves into the changes and experiences of migrant parents in the new educational context according to different variables such as gender or social class and takes into account the influence that transnational links can have on all of this. In this sense, "it is more useful to think of the migrant experience as a kind of gauge which, while anchored, pivots between a new land and a transnational incorporation. Movement and attachment is not linear or sequential but capable of rotating back and forth and changing direction over time. The median point on this gauge is not full incorporation but rather simultaneity of connection" (Levitt and Schiller, 2004, p.10).

The analysis should also be oriented toward the strategies and resources that parents families, at the same time, can use to help their children and their families to cope with cultural diversity. Despite the difficulties, they bring into play to favor the educational inclusion of their children. Exploring migration as the process of change and transformation that it is (Friedmann and Calderón-Grossenbacher, 2002), should also serve to value the resources of immigrant parents as a potential for innovation for the host society. In this regard, and as McWayne et al. (2022) conclude, a change of perspective is still necessary in order to recognize the positive elements that parents themselves can contribute to the school and inclusive processes of their children.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Author contributions

IG-F made the structure of the article, order the research data, and wrote the first version of the manuscript. MA-G did translation and editing work. IB-R reviewed the formal aspects and bibliographic update. PD reviewed the content coherence of the manuscript. All authors participated in data analysis and reviewed the first draft.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Frontiers in Education

Child friendship patterns at a refugee center in Greece

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Since 2015, Greece has seen a large influx of refugees, resulting in increased needs for accommodation and education provision. As most newcomers come in family units, innovative educational measures were established to assist schooling and inclusion for refugee children. Schools provide opportunities to young refugee communities for initiating connections and maintaining friendships with local native peers. However, segregated accommodation structures, such as large, remote Refugee Hospitality Centers, can hinder this process. A small-scale study was conducted at Skaramagas refugee camp in the outskirts of Athens, to investigate the number and type of friendships formed by adolescent refugees, including friendships with refugees/migrants from other countries, as well as native peers. Certain sociological factors, such as age, sex, country of origin, school attendance and duration of stay in Greece, were examined. The study was conducted through semi-constructed interviews with 21 adolescent students at the Refugee Hospitality Center, all of whom attended onsite non-formal language classes, although only half attended formal education outside the camp. The results indicate the positive impact of school attendance on relational inclusion and widening friendship circles. Children attending local formal schools were more likely to widen their friendship circles and form friendships with native peers than children who only attended non-formal classes inside the camp. Girls appear to have fewer friendships than boys, ethnicity and age do not seem to provide any significant differentiation, whereas duration of stay in Greece does not seem to affect socialization patterns directly. This study examines the patterns of friendship formation among newly arrived refugee adolescents and highlights the impact of schooling on relational inclusion, even at highly segregated accommodation structures, such as remote refugee camps.

KEYWORDS

gender differences, child friendship, refugee inclusion, multicultural friendships, refugee socialization

Introduction

Since 2015, Greece became a main reception country for large numbers of refugees through the Mediterranean route. Most of these refugee populations did not aim Greece to be their final destination country, but only a temporary transit point through their journey to another European country (Kuschminder, 2018:3). However, many refugees and migrants end up staying in Greece longer than expected or, eventually, settle in Greece permanently (UNICEF, 2017, p. 11). In 2020, over 44,000 refugee children lived in Greece

(UNICEF, 2021, p. 3). Facing severe obstacles regarding their psychological and social well-being, including the formation of peer friendships. These children should be included and empowered as active individuals who are able to speak for themselves and create their own futures (Gornik, 2020, p. 536).

Skaramagas refugee camp was chosen as a representative structure to investigate refugee children's social lives and friendship patterns. One of the largest camps in mainland Greece, it operated at the outskirts of Pireaus port, at a remote former dock area, from 2016 until 2021. In 2020, Skaramagas refugee camp hosted from 2,000 to 3,200 refugee families during its operation, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and African countries (Palaiologou et al., 2021, p. 320), with 40% of its population estimated under 18 years old. Since the beginning of its operation in 2016, a formal education scheme was established by the Ministry of Education to meet refugee children's educational needs. The scheme was implemented in two routes: (1) The Reception Class route, with refugee children attending morning mainstream schools, with 15 h per week segregated Greek language classes and 17 h per week mixed mainstream classes on other academic subjects. (2) The Structures for the Welcoming and Education of Refugees route: One-year preparatory, wholly segregated, afternoon classes were formed for refugee children aged 4 to 15 years, with no knowledge of Greek language. The Structures for the Welcoming and Education of Refugees resulted as an emergency measure, especially at the peak of refugee influxes, lasting one school year at most, after which, refugee children moved onto a morning mainstream Reception Class (Palaiologou et al., 2021, pp. 323–324).

Formal school attendance was found to have a positive impact for refugee children at Skaramagas refugee camp, in terms of their psychosocial well-being and mental health (Fasaraki, 2020, p. 88). The purpose of this study is to investigate more specifically the friendship patterns of the camp's refugee children and the impact of formal school attendance regarding the formation of multicultural friendships and the promotion of relational inclusion. The study's goal was to approach children's lived experiences and social life stories, through the perspective of children's understanding. Researchers performed general interviews on key issues affecting children's lives, with some key questions on relational history, such as "Have you made new friends?", "What countries are they from?", "What do you like to do with your friends?", "Have you been to school by bus, outside the camp, where there are also children from Greece?", "How did you find it?", "Which people in particular will you turn to for help when you need something at the camp?." The sample of interviewed children was chosen from non-formal education classes running onsite at Skaramagas camp by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and municipal authorities. All non-formal educational programs at camp had been granted approval by the Ministry of Education (SIRIUS Watch, 2018, p. 11).

Materials and methods

The research intended to investigate refugee teenagers' socialization patterns with peers from the same country, different countries of origin and local native peers and how their socialization changes by age, sex, country of origin, duration of stay in Greece and formal education attendance. The sample of participants interviewed for this purpose consisted of pre-adolescent and early to middle adolescent children (ages normally corresponding to secondary education), all inhabitants at Skaramagas refugee camp. This age range was chosen in order to ensure that they could answer the research questions in a meaningful and reliable way. The sample (N) consisted of 21 children, 14 girls and 7 boys. The countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and their ages varied between 10 and 17 years old. Children had been in Greece between 7 and 72 months. During the interviews, children were approached as creative participants in the narration of their life stories and experiences. The interviewees were welcomed in a culturally appropriate way and explanations were given about the research's nature and purpose, in a simplified language they could understand. These explanations were necessary so that they did not feel threatened that any information gathered would in any way be used against them. The research team avoided any 'guiding' hints that would bias their answers. Researchers adapted their approach, whenever necessary, to respect children's privacy, developmental level, fluency, and psychological condition. Interviewees were given enough time to express themselves, knowing they could stop participating at any moment without explanations or they could ask for more information about the research. Confidentiality was maintained and a code number was used for each interviewee during the data collection/organization process, as well as the results' presentation phase, in order to protect children's identities. A mixed-methods framework was used, with both qualitative and quantitative data: certain sociological indicators were examined, in order to understand how refugee teenagers perceived their transition to a social life within their new linguistic-cultural environment.

A significant amount of time and effort were dedicated to planning and preparation of data collection, as access to refugees hosted in Refugee Hospitality Centers is controlled by government authorities and the interviewers' team requested official permission to conduct research. The aims, objectives and methods of the research project were approved, as well as the results' use for the amelioration of refugees' condition. Children, as minors, are not legally authorized to consent, therefore, parental permission was asked. The research team applied the "do no harm" principles in interviews, so that children would not feel uncomfortable or pressed for answers. Discretion and sensitivity were used, so that the interview proceeded like a free-flowing discussion, without causing children psychological stress. The semi-structured interviews had a duration of 7–16 min and were assisted by translators, provided by NGOs operating onsite. The interviews' audio files were transcribed verbatim using a transcription service. Open questions, empathetic rephrasing, warmth, light humor and explanation of the research's goals helped interviewees relax and trust the interview process. Some older children had prior experience with being interviewed, which facilitated the process further. The number of interview participants was small, so a full

statistical analysis was not possible. Additionally, as child participants are often not used to talking about themselves and/or give answers that they think would please the interviewers, this means that the outcomes were indicative, but nevertheless notable, particularly regarding the role of schooling in establishing friendships and relational integration within the local community.

Finally, the research interviews were conducted by the Hellenic Open University's research team between July and September 2020 during six separate visits at Skaramagas Refugee Hospitality Centre (on the 16th, 23rd, 27th, 29th of July 2020, 1st and 15th of September 2020). Prior to the interviews, several preparatory visits were conducted from August 2019 until November 2019 to investigate the field dynamics, establish cooperative liaisons with the camp's staff and build a climate of trust with the students through observation of non-formal classes and contribution to class creative activities. Unfortunately, there was a gap between November 2019 and May 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting closures. The research team resumed its work with the interviewee population immediately after the pandemic restrictions ended and recapitulated the preparation work with the target population during May–June 2020. The project was implemented in the frame of the HORIZON Project MICREATE, coordinated by the Science and Research Center, KOPER in Slovenia.

Results

Formation of friendships with peers, with whom they share common interests, ideals and recreational activities is key to teenagers' psychological well-being. It is expected that during this development period (early adolescence between ages 10 and 14 and middle adolescence between 15 and 17), adolescents are intensely interested in peer relations and crystallize their choice of casual friends and best friends. Although, many friendships may be transient and temporary, they form an important pillar in children's psycho-emotional development. Lack of friendships during adolescence contributes to depression, withdrawal, low motivation and low self-esteem and it is important to understand the factors contributing or hindering socialization for refugee children at Skaramagas camp. During the interviews, children's social lives were investigated. Generally, participants spoke easily about their socialization, with only two exceptions of children who did not give much information. A clear picture emerged, that friendships with native children were not common and on one occasion, negative ("Children at Greek school looked at us weird"). It was investigated how refugee children's friendships varied with country of origin, duration of stay in Greece and gender. Specific question about socialization with local children were asked "Do you have any friends here in Greece?," followed by other clarifying questions, such as "Did you make any new friends in Greece?," "Do you have any Greek friends?," "Do you like/play with Greek children at school?." All friendships are expected to have been formed in Greece, as refugees come in family units or

family fragments, so they create their social circle from the start, when they arrive at camp.

Friendships patterns and country of origin

Table 1 presents four categories of friendship patterns, positioned as an increasingly wider social circle. Interviewed children report: (a) having no friends, (b) having only refugee friends from the same nationality as their own, (c) having refugee friends from different refugee nationalities, (d) having Greek children as friends. In all Tables, category (d) includes (b) and (c), meaning that, children with Greek friends also have refugee friends from the same or other nationalities, and category (c) includes (b), meaning that children with refugee friends from other nationalities also have refugee friends from the same nationality. Therefore, in all Tables, the columns represent a gradual expansion of socialization patterns from 'no friends' to friends from increasingly different backgrounds.

Unsurprisingly, most interviewees reported having friends either from the same nationality or from other refugee nationalities hosted at camp, the site where refugee children spend most of their day and do most of their past-time activities. The camp is geographically isolated and remote from the urban environment, so it is difficult for children to socialize outside the camp. One child reported "I know Greek children from school, and I wish we could play together, but they live very far'. Another child said "We know Greek children from school, but we cannot have fun with them." There is a worrying number of children (4 out of 21) who reported having no friends and remained silent without any further clarifications. Syrian children appeared to have no Greek friends and seemed to prefer friends from the same nationality. This may relate to the length of their stay in Greece (Syrian refugees tend to be relocated to other European countries faster than Afghan refugees), their attendance of Greek formal education (Syrian teenagers are less involved in Greek formal education and Greek language learning than their Afghan peers) and their general lack of investment in Greece as a country of destination.

TABLE 1 Refugee children's friendships and country of origin.

	No friends	Refugee friends only of the same nationality	Refugee friends from different nationalities	Greek friends	Total
Syria	2	5	4		11
Afghanistan	2	3	2	1	8
Iran				2	2
Total	4	8	6	3	21

Children with 'Refugee friends from different nationalities' also have 'Refugee friends of the same nationality' and children with 'Greek friends' also have 'Refugee friends of different nationalities' and 'Refugee friends of the same nationality'.

TABLE 2 Refugee children's friendships and duration of stay in Greece.

	No friends	Refugee friends only of the same nationality	Refugee friends from different nationalities	Greek friends	Total
0–1 year	1	2	1	0	4
1–3 years	2	3	1	1	7
Over 3 years	1	3	4	2	10
Total	4	8	6	3	21

Children with 'Refugee friends from different nationalities' also have 'Refugee friends of the same nationality' and children with 'Greek friends' also have 'Refugee friends of different nationalities' and 'Refugee friends of the same nationality'.

TABLE 3 Refugee children's friendship differences among boys and girls.

	No friends	Refugee friends only of the same nationality	Refugee friends from different nationalities	Greek friends	Total
Male	0	2	3	2	7
Female	4	6	3	1	14
Total	4	8	6	3	21

Children with 'Refugee friends from different nationalities' also have 'Refugee friends of the same nationality' and children with 'Greek friends' also have 'Refugee friends of different nationalities' and 'Refugee friends of the same nationality'.

Participants seemed to prioritize and value friendship. An Iranian boy with many friends from different nationalities stated about his friends: "I made a big map and I was like putting some sticks on the countries they were coming from." 4 out of 21 participants stated that one of their key expectations when they came to Greece was 'to find friends', as shown in the following interview with an 11-year old Afghan boy:

Researcher: "What do you think children from other countries want to have when they come to a foreign country, e.g., Greece?"

Interviewee: "A normal house, friends, toys and go to school… I have many friends in Greece and I want to stay but not in the camp. I want a real house."

A girl stated that her happiest moment since coming to Greece was when "I went to school and made new friends" and another girl that her favorite activity was "playing with my friends."

Friendship patterns and duration of stay in Greece

The next factor investigated was the duration of stay in Greece and whether it influenced the formation of friendships for teenagers. Most children interviewed have been in Greece for more than a year, sufficient time to form friendships at camp and at school, provided students attended. Table 2 results show that there is little differentiation depending on length of stay, as there are children with no friends, even after living 3 years at camp. So, duration of stay does not seem to be a determining factor. It must be noted that arrival in Greece was reported as the happiest moment in most children's journeys from their country of origin (Prekate and Palaiologou, 2022, p. 13). Most children experienced severe difficulties during the journey and reported that they were very relieved to have arrived and that one of the main expectations refugee children had upon arrival was "to find friends". Not being able to make friends after 1, 2, or 3 years at camp must have been a grave disappointment for the children concerned.

Friendship differences among boys and girls

According to the principles of gender mainstreaming (Brauner and Frauenberger, 2014, p. 5), all data in research must be analyzed and presented by gender, therefore it was a research priority, to differentiate our findings among boys and girls (in this research since we refer to children, we specify gender as female and male only). These differences are confirmed in Table 3: girls appear to be monopolizing the category of having 'No friends' and form the participant majority of having 'Refugee friends only from the same nationality'. Girls outnumber boy interviewees, yet they are more boys having Greek friends than girls. These differences seem to reflect the culturally sensitive gender stereotype that girls are more reserved regarding socialization, whereas boys seem to be more outgoing and confident in liaising with children from other socio-linguistic backgrounds, including Greek children. The findings shed light on stereotypic associations that seem salient with respect to the relational choices of our interviewees. Nearly half the girls report having friends only from the same nationality, often 'one female friend', who may be a neighbor at camp or a classmate at onsite non-formal classes. An Afghan girl characteristically noted that "My friends only come from Afghanistan and when we are together, we only read or study." Another 16-year old Afghan girl, reported that she has only one female friend with whom the only joint activity was "to read together." A 13-year old Afghan girl said in her interview "We do not spend that many hours with friends but the time that we spend together the most we talk about the lessons or classes." An older Afghan girl, when asked about friends and what they do together, stated that her friends are only Afghan, but "since we are all from family members, our relatives, when I meet my friend, I think that what we all like to do and give us good feeling is just to speak, to talk." The teenage girl emphasized to the researcher her origin ("I am from family") and the activity with friends ("we talk"), probably declaring an acceptable social profile within the socio-cultural context for her age and gender.

Boys on the other hand reported a wider circle of friends from all over the camp. As one Afghan boy stated: "I have Afghan, Syrian, Congolese friends." A refugee camp is a very closed

TABLE 4 Refugee children's friendships and age.

	No friends	Refugee friends only of the same nationality	Refugee friends from different nationalities	Greek friends	Total
10–12	4	3	1	2	10
13–14	0	3	2	0	5
15–17	0	2	3	1	6
Total	4	8	6	3	21

Children with 'Refugee friends from different nationalities' also have 'Refugee friends of the same nationality' and children with 'Greek friends' also have 'Refugee friends of different nationalities' and 'Refugee friends of the same nationality'.

community, despite its size, and this relational context may affect social perceptions and choices, so that teenage girls are confined to a more restricted social role, with past-time activities that are more home-based and conventional. An intermediate factor regarding girls' socialization is girls' participation in education. All four children who report having 'no friends' are girls that do not attend formal education.

Friendship patterns and age

Table 4 presents the age variation, but, as the sample is small, the results in this case are inconclusive. The only notable finding is that it is only the youngest category (10–12 years old) that report having 'No friends', even though these children (all girls) had been in Greece for a long time. As age does not seem to produce definite differentiation, formal school attendance is the next factor investigated.

Friendship patterns and school attendance

Unsurprisingly, all children who have Greek friends attend Greek formal school, as this is the only place that refugee camp children are likely to meet Greek peers. At the other end, all children who report having 'No friends', do not attend formal education. This significant result, shown in Table 5 is consistent with the fact that during the school process, refugee children are exposed to increased interactions with Greek children, but also refugee children of other nationalities (for example, in the bus, in class, during breaks, during educational trips and sports events etc.). Schooling is the process through which inclusive socialization is more likely to develop and children not attending school seem to be at higher risk of isolation. On the other hand, the issue of xenophobia in Greek schools was also mentioned. One Syrian boy reported that he attended a local formal school but dropped out due to bullying from other students (but he added "They were not Greek"). Two children did not reply to the question if they liked their Greek classmates, although all other children reported that they did. The above results reflect

TABLE 5 Refugee children's friendship patterns and formal school attendance.

	No friends	Refugee friends only of the same nationality	Refugee friends from different nationalities	Greek friends	Total
Formal education attendance	0	5	3	3	11
Non-attendance	4	3	3	0	10
Total	4	8	6	3	21

Children with 'Refugee friends from different nationalities' also have 'Refugee friends of the same nationality' and children with 'Greek friends' also have 'Refugee friends of different nationalities' and 'Refugee friends of the same nationality'

the value of schooling in providing socialization opportunities and mixed interaction among refugee and local communities. It is important to bear in mind that there were ethnic tensions among different refugee communities at camp, especially during periods when hostilities flared in their countries of origin. Some of these tensions were reflected in refugee children's relations. Half of the participants did not attend formal education, missing out on important years, but it should be noted that the study was carried out during the pandemic, which further hindered access of refugee camp children to formal education (Prekate and Palaiologou, 2021, p. 5).

Apart from the number or type of friendships, it is important to add a final note regarding the quality of these friendships. To the question "Who would you turn for help if you had problems?," only two teenagers replied: "My friends," even though adolescence is a period in children's lives when they form alliances with their peers. Most children replied "My family," or "DRC employees" or did not reply at all. 'DRC' is an abbreviation for Danish Refugee Council, the camp's administration NGO, but it is unlikely that children would resort directly to its employees for help, as interventions were only applied in communication with the parents. It is possible therefore, that interviewees' answers were biased in an effort to appease the researchers, whom they saw as 'authorities'. Another interesting indicator is the type of activities shared with their friends. To the question, "What activities do you do when you are together with your friends?," one interviewee replied "Talk." Almost all interviewees replied "Play," "Do sport" or "Study together." To look further into the quality of these friendships, level of trust and impact on psychosocial health, more research is required (Table 5).

Interviewees' comments raised further complications regarding childhood friendships among refugees, issues not normally found in mainstream population. For example, a 13-year old Syrian girl reported that she had made a friend at camp, but her friend was soon relocated in Germany. Most families stay at camp only temporarily and this type of secondary 'loss' is something all children learned to live with, as shown in the following interview with a 15-year old Syrian girl:

Researcher: "How do you make new friends? And if yes, what countries are they from?"

Interviewee: "Most of them they traveled. So we have only those two. Um, there was some goods, some Syrians, some, one child. I had one Afghan, but most of them they traveled."

Relocation to another European country is the primary aim for most families at camp, but the way it happens can also affect beneficiaries' relationships:

Researcher: "Can you describe us how you spend your day here, in the camp?"

Interviewee: "It's not that good. I do not hang out that much because people in the community, if I needed the day most of the people are in here, they look more for travel and I do not and I do not try and put them in order to avoid that, I would have to stay away from them. So in that case, I do not hang out that much in the camp. But I do have great friends. I go skateboarding with, I playing football with them. I have more fun with them, with them."

The above excerpt is from the interview with a 16-year old boy who implied that some people in his community at camp could be thinking of leaving Greece (for another European country) through non-standard, non-official routes, something he wished not to be involved in. Self-protection from traffickers or other networks, affected the socialization choices of teenagers and their families.

Limitations of the interviews study

The sample of 21 students was taken from students attending non-formal English language classes at camp, provided by the administrating NGO Danish Refugee Council for the camp's beneficiaries. Even though almost all children living at camp attended such classes, even if irregularly, there was still a small, yet unknown, number of children who never registered for formal or non-formal classes. This population was largely inaccessible for research purposes. Further research would be required to investigate the profile of this population (for example, income and socioeconomic status in country of origin) and the reasons behind school drop-out. Some of the reasons that have been suggested are: expectation for relocation, language difficulties, children helping parents with sibling care/housework, stress and trauma. Another issue that required more research concerned the reasons why 8 out of 11 children attending formal school did not have Greek friends. One obvious explanation is the physical remoteness and geographical isolation of the camp, but more thorough research, perhaps involving parents and teachers, could investigate other factors, such as lack of access, linguistic barriers, cultural barriers, xenophobia, lack of inclusion culture at school and in the community, the role of camp accommodation status in stigmatization of refugee children etc. Another point which could improve the rigor of the study could be the inclusion of a control group for comparison, for example, other refugee students living in rented apartments (rather than camps), native students, other

minority students (such as Roma). It would also be interesting to examine the correlation between refugees' Greek language speaking skills and socialization with Greek students, as these two factors appear to feed each other and are both related with inclusion in mainstream education.

Discussion

Adolescence is the period when young people develop a network of peer friendships, which is central to their sense of well-being and self-esteem. Although some children demonstrated intercultural flexibility and openness to creating new friendships from many different nationalities, most children in the study of Skaramagas Refugee Hospitality Center were limited to friendships from their own national/linguistic background or remained isolated. The insights gained from this study provide empirical confirmation that children from disadvantaged socio-economical background, such as refugees, can be deprived socially. Also, formal mainstream education attendance is a necessary condition for building friendships with local communities, but it is not sufficient: specific interventions need to be established to create an inclusive school environment.

Regarding relational differences between boys and girls, schooling assumes a complicated role, both as a cause and a consequence of social interaction (or lack thereof). According to an Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) report, refugee girls' attendance rates of secondary school lags to refugee boys' rates, by nearly 10 percentile units (INEE, 2021, p. 15). Cultural restrictions may prevent girls' participation in formal education classes, especially during adolescence and pre-adolescence. Some good practices in emergency education for refugees recommend girls-only learning spaces, as girls need to have a safe space where they can participate freely without fear of being judged or bullied by boys. Making schools more accessible to girls would help them enhance their social life and establish new patterns of relating, participation and self-affirmation. Furthermore, school interactions involve fellow-students, teachers, school-staff, but also other social institutions, such as museums, environmental awareness centers, examination centers etc., so integration is encouraged in multiple ways. Girls' poor social lives are one of the side-effects of lacking gender perspectives in education policy making. Gender mainstreaming in education means taking into account gender differences in all phases of defining, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies (EIGE, 2022). For example, hosting refugee families in remote, isolated camps, with no easy access to schools through public transport, prevents teenage girls from attending local high schools, even if cultural inhibitions about mixed classes are overcome. Incorporating gender-responsive interventions, facilitates participation, and socialization influences, individual and community development, while respecting cultural norms, values and behaviors (Šaras and Perez-Felkner, 2018, p. 1). There are additional cultural differences, which in praxis, might be an

obstacle for specific gender populations, in this study, female teenagers, to participate at education outside the camp setting: for example, if young women wished to attend formal evening high school (as they are often busy with sibling caring during the day), there would need to be special provisions for their safe transportation to and from school and baby-sitting facilities at camp. According to the socio-cultural approach, such provisions and processes offer opportunities for the individual and collective development of all minorities. Denying such opportunities from girls and young women prolongs divisions and leaves intergenerational transition of such divisions unchallenged.

According to the intersectional approach, other forms of inequality interact with gender differences to result in social isolation (Adaptation Fund, 2022, p. 9). In this context, socialization patterns may be influenced in complicated ways not only by students' gender, but by ethnicity, socio-economic status (asylum seekers temporarily hosted in a refugee camp), age (pre-adolescent girls versus late adolescent girls), ethnic subgroup cultural norms (for example, Kurdish Syrian girls have different dress codes than Arab Syrian girls), positioning in a household (oldest daughter in a motherless household, undertaking the caring of younger siblings versus younger daughters in a household with both parents), prior socio-economic status in country of origin etc. There were other categories intersecting with the above, including refugee students with learning difficulties and disabilities, but this is an area largely under-researched. Socio-cultural barriers in school enrolment should also be considered through the lens of parental views. If parents undervalue education (for all their children or girls in particular) this will prevent children from accessing the main pathway towards integration (UNESCO, 2007). Teachers, school authorities, and local children's parents also hold distinct views about children's friendships, appreciating (or not) diversity. An intersectional approach in research could provide more accurate insights, creating more equitable provisions.

The extent of isolation that some of the interviewed children experienced is worth investigating further, with possible explanations including trauma, community tensions at camp, racism/xenophobia at school, shyness, lack of social or linguistic skills etc. Even though eight out of 11 children attending formal education expressed very positive comments about their relations with Greek classmates, two comments showed that xenophobia does exist. It has been found that negative socialized behaviors, values and biases against refugees, constructed through social norms and contexts, hinder positive intercultural social interaction among refugee/migrant children and native children (Blair, 2020, p. 2). Racist bullying is one way in which such negative biases are expressed in a school context and of key concern to refugee students (Aspinwall et al., 2003, p. 19). As (Samara et al., 2019, p. 4) support, even though friendships are very important for refugee children, they often face difficulties in their initiation and quality.

It may therefore be the case that specific interventions need to be implemented in schools to facilitate and encourage the formation of intercultural friendships. Some school authorities, for example, have concluded on certain good practices, such as organizing a warm welcome at school for refugees, valuing refugee/migrant students in class, assigning a peer/buddy to each refugee child (Candappa et al., 2007, p. 42), while humanitarian organizations routinely use team-building activities to strengthen friendships among refugee children (IMPR, 2015). The newly introduced 'Skills Workshops' in Greek formal education also aim at facilitating a safe and friendly school environment, through the development of empathy, conflict-resolution capacities, cooperation, diversity skills. These workshops are not specifically targeted for refugees but involve many activities that allow all students to share personal information with their peers, get to know each other, express their views/feelings/ stories, all of which are building stones to bonding (Gornik and Sedmak, 2021, p. 111).

Appropriate multi-level interventions by educational professionals, school systems and policymakers, should provide relational inclusion activities and practical opportunities for children to socialize. Education affects multiple aspects of children's lives and this study highlights the significance of education as global care (Sancho Gil, 2018, p. 105). Schooling allows children to develop their thinking, feeling and acting beyond the narrow norms of their cultural barriers, including the way they relate to others. All refugee children should have this opportunity and schools should invest time and energy to acquire a better understanding of the unique educational and behavioral needs of refugee children, especially children at remotely secluded refugee camps. Psycho-social education activities could help prepare the ground for inclusion and team bonding, challenge stereotypes, develop empathy and acceptance. These activities can contribute to a welcoming atmosphere for refugee children and facilitate connection skills for refugee and native children alike. With increasing flows of refugee children, it is becoming more and more important to transform formal educational systems in host countries to friendly environments for the inclusion of all children.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this study can be found in online repositories. The names of the repository/repositories and accession number(s) can be found at: All data are registered at the official portal of SODANET The Methodological Protocol was approved by the Relevant Committee of Research and Ethics at HOU. RELEVANT LINK: https://doi.org/10.17903/FK2/JAB51L Research Data on Migration and the Refugee Crisis LINK TO THE COLLECTION: https://sodanet.gr/data-services/infographics/migration.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Committee of Research and Ethics at Hellenic Open

University (HOU). Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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![frontiers] **Frontiers** in Education

How do you feel at school? A cross-country comparative analysis of migrant adolescents' school well-being

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Adolescents present a relevant stakeholder in international migrations since they comprise a large share of all migrants. Previous studies show that migration processes significantly affect the well-being of migrant adolescents. This article investigates how the school environment, with its pedagogical practices and interpersonal relationships established between migrant adolescents, their classmates, and teachers, affect migrant adolescents' well-being. Our research draws on quantitative data collected as part of the MiCREATE project. The sample of migrant adolescents (N=700) was surveyed in 46 schools in six countries: Austria, Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, and the United Kingdom. Results indicate that migrant adolescents like school and feel safe there, however, they tend to be more satisfied with relationships established with teachers than with peers. Furthermore, differences in self-perceived school well-being emerge when comparing countries with a longer tradition of high migration flows (Spain, Denmark, and the United Kingdom) and those less experienced (Poland and Slovenia), although slight exceptions were detected. The results lead to the conclusion that schools that foster intercultural education and fulfilling interpersonal relationships are essential for school well-being of migrant adolescents and present an important step toward successful integration of migrant youth.

KEYWORDS

migrant adolescents, school, school well-being, educational system, intercultural education, migrations, multiculturalism

1. Introduction

As countries around the world continue to face high numbers of migrant adolescents, various governments, international institutions, and boards have focused on the well-being of migrant youth. The latter is often presented among the key indicators (other indicators being, for example, language fluency, access to rights, academic success, sense of belonging, etc.) for evaluating how successful the integration process of migrant adolescents is. In this article, we will follow the definition of the integration process as stated by Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016); it is the process by which people who are new to a country become part of the society, while it is also a process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows migration. When using the term "migrant adolescent," we are referring to those who are migrants themselves (also called 1st generation migrants). Considering current trends and studies, it is essential to understand the well-being of migrant adolescents, not only to ensure that they have a quality youth but also to build a solid foundation for their adult lives. The transition of migrant adolescents through the different stages of their lives will significantly affect their integration process in the host country as well as their life quality as adults. In line with this argument, well-being of migrant

adolescents has become a priority in today's multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious Europe. Political agendas reflect these trends; for example, Euro 2020 has prioritized combating poverty and social exclusion as well as improving the well-being of adolescents (Pollock et al., 2018). According to the Youth Policy Press (2014), 98% of European countries have a national government institution responsible for youth; this indicates the attention and targeted action of state institutions are in place. On the other hand, the structure and implementation of policies that address migrant adolescents and their well-being vary significantly across European countries.

Well-being of migrant adolescents (these are defined as people between 10 and 19 years old) can be severely affected by migrations through risks associated with the country of origin, during the migration, and upon arrival in the host country (World Health Organization, 2018). Plenty of migrant families are socioeconomically disadvantaged upon arrival, which results in downward social mobility after settling in the host country and this consequently increases the risk for migrant adolescents' well-being. Migrant youth is more vulnerable also due to their specific experiences; they had to separate from social relationships established in their country of origin, may have been exposed to various forms of violence during migration, and face numerous challenges and barriers in the host country (e.g., difficulty in accessing health care, education and extra-curricular activities, experience of negative attitudes, harassment, and/or physical violence). These challenges are also reflected in the educational setting (Smith et al., 2021); while migrant adolescents learn the language of the host country and try to adapt to the educational style, they may encounter difficulties keeping up academically and socially with local peers (Wong and Schweitzer, 2017). Additionally, minorities attract prejudice and discrimination that jeopardize their overall well-being within various social settings (Säävälä, 2012; Sirin and Rogers-Sirin, 2015), for example, peer bullying. Despite evidence show that experiencing peer bullying causes negative consequences for all adolescents, regardless of their ethnicity, studies (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2010; Closson et al., 2014; Pottie et al., 2015) emphasize that migrant adolescents, marked as "outsiders," experience higher levels of peer bullying, discrimination, and exclusion due to cultural differences. On the other hand, to combat these challenges, migrant adolescents may draw strength from the very same surrounding, as discussed in later sections of this article.

The main objective of this article is to assess the school well-being of migrant adolescents and to examine how the relationships migrant adolescents establish with teachers and peers affect their school well-being. Using the comparative approach, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of school well-being of migrant adolescents who live in Austria, Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, and the United Kingdom. As the below presented studies indicate, supportive relationships have been evaluated as vital for the well-being of migrant adolescents. Therefore, our research focuses primarily on the relational dimensions of school well-being. Additionally, we evaluate the relationships between peer victimization, teaching practices that recognize principles of intercultural education, and self-perceived school well-being of migrant adolescents. The importance of intercultural education is reflected in its broad set of solutions, practices, and approaches that aim to support cultural diversity and social justice, but also in its potential to counter marginalization in education and society. In the array of approaches and methods, solutions that focus on language, customs, beliefs, traditions, literature, cultural heritage, intercultural conflicts, school management, interpersonal relationships, and similar can be identified (Portera, 2008).

First, an overview of the current theoretical debates on the topic of school well-being of migrant adolescents is presented, followed by the results of the survey, conducted in 46 educational institutions within six European countries. The sample consisted of three separate groups; newly arrived migrant adolescents (being in the host country for 2 years or less), long-term migrant adolescents (being in the host country for more than 2 years), and local adolescents. For the purposes of this article, the performed analyses focused only on migrant adolescents and their perceptions and assessments of well-being within the educational community. Finally, a discussion and implications for future research are displayed.

The findings of studies that have examined the relationship between migrant status and well-being of adolescents are contradictory. While some studies suggest that migrant adolescents are at greater risk for low well-being (see for example Shoshami et al., 2016) due to their specific circumstances, others (e.g., Alati et al., 2003) report no difference between levels of well-being among migrant and non-migrant youth. Reasons for potential lower well-being of migrant adolescents range from traumatic events that occurred prior to migration (Correa-Velez et al., 2010), the lower socio-economic status migrant families often have, the greater vulnerability and emotional distress of migrant adolescents due to migration (Pawliuk et al., 1996), and to intergenerational conflict that may arise within the family during the process of integration. Considering that migrant adolescents tend to go through the integration process faster than their parents, family conflicts and disruption may emerge. Additionally, migrant adolescents can be confronted with inadequate support from their parents, who are preoccupied with their own migration stresses (Hicks et al., 1993). Another relevant circumstance is that migrants represent a minority that differs in culture and language from the prevailing population in the host country. Consequently, migrant adolescents can encounter rejection, discrimination, and hostility that pose additional threat to the well-being of migrant adolescents. These factors could lead to the conclusion that migrant adolescents should fare relatively low on the ladder of well-being, but studies also report about the *immigrant paradox* phenomenon (e.g., Marks et al., 2014; Bowe, 2017). The phenomenon is often explained by the close bond that migrant parents and adolescents develop, the high aspirations and expectations migrant parents have for their offspring, consistent monitoring of their behavior, strong and extended social ties established with the migrant community, but also the ability of migrant adolescents to shift between identities, languages, and cultural norms, which may forge their resilience (Darmanaki Farahani and Bradley, 2018). Altogether, the literature thus suggests that the answer to the question which of these effects prevail is likely to depend on individual, ethnic, and contextual factors. A combination of different factors is important for resilience as well. Developmental psychologists have defined resilience as "*the ability to weather adversity or to bounce back from negative experience*" (Prince-Embury, 2012, p. 10). Among protective factors that contribute to the resilience are some that have roots within the family context (e.g., family warmth, emotional support, a close bond with at least one parent), however, factors associated with individual traits are also critical (e.g., intellectual ability, self-reliance, sociability, communication skills). In terms of school environment, positive school experiences, good peer relations, and positive relationships with other adults are set forth to be among the most essential. However, when discussing resilience of (migrant) adolescents, one must be aware that assessment tools for measuring

this phenomenon are more prevalent for adults than for younger groups, as studies highlight (e.g., Prince-Embury, 2012; King et al., 2021).

Following increased attention paid to migrant adolescents' well-being, scholars have recognized the fundamental role schools have in supporting migrant learners during the integration process. Furthermore, educational institutions are also important to understand the well-being of migrant adolescents. School setting has a decisive role in the lives of migrant adolescents as it can anchor them in the community, provide context to develop relationships with teachers and peers, prepare them for civic life (Weissberg and O'Brien, 2004), contribute to self-development, and set plans for the future. Schools can be especially important in providing a stable community surroundings while fostering a sense of inclusion and safety (Trentacosta et al., 2016), but more importantly, schools represent the entry point for migrant adolescents regarding establishing contact with the host country's culture, rules, traditions, customs and similar. Similarly, the classroom environment provides a unique context in which various interactions take place; among these, intercultural exchange is significant (Wang et al., 2020).

Although research on benefits and importance of inter/multicultural education is extensive, newspapers often assess policies on multiculturalism in Europe (but also in the United States) as unsuccessful in promoting social integration. These claims are rooted in populist tendencies (e.g., growing migration, fear of Islam, economic crisis) that neglect not only various approaches but also goals of intercultural education. As Torres and Tarozzi (2019) state, such education aims at developing ethnic and cultural literacy (it expands the amount of information about the contributions of ethnic groups that traditionally had been excluded from the curriculum) and personal development (pride in one's ethnic identity), while it also challenges attitudes, values, prejudice, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, racism and similar, promotes multicultural competence (e.g., how to understand cultural differences), and develops skills of people whose ethnic/racial background is different from the mainstream cultural capital that predominates in the curriculum. In addition, intercultural education is oriented toward achieving educational equity and excellence by developing learning methods that work across different cultures. The importance of a supportive school environment that takes into consideration various needs of migrant adolescents but also promotes the diversity they bring is clearly pronounced in studies showing that school connectedness, belonging, or membership has been associated with enhanced well-being of migrant adolescents (Chun and Mobley, 2014; Shoshami et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, schools can also hinder beneficial effects since they are recognized as settings where social inequalities and peer victimization emerge. By following the assimilationist approach and ignoring the principles of intercultural education, schools significantly jeopardize migrant adolescents' well-being, disconnect migrant adolescents from their culture of origin and also harm their adjustment process (Bartlett et al., 2017). When, for example, educational institutions prohibit migrant learners from using their mother tongue, despite evidence that adopting the culture of the host country while retaining the original culture leads to better well-being outcomes (Fang, 2020), they prevent migrant adolescents from a successful two-way integration where both sides work toward the same goal. Several studies (e.g., Grzymała Kazłowska and Philimore, 2017; Schinkel, 2018; Medarić et al., 2021) have already rejected the perception of integration as merely passive assimilation or simple one-way adaptation to the new social reality.

In academic literature, well-being is used as an overarching concept that refers to the quality of life of people in society (Reese et al., 2010). For adolescents, well-being is determined by safe and supportive social contexts and relationships (family, school, and peers) and structural factors, e.g., socioeconomic drivers and access to education (Viner et al., 2021). Among social contexts, the classroom environment is of particular importance. The concept encompasses numerous dimensions, among which we highlight pedagogical and curriculum practices and interpersonal relationships between learners and teachers (Jones et al., 2008; Wang and Degol, 2016). Regarding the latter, socioemotional support, which expands over feeling of safety, a positive feeling of belonging, and quality interactions with teachers and peers, is recognized as a classroom characteristic that promotes well-being of learners (Danielson, 2014; Fang, 2020). Teachers create an encouraging classroom climate by responding to learners' needs, respecting their cultural characteristics, and incorporating their opinions into learning (Quin, 2016), while peers contribute by fulfilling psychological needs of belonging (Wang et al., 2020) and feeling supported (Cuadros and Berger, 2016). Studies also suggest that a supportive peer network mitigates negative effects of migration and reinforces well-being of migrant adolescents (Smith et al., 2021). As Medarić et al. (2021: 769) state: "*Schools and educators can have a critical impact and play a significant role in facilitating and supporting migrant children and youths on this journey, as they are the ones who can make a difference.*"

Although there is no universally accepted definition of well-being, scholars agree that it is a multidimensional concept. According to WHO, well-being comprises an individual's experience of their life as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values; it takes into consideration subjective and objective dimension (World Health Organization, 2012). Consequently, it is shaped and influenced by factors at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels. The scope of our article requires to focus on the characteristics and roles associated with the educational environment and thus leads us to school well-being of migrant adolescents being the focal point of the study.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

An analytical convenience sample of 700 migrant adolescents from 46 educational institutions within six countries (Austria, Denmark, Poland, Spain, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom) was included in the study (52.3% females, 46.6% males, and 1.1% identified as "other"). The sample was part of the Horizon 2020 research project MiCREATE (Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe) conducted in 2019–2022. First, districts with a high proportion of migrant population were identified. In the next phase, learners were surveyed on selected schools. As Table 1 shows, the sample in each country ranged from 6 (Poland) to 10 educational institutions (Spain). In the United Kingdom, the researchers included one online children's and young people book club to reach a sufficient number of migrant respondents, while in Austria, a student organization had to be brought in for the same reason. For each school, a simple random selection of classes was included in the survey. Participants were divided into two age groups; age group 1 consists of learners aged 10–13 years, while age group 2 consists of learners aged 14–17 ($M = 13.64$, $SD = 2.45$). In addition, participants were divided into two groups according to their

TABLE 1 Sample characteristics.

Country	Institutions (N)	Migrant participants (N)	Mean Age+SD
United Kingdom	7	151 (F = 76)	12.27, SD = 1.92
Denmark	7	81 (F = 35)	12.03, SD = 2.53
Slovenia	7	119 (F = 72)	14.37, SD = 2.29
Austria	9	106 (F = 62)	14.58, SD = 2.01
Poland	6	129 (F = 64)	15.04 SD = 2.81
Spain	10	114 (F = 52)	11.59, SD = 1.66

length of residence within the host country (56.4% lived in the host countries for more than 2 years).

2.2. Procedure

After gaining ethics clearance from the school, learners (and their parents or legal guardians) signed the consent form before completing the questionnaire. The instruments were translated into 13 languages (Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Catalan, Danish, English, German, Macedonian, Polish, Russian, Slovene, Spanish, and Ukrainian), with a back translation carried out by a professional translator to ensure the equivalence of meaning. As results revealed later, 76.4% of migrant adolescents evaluated their language proficiency in host country's language as good; however, with the decision to have a questionnaire in different languages, researchers aimed at migrant adolescents with weaker levels of proficiency. The questionnaire was tested by the Child Advisory Board in each country and adapted accordingly. Measurement scales were based on good reliability and validity ($\alpha > 0.85$). Participants were asked to complete the survey in a classroom or similar place in the presence of the researcher and/or the teacher, using their smartphones or computers. During the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the survey was administered online in the form of a computer-assisted web interview (CAWI). All phases of the research were conducted in accordance with international and national ethical standards. All analyzes were computed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 27).

2.3. Measures

The survey was based on items from previous questionnaires on child and adolescents' well-being from a child-centered perspective, such as the European Cohort Development Project (2018), Children's Worlds Survey (2013), and The Children's Society (2010). Analyzes include surveys that were completed, as well as those that had at least 75% of questions answered.

The 7-item well-being scale was used as a multidimensional instrument to assess the school well-being of migrant youth within the educational community. As Table 2 shows, the scale includes the following items: *I feel OK about what my classmates think of me, My classmates accept me just the way I am, I feel like I belong in this class, My classmates care about how I feel* and *My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account, My teachers accept me the same way as other classmates, I am OK when teachers ask me a question.* Response options were given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Never (1)* to *Always*

TABLE 2 Pattern matrix for classmates' and teachers' relationship.

	Classmates' relationships	Teachers' relationships
My classmates accept me just the way I am	0.812	
I feel OK about what my classmates think of me	0.791	
I feel like I belong in this class	0.769	
My classmates care about how I feel	0.743	
My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account		0.866
My teachers accept me the same way as other classmates		0.782
I am OK when teachers ask me a question		0.658

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Values below 0.3 are omitted.

(5). We conducted an exploratory factory analysis. A principal component analysis was performed on these items, followed by varimax rotation that resulted in two dimensions: relationships with classmates and relationships with teachers. As all items had a factor loading >0.3, they were retained in this study, while a two-factor solution accounted for 65% of the total variance. The scale had a good reliability score (Cronbach's alpha >0.83). All dimensions proved to be stable and composed by the same items in all six national samples.

In contrast to some other studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2012; Fang, 2020), we decided not to control for the socioeconomic status of migrant families, as longitudinal studies (e.g., Ozan et al., 2018) show that this association is not as strong for adolescents as it is for adults. Similarly, we decided not to control for academic success. As Jonathan Bradshaw (2009), one of the leading researchers in the field of cross-country comparisons of child well-being, notes, there is no consensus on whether this is a relevant indicator of adolescent well-being. In his words "*Education attainment may be an indicator of well-becoming, but it is not a good representation of well-being.*" (Bradshaw, 2009: 8).

In addition, we analyzed two additional indicators of school well-being that were excluded from the factor analysis but have solid theoretical relevance regarding migrant adolescents' well-being. These include perceived feeling of safety (*I feel safe when I am at school*) and school satisfaction (*I like being in school*). Both questions had answers given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Never (1)* to *Always (5).* These two indicators were single-item measures. The convergent validity of both indicators was tested separately and prior to the pilot. Both items were correlated with their multi-item counterpart ($r = 0.70$) of the previously mentioned questionnaires.

At this point, it should be highlighted that disadvantages of single-item measures (e.g., lower reliability, vulnerability to measurement error, inadequate depiction of complex experience) were taken into consideration during the preparation of the questionnaire. Due to several important characteristics of our respondents, for example their belonging to vulnerable population, short attention span, their cognitive and emotional resources, the decision to make a questionnaire as time sensitive as possible was made. Consequently, these items can appear as too generic. During the pilot phase and surveying in researchers' presence, there were no comments, questions or suggestions related to these two questions. When asking about feeling safe at school, the

objective was to collect data on the number of migrant adolescents who perceive school as a positive space where they are not subject to physical or psychological discomfort. Regarding school satisfaction, the question focused on learning, social activities and opportunities that take place in school.

Considering the needs of migrant adolescents, we analyzed three items related to language use within the school environment. The first question was *Are children allowed to speak other languages in your school (e.g., in the hallways, when playing, etc.)*, followed by *During classes, do teachers sometimes speak with children in other languages or ask learners how something is said in other languages?* and *My teachers talk about different countries, languages, religions and culture.* We created a dichotomous variable where *0* presents experiencing such practice (yes) and *1* presents absence of it (no).

Following studies that discuss the impact of peer victimization on learners' school well-being, we used three items that took into account migrant adolescents' experiences during the past school year (*How often did children make fun of you, call you unkind names, spread lies about you, share embarrassing information about you or threaten you?/How often did they hit or hurt you?/How often did they leave you out of their games or activities?*). The answers were given on a four-point Likert scale ranging from *Never (1)* to *More than three times (4).* We created a new dichotomous variable labeled as *peer victimization* where *0* indicates that unfavorable peer behavior was experienced and *1* marks the absence of it.

3. Results

First, analysis of the demographic variables were carried out and are presented in the Table 3.

The results are presented in three sections. Firstly, we analyzed mean group differences on more general and straight-forward indicators of school well-being known as school satisfaction and perceived feeling of being safe in school (the results are shown in Table 4). In the next step, we analyzed group differences on relational indicators of school well-being (relationships between migrant adolescents and their classmates and between migrant adolescents and their teachers). Finally, we examined the correlational link between school well-being and peer victimization. Additionally, we were interested in specific teaching/

curriculum practices related to cultural diversity and migrant adolescents' well-being.

When migrant adolescents were asked whether they like being in school, we found that the average satisfaction was rather high ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.04$). The highest scores were obtained from migrant adolescents attending schools in Spain ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.89$), closely followed by Denmark ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.94$) and the United Kingdom ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.04$), while the lowest scores were observed in two post-socialist countries, Slovenia ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.17$), and Poland ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.08$).

Another dimension relevant to school well-being is the perceived feeling of safety. This item spotlights sense of migrant adolescents feeling nothing harmful and/or discomfortable will occur to them while being in school. In all six countries, migrant adolescents reported high values of feeling safe ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.04$); comparing this to the results from the other column, migrant adolescents might not experience school as utterly pleasant place, nevertheless, it is still a safe haven for many of them. Again, these scores were above the average value for migrant adolescents attending schools in Spain ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.89$) and the United Kingdom ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.95$), while Austria ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.83$) performed better in this indicator comparing it with previous one. The lowest result was obtained in Denmark ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.05$), a country with high migration flows, and Poland ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.26$).

Following the theory and our factory model, we analyzed school well-being through the relationships migrant learners develop with their classmates and teachers. Our results presented in the Figure 1 indicate that migrant adolescents are most satisfied with classmate relationships in Spain ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.66$) and the United Kingdom ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.75$). In no country were the relationships evaluated as particularly unfavorable; however, both indicators were the lowest in Poland ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.98$) compared to other countries.

When evaluating the relationship between migrant adolescents and teachers, migrant youth from Denmark ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 0.77$) perceive these relationships to be the most satisfying, while migrant adolescents from Poland are the least satisfied ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.85$). Moreover, the results reveal that in all six countries, migrant youth rank their relationship with teachers higher than they assess their relationship with classmates.

In the next step, we combined both relational dimensions into a construct and labeled it as self-perceived school well-being (as Table 5 shows). Overall, migrant adolescents evaluated their subjective school well-being the highest in Spain ($M = 4.21$,

TABLE 3 Socio-demographic characteristics of migrant adolescents.

	N (%)
Age	
14 or above	327 (46.7)
Sex	
Male	326 (46.6)
Female	366 (52.3)
Other	8 (1.1)
Self-perceived language proficiency	
Good	535 (76.4)
Bad	165 (23.6)
Length of residence	
2 years or less	305 (43.6)
More than 2 years	395 (56.4)

TABLE 4 School satisfaction and feeling of safety (mean values).

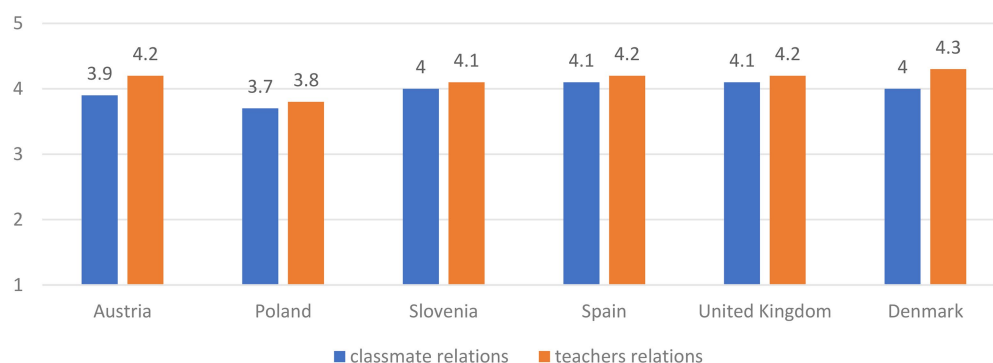|	I like being in school		I feel safe in school	
	M	SD	M	SD
Austria	3.84	0.96	4.20	0.83
Poland	3.57	1.08	4.01	1.26
Slovenia	3.66	1.17	4.17	1.18
Spain	4.18	0.89	4.33	0.89
United Kingdom	3.92	1.04	4.23	0.95
Denmark	4.13	0.94	4.08	1.05

FIGURE 1
Evaluation of classmates' and teachers' relationships.

TABLE 5 Migrant adolescents' subjective school well-being.

	Subjective school well-being	
	M	SD
Spain	4.21	0.58
United Kingdom	4.14	0.72
Denmark	4.07	0.73
Austria	4.07	0.75
Slovenia	3.98	0.76
Poland	3.78	0.78

SD = 0.58) and in the United Kingdom ($M = 4.14$, SD = 0.72), while subjective school well-being was slightly lower in Slovenia ($M = 3.98$, SD = 0.76) and Poland ($M = 3.78$, SD = 0.78). Correspondingly to school likeability, the lowest levels of self-perceived school well-being of migrant adolescents were obtained in both post-socialist countries. In the following table, the mean values are arranged in a descending order.

Figure 2 examines two methods of intercultural education that focus on language use. The ability to use their mother tongue even after settling in the host country is, as studies report, of immense importance for migrant adolescents. The results below suggest that in all countries, at least to some extent, school advocates for the policy of allowing migrant learners to speak different languages in hallways, playground, school cafeteria, and similar places. However, fieldwork experience confirms that in all countries, language of the host country was more approved than other languages. The practice of encouraging the use of various languages in school premises was the least common in Denmark; 67.9% of migrant adolescents confirmed that such behavior was allowed. On the other hand, in Slovenia, it was most widespread, resulting in 84.9% of migrant learners confirming that different languages can be spoken at school.

Inside classrooms, teachers in different countries respond differently to acknowledging multiculturalism (e.g., speaking about different cultural practices, traditions and habits, religious and racial groups) and using different languages or asking migrant learners how something is

said in their mother tongue. For example, compared to teachers from Spain (78%) and Slovenia (76.3%), it is particularly striking how rarely (migrant) adolescents in the United Kingdom (67.3%) and Denmark (61.2%) hear teachers using different language than the mainstream inside the classroom. Similarly, it is less common for teachers in Denmark, Austria, and the United Kingdom, compared to their colleagues in other countries, to ask migrant adolescents how something is said in their language.

Furthermore, according to migrant adolescents, teachers are particularly likely to talk about multiculturalism in Spain (92.2%) and Denmark (90.7%). In the questionnaire, this item was interested in teachers speaking about different languages, cultures, religions, and countries in a positive manner during classes. The results were also promising in Austria (86.6%) and the United Kingdom (85.7%), while Slovenia obtained the lowest result (76.3%).

Observing all three indicators together, the results show that migrant adolescents in Spain rank the frequency of these indicators the highest.

The items related to teaching and curriculum practices that acknowledge cultural diversity in schools, as well as peer relationships measured as peer victimization, were analyzed using Spearman's correlations (Table 6). Each of the four variables presented below has been correlated with the composite variable labeled as school well-being. When looking at the correlations between school well-being and teachers discussing multiculturality in classes, there were correlations related to teachers talking about different cultures, languages, countries, religions, etc. during classes. The only exception was Austria where the results were not statistically significant. A correlation was present also with the school leading the policy of allowing different languages in the hallways, school cafeteria, playground, and similar facilities [the correlation was significant only in Austria ($rho = 0.33$) and Slovenia ($rho = 0.23$)]. In no country was there a statistically significant correlation for the use of different languages or asking how something is said in another language.

Considering that migrant adolescents are more likely to be subject of peer victimization, we were also interested in investigating this correlation. As expected, the correlation was negative in all countries. Therefore, this study confirms that experience of peer victimization negatively affects the school well-being of migrant adolescents.
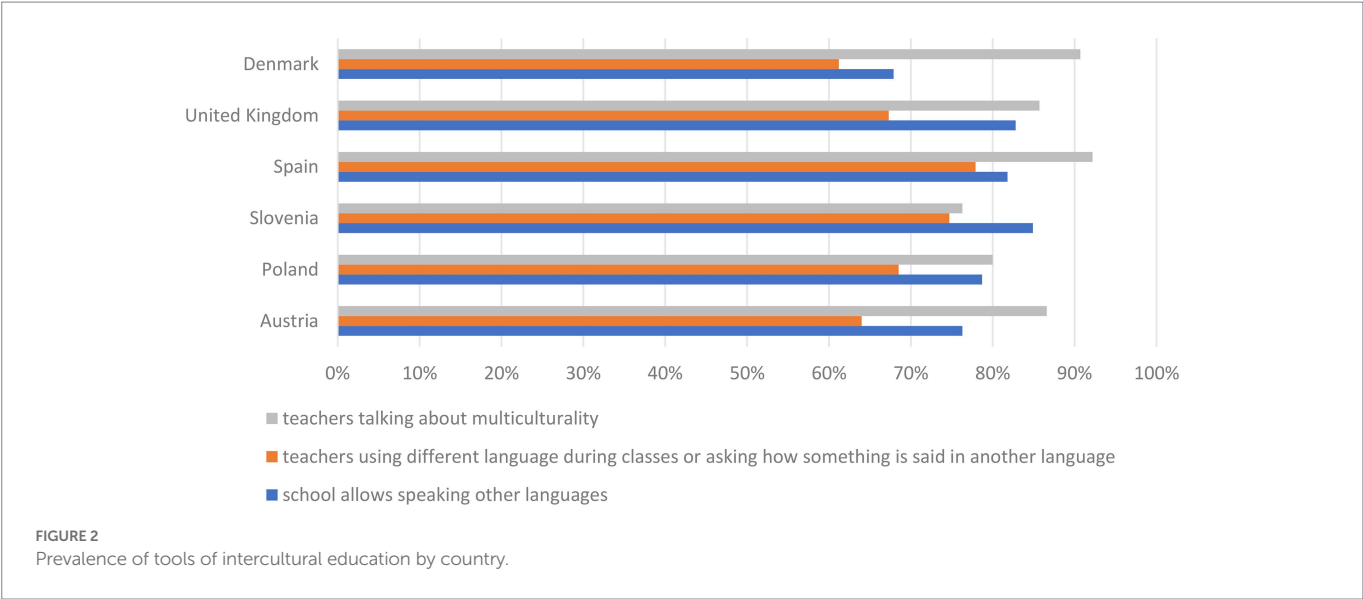
FIGURE 2
Prevalence of tools of intercultural education by country.

TABLE 6 Correlation statistics between school well-being and teaching practices/peer victimization.

	Teachers talking about multiculturality	Multiple languages in the classroom	School allows different languages	Peer victimization
Austria	0.36	0.47	0.33**	−0.25
Poland	0.35**	0.54	0.40	−0.33*
Slovenia	0.22*	0.67	0.23*	−0.31**
Spain	0.20*	0.15	0.57	−0.14
United Kingdom	0.42**	0.18	0.57	−0.34**
Denmark	0.44**	0.66	0.85	−0.33*

$*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$.

4. Discussion

In light of the comparative potential of countries that differ significantly in their historic experience with migration and integration, and were not, to our knowledge, prior analyzed together along the dimensions presented in the paper, the aim of this cross-country study was to investigate the experiences and perceptions of migrant adolescents regarding their self-perceived school well-being. Moreover, the influence school setting in Austria, Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, and the United Kingdom has on migrant learners' school well-being was another point of interest. During analyzes, we focused on general but also more specific indicators of self-perceived school well-being (e.g., school satisfaction and feeling of being safe), while also considering the role of interpersonal relationships and methods of intercultural education on the school well-being of migrant learners.

Self-perceived school well-being of migrant adolescents is, to a certain extent, reinforced by teaching and curricular practices that recognize cultural diversity in schools, while peer bullying poses a threat. Within the next lines, we will examine this statement more thoroughly. A central information that should be highlighted is that many migrant adolescents in all six countries, regardless of differences on micro (individual), mezzo (school), and macro (country) level, like school and feel safe there, which is an important step toward high levels of school well-being. Although expectations were that countries with longer tradition of high migration flows (e.g., the United Kingdom,

Denmark, and Spain) will overall perform better than post-socialist countries (Poland and Slovenia) due to their vast experiences with integration, the results were not entirely in line with this assumption.

For example, in the case of Denmark, teachers were less in favor of acknowledging different languages that are spoken within school facilities compared to other countries. Intercultural teaching practices of school professionals in Denmark seem to be affected by the insecure life situations of refugee and migrant adolescents. When teachers perceive migrant learners as temporarily present, they question practicality of adapting the teaching process to them. The link between lower levels of migrant learners' school well-being when the use of mother tongue is restricted was previously confirmed in the study by Fang (2020). Another important factor that shapes teaching decisions in Denmark are policies that enable racialization inside the school's walls (Hellesdatter Jacobsen and Piekut, 2022). These policies go hand in hand with increasingly restrictive policies regarding migration and integration in Denmark (see for example Rytter, 2019) that operate like fuel for conflicts, polarization, discrimination, and nationalist discourse not only outside but also inside schools. These circumstances reflected in our study as well; Denmark (together with Poland) was recognized as a country where migrant adolescents identify school as less safe as their peers in other countries. Feelings of safety are undoubtedly associated with self-perceived school well-being – our results show that migrant adolescents who like school also feel safe there and vice versa. Considering findings about school satisfaction and safety, a sense of

connectedness to school should be, for example, fostered through mentoring interventions.

On the contrary, Slovenia, a post-socialist country, obtained high results regarding indicators associated with methods of intercultural education (especially school language policy) despite its limited experience with (school) integration of migrant adolescents. This lack of experience is often expressed by inadequate and inappropriate educational approaches that were criticized in other studies (see for example Rutar, 2018; Dežan and Sedmak 2020; Medarić et al., 2021; Vižintin and Kern, 2022). These authors concluded that primary and secondary schools in Slovenia still have a long way to implement intercultural dialogue in pedagogical activities thoroughly, however, our findings signalize turn for the better.

Albeit intercultural education has been widely accepted as a principle and a response to cultural diversity in Europe and an important strategy for the successful integration of migrant learners, our findings show that the prevalence of intercultural practices varies widely across the six countries. The results thus revealed that "teachers talking about multiculturality" was the most frequently present intercultural educational practices (Slovenia being an exception there as shown above); more than 80% of migrant adolescents rated this practice as sometimes or often present. As Machovcová (2017) points out, schools that acknowledge and support migrant adolescents' original culture can anticipate benefits for their well-being and integration. While we recognize that implementing the principle of intercultural education is challenging because it requires systemic change and a shift in the perspective of pedagogical staff, results indicate how valuable it is for migrant adolescents' school well-being when educational institutions acknowledge variety of cultures that co-exist there.

Furthermore, this study showed that migrant adolescents are, in general, more satisfied with the relationships they have established with teachers than with their classmates. Internal differences (when assessing peers' and teachers' relationships) as well as differences across countries were not vast, but migrant adolescents evaluated relationships with school staff as somewhat more favorable in comparison with relationships they develop with their peers. Following Samdal et al. (1998) highlighting that teachers' influence is more important for school satisfaction than peer influence, our results could be a favorable future circumstance for the integration of migrant adolescents. Generally, as Danielson (2014) pointed out, socioemotional support promotes high levels of school well-being, but evaluation of relationships from our study suggests that we can indirectly assume that teachers, partly due to their professional duty, act more acceptingly toward migrant adolescents than their peers. However, studies (e.g., Kaukko et al., 2022) reveal differences among migrant learners in reaching out to teachers at the level of time spent in the host country; migrant learners who had been in the host country for <1 year less frequently requested help and support from school professional in comparison to migrant adolescents who had been there for a longer period. Although time dimension was not part of our analyzes, it should be taken into consideration.

Similar observations in terms of migrant adolescents and their engagement in relationships with peers was found also in studies of Iranian refugee youth in Turkish schools (Şeker and Sirkeci, 2015) and migrant learners in Finnish schools (Kaukko et al., 2022). Among decisive factors that challenge peer relations and contribute to peer rejection were cultural differences, negative attitudes local learners (and their families) have considering migration and integration, and low self-esteem of migrant adolescents that stems from limited language skills (Şeker and Sirkeci, 2015). Once more, it was confirmed that language barrier prevents migrant

learners from making friends with new peers. Note that this limitation extends over several other domains, for example, academic performance since language fluency affect migrant learners' academic success, thus making migrant youth even less appealing in peer's eyes. Considering the correlation between peer victimization and school well-being of migrant adolescents, a negative association is no surprise. Migrant adolescents are at higher risk associated with peer bullying due to their cultural characteristics (Closson et al., 2014; Pottie et al., 2015). This correlation was the strongest in the analyzes performed. More importantly, this result highlights an area of the school environment that needs to be thoroughly addressed to ensure adequate development of migrant adolescents' well-being. Policies and practices that establish safe communities and schools (e.g., anti-bullying and anti-discrimination programs) can help to tackle this issue.

Overall, the results of the various analyses imply that Spain, a country with long tradition of migrations, still performed best among all six countries. This goes in line with results from the comparative study by Rojas et al. (2021), where Spain stands out in terms of the establishment of several necessary and positive measurements related to integration policies within the school setting (for example, developing teaching practices that incorporate interculturality and tackling issues of segregation and lower academic achievements of migrant learners) Reasons for general lower results in Poland, but also Slovenia, may be found in the explanation that, until recently, both countries were perceived as homogenous in terms of population. Significant changes in terms of migrant flows and characteristics of migrant population appeared in past years, however, these changes are not reflected in sufficient state-supported integration programs delivering, for example, additional language classes and integration activities between migrant and local population but also trainings for teachers. Consequently, school professionals in Slovenian and Polish schools might have less sufficient knowledge, tools, and experience regarding migrant learners' integration in comparison to their colleagues from Austria, Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, Slovenia and Poland face similar structural problem; without typical migration districts in cities and following the procedure of enrolling migrant adolescents into schools located in the area of their domicile, migrant learners are dispersed between numerous schools as Kościółek (2020) points out. Consequently, they do not build visible community and the integration is dependent on the teacher's sensitivity and ability. On the other hand, Poland and Slovenia experienced migration flows from surrounding countries after the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia collapsed in 1991/1992. Following these events, plenty of people gained their hands-on experience with migration and integration of people (with similar cultural background) while being classmates of these migrants and refugees. It is possible that 30 years later, they translated these experiences into their teaching practice.

Above mentioned domains relate to the focal point of our article, the self-perceived school well-being of migrant adolescents, and it is reassuring to see that its levels were high in all countries. Our study indicates that migrant adolescents perform relatively well in terms of this indicator despite growing up, socializing, and educating in different circumstances that extend from micro to mezzo and macro level. However, additional efforts must be made in the process. The school environment, and especially the classroom environment, is not only an important academic learning setting, but serves as a developmental context (Wang et al., 2020) and a pillar for the successful inclusion of migrant adolescents. We have highlighted the importance of establishing supportive relationships, as they appear to be important for migrant

adolescents' well-being, but also pay attention to the recognition of cultural diversity within the school community. Migrant adolescents (as well as other members of the school community) are a vital source of knowledge regarding how to address school well-being and overcome potential barriers. At a time when countries in Europe face the challenges of integrating large numbers of migrant adolescents, national governments and societies would benefit from including migrant adolescents (as well as school staff and family members) in systemic deliberation on tackling integration and preventing inequalities. Educational environment promotes social equity and equal opportunities for migrant adolescents, however, current, and past findings (see for example Machovcová, 2017; Gornik et al., 2020; Kościółek, 2020; Medarić et al., 2021) have demonstrated that educational systems need to ensure that any specific needs that impact migrant adolescents' well-being should be identified and targeted. Providing adequate support for migrant adolescents through available resources is an essential step in helping this increasingly growing group of youth to cope with the challenges that integration brings along.

5. Conclusion

Although the relationship between educational environment and school well-being has been extensively studied, fewer studies have addressed the specific relationship between school well-being and migrant status. Moreover, to our knowledge, no study has previously considered comparing this specific set of countries to assess the self-perceived school well-being of migrant adolescents. We aimed to examine how is self-perceived school well-being of migrant adolescents affected by the relationships migrant adolescents develop with teachers and classmates and how intercultural education contributes to school well-being of migrant adolescents.

Our findings are consistent with evidence on teacher and peer support for adequate well-being development for migrant adolescents within educational institutions (see for example Quin, 2016; Pollock et al., 2018; Fang, 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Similarly, peer victimization has been identified as a risk factor for school well-being of migrant adolescents. A novel contribution of our study lies in fact that to some extent, countries that are more experienced in migration and integration processes truly perform better (especially Spain), but this does not mean that we could dismiss other countries with less experience. It is likely that the willingness and internal motivation of teachers for integration as well as experience of school staff to recognize and adopt the methods of intercultural education are decisive factors. The importance of addressing multiculturalism in the classroom has also been highlighted in other studies (e.g., Machovcová, 2017; Wang et al., 2020; Medarić et al., 2021; Rojas et al., 2021).

In terms of strength of this article, the comparative nature of the study allowed us to examine the perspectives and experiences of migrant adolescents in different European countries. These countries share several characteristics, but, on the other hand, they are recognized by their different approaches to migration and integration of migrant adolescents. Considering these similarities and differences, we were able to conclude that the self-perceived school well-being of migrant adolescents is not as dependent on macro factors (country migration flows and its experience with migration and integration) but it is rather a compendium of factors extending over micro, mezzo, and macro level. Countries that have only recently faced integration and migration challenges can

be similarly successful as countries with historically high migration flows, if they are attentive that educational institutions, also recognized as the entry point for migrant adolescents where they encounter the host country's culture, works in adolescents' best interest. This means that governments and schools must strive to create a safe, supportive, inclusive, and respectful environment. At the time of finalizing this article, schools are experiencing yet another increase in the number of migrant (and refugee) learners. The war in Ukraine has brought migrant adolescents to primary and secondary schools in Europe, and their background as well as educational histories differ from migrant adolescents that came, for example, in 2015. The findings of our study suggest that although schools need more resources and support from the state and local community, the foundations for high levels of school well-being of migrant adolescents are strong.

Nevertheless, our findings should be considered in light of a number of limitations, which we discuss in more detail in the following lines. These also serve as gaps that should be addressed in future research. Among significant limitations, we can highlight that these results are largely based on mean values and correlational studies, therefore, we cannot assume causality in the relationship between school environment and migrant adolescents' well-being. The cross-sectional study design presents another limitation since it hinders the ability to test the developmental trajectories of migration effects on the well-being of migrant adolescents. Despite a strong theoretical basis for classroom environment as an antecedent for school well-being, there is a need for longitudinal studies that will address these relationships more thoroughly. Moreover, using a one-item measure for school satisfaction and perceived safety reduces this paper's ability to depict experience of migrant youth accurately. In addition, we used only self-reports in investigating migrant adolescents' outcomes. The use of self-reports is one of the most applied methods in obtaining information on subjective well-being; however, self-reports are susceptible to several sources of bias. Additionally, attention must be paid to social desirability effects. Another issue that must be considered when reading this data and findings is temporality. A considerable amount of data was obtained during one of the largest health crises and this certainly impacted thoughts of at least part of the respondents who participated in this research. After numerous negotiations with schools, data collection often involved many challenges and alterations to study methods. Furthermore, one of the most challenging aspects of conducting surveys was the limited time school personnel could provide to facilitate the research. Lastly, the lack of scholarly consensus regarding school well-being requires a caveat. Our conceptualization of school well-being did not exhaustively and holistically capture the multitude of indicators.

Future studies should investigate how individual and contextual characteristics moderate the relationship between the school/classroom environment and migrant adolescents' school well-being. Considering multiple perspectives of the school environment and multiple indicators of school well-being will contribute to a more nuanced picture of which school factors are related to which indicators of well-being. Following these steps, prevention and intervention strategies could be developed and implemented.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Science and Research Centre Koper Ethics Board. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin. Written informed consent was obtained from the minor(s)' legal guardian/next of kin for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

LD and MS contributed to conception and design of the study. LD organized the database, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, wrote introduction, methodology, results, and first draft of discussion and conclusion. MS wrote sections of the discussion and conclusion. All authors contributed to manuscript revision, read, and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articless/10.3389/feduc.2023.1003762/full#supplementary-material

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Migrant families and Children's inclusion in culturally diverse educational contexts in Spain

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This paper builds on the European project MiCREATE, which aimed to explore and stimulate migrant children and youth reception and inclusion in educational and social systems by adopting a child-centred approach at educational practice and policy levels. We focus on the role of the students' local and immigrant families in this often-challenging process. We have evidence of the vital role of families in children and youth education. However, research mainly focuses on teachers when discussing issues related to the reception and inclusion of migrant students in schools, often forgetting that families and children/youth are also critical elements in these processes. In this project, we have explored the roles expected and developed by local and foreign families in facilitating and accompanying schools and students on these not-always-easy paths using various methods and activities. This paper focuses on aspects of the MiCREATE project related to the crucial role of families in their children's social and educational experiences in the host country. It is based on fieldwork carried out in 16 schools in Spain, including teachers, families, students, educational community members and policymakers. Art-based research methods, open-ended interviews and focus groups provided a broad picture of the different views and expectations of all those involved in formal education. From the thematic analysis of the participants' contributions, results emerge around two main focuses: (1) difficulties migrant families face in getting involved in school life, such as cultural clashes, school segregation, migrant families' environment and the difference between primary school and secondary schools; (2) more general and specific initiatives that facilitate migrant family involvement in school life.

KEYWORDS

families, inclusion, child-centred approach, educational context, Spain

1. Introduction

European countries face demanding situations and challenges like those in other parts of the world. One of them is the growing arrival of migrant families needing better, safer, healthier living conditions for themselves and their children (Hernández-Hernández and Sancho-Gil, 2018; Linton et al., 2019). This phenomenon, which is not new but much more intensive nowadays, is locating educational systems under pressure to welcome and respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse population, often with painful and vulnerable backgrounds (Naydenov, 2018).

As one of the entrances to Europe, Spain is one of the European countries experiencing one of the most significant impacts of this phenomenon. From the 1980s onwards, Spain went from being a country of emigrants to a country that receives increasing numbers of immigrants (Hernández-Hernández and Sancho-Gil, 2018). According to Sancho-Gil et al. (2021), in 2000, 923,879 foreigners lived in Spanish lands, while by 2022, this number had gone up to a total of 5.417.883 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2022). In the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, where we mainly conducted the research on which we base this article, in 2000, immigrants accounted for 2.9% (181,590) of its total population. By 2022, this figure had climbed to 16.2% (1,263,163 people) (IDESCAT, 2021). In 2021, the percentage of international non-university students in Catalonia was 15.1%. 75.3% attended public institutions, 16.7% private schools subsidized by the government and 7% to private institutions (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2021).

In this context, we cannot forget that learning is a continuous process that begins at conception and continues throughout our life's length, breadth and depth (Banks et al., 2007). Children arrive at school with their family's social and cultural background that shapes the beginnings of their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1980) and their "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992; Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014). So, schools and teachers do not educate alone (Sancho, 1998). They cannot establish an educational relationship with the student if they ask them to leave their identity at the institution's door (Bernstein, 1970). This situation has led to many studies and publications on aspects related to the presence of immigrant students at school (Schneeweis, 2011; Essomba, 2012; Elosua, 2019; Demintseva, 2020; Luedtke, 2020). These studies highlight the considerable disregard for the experiential knowledge of these children and young people, although it is a perspective considered by the research on other social groups (Rudduck and Flutter, 2007; Susinos, 2009; Fielding, 2011; Calvo et al., 2012; Susinos and Ceballos, 2012, among others). Considering these children and young people's knowledge and experiences could improve their reception, socialization, and involvement in the host countries (Sancho et al., 2012; Acosta, 2015).

The consideration of migrant students as "legitimate others" (Maturana, 1996) and education as a human right has sparked a growing debate about the similarities and differences between integration and inclusion. As we discuss later, these two terms are often used as synonymous. Integration is generally understood as incorporating individuals of different groups into society, or in this case, into school. In contrast, inclusion means that everyone in a community has the same rights, access and choices as everyone else. However, policymakers, schools and teachers generally find it difficult to understand and meet the challenges of learners' increasing cultural, linguistic, economic and social diversity. Hence a growing need not only to know the cultural characteristics of students coming from other countries but also to include and engage families in the school context.

The European research project MiCREATE-Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe,[1] on which this article builds,

aware of multiple dimensions of educational and social systems, adopted a "child-centered" approach (Clark, 2011; Clark and Moss, 2011; Mayeza, 2017) and invited most agents involved in education to overcome a reductionist approach to the phenomenon. By adopting a child-centered approach, a perspective more and more present in different knowledge areas (Walton, 2018; Grant et al., 2022), researchers tried to avoid a persistent tendency to colonize childhood and youth (Cannella and Viruru, 2003; Liebel, 2020). In our research, this perspective aims to circumvent the common-sense presuppositions about what 'we'–adults, with our cultural and academic mind-frames, tend to think of as the indicators and stimulators of inclusion and reception. The objectives of our project were accomplished by gathering the experiences and viewpoints of migrant children regarding their lives in host societies (present). They also assessed the obstacles and difficulties they have faced (past) or are still facing after arriving in the host country and their opinions about overcoming these challenges (future). Therefore, we include children and young people's views on the families or other educational stakeholders (adults) in their inclusion process. As with the rest of the research participants, we did not want to speak up for them. We did not want to "give them a voice" as all of them, as all human beings have a voice. We wanted to listen to them, make them visible, and consider their experiences, knowledge, ideas, and reflections. To respond to the educational and social needs of migrant students, it seems essential to understand how the processes they go through, often painful, are shaping their life stories (Calvo, 2005; Larriva, 2017). Hence the relevance of departing from them and situating the needs involved in their development as human beings and citizens.

This paper focuses on a fundamental issue explored in MiCREATE: the role of families in their children's school performance and participation in society (Ball, 1998; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). It focuses on the essential role of families in their children's educational process and their inclusion in schools and society (Banks, 2010; Banishoeib, 2017; Pötzsch, 2020). We do that by considering students' views, reflections, and experiences, but also families themselves and other educational community members. We begin by setting out the research project from which our article derives, carefully outlining the methodological pathways. Then, based on the collected data analyzes, we present and discuss children, families and other educational community agents' views and experiences on this issue. We highlight the most relevant matters for families, schools and their communities, policymakers and host societies regarding children and youth inclusion processes, the difficulties, the schools' actions and the institutional projects to foster family engagement.

1.1. The educational role of families

Different studies point to the essential role of educational systems and schools as promoters of well-being (Soriano and Cala, 2018) or highlight the relationship and the importance of relying on educational institutions to improve students' conditions (Tonheim et al., 2015). Although we agree that formal education plays a significant role in social inclusion, economic ability, cultural enrichment and as an indicator of a secure life (Nicolai et al., 2016; Plener et al., 2017; Uyan-Semerci and Erdoğan, 2017), as stated above, learning does not only happen at school. Children arrive at school with a large backpack loaded with life, affections and disaffections, happy situations and

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challenging experiences that have increased or decreased their learning and relationship capabilities. Because:

> Learning is a phenomenon that involves real people who live in real, complex social contexts from which they cannot be abstracted in any meaningful way. […] They do have a gender, a sexual orientation, a socio-economic status, an ethnicity, a home culture; they have interests–and things that bore them; they have or have not consumed breakfast; and they live in neighborhoods with or without frequent gun violence or earthquakes, they are attracted by (or clash with) the personality of their teacher, and so on (Phillips, 2014, p. 10).

Children begin to learn from conception. Their mother's physical, mental, social and economic conditions and the family environment deeply affect their "subliminal" learning process that goes far beyond school (Mlodinow, 2012). Hence the significance of considering the family's role, engagement and influence in children's and youth's educational processes, not only from adults' views but also from themselves.

In the case of migrant families, children carry with them particular emotional and social experiences. However, not everyone has the same experience and feels affected in the same way by the migration process. Some leave relatives behind; others stay with a relative in their countries of origin until the family can settle in the host country. Moreover, not all of them find the same living conditions and facilities in the host country, and not all families enjoy the best physical, cultural, social, and economic resources (Valero-Matas et al., 2014; Consejo Económico y Social de España, 2019). Hence, it is critical to understand how the migration process shapes children's life stories and the grief they and their families can experience (Calvo, 2005; Larriva, 2017).

In Spain, inclusion policies referring to migrant children are the responsibility of each Autonomous Community (AC) except Ceuta and Melilla. Although ACs can apply educational legislation in different ways, all of the newly arrived migrant students are considered students in need of special attention. Consequently, legislation is context-specific for each of them (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2017; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018). The main measures implemented for responding to it are reception units, language support, actions for involving families and local communities, adaptations to school curricula, teacher professional development, and, in a broader sense, actions for going beyond segregation. Nonetheless, policies are not sufficient to address the needs of migrant students and the challenges that schools face daily. Therefore, the need for new strategies and ways of approaching educational practice. When researching transnational experiences, as Zembylas (2012) points out, we should consider the diasporic attachments with the homeland. Furthermore, it is also essential to pay attention to the grief of migrant children, as the migration experience does not end once migrants are in the new country.

The available literature shows the importance of migrant families' involvement in school to improve migrant students' learning process, engagement, and participation (López et al., 2001) and the difficulty of this cooperation. According to Seker and Sirkeci (2015), migrant children's families are often not well-informed about education in host countries, making migrant children's involvement difficult.

Another barrier to school engagement is the linguistic and cultural gap between migrant families and the school (Sime et al., 2018). On the other hand, Säävälä et al. (2017) claim that the vulnerability of many migrant families makes them reluctant to reveal issues related to their family life to school staff.

On the other hand, rather than students' migration background, other demographic variables such as family's cultural and educational resources and factors related to school features (type of school, quality of social relationships, teachers' expectations of students' performance, perspectives on multicultural education at school) turned out to be crucial for psychosocial engagement and educational success migrant children (Hoti et al., 2017).

In most cases, children and young people's ideas and wishes depend on their families and their particular dynamics (Rübner, 2017). The lack of autonomy over their education and future could hinder their involvement and participation in the host country, preventing them from benefiting from the educational and social opportunities available.

Janta and Harte (2016) consider it essential to ensure that migrant students learn the language of instruction and maintain a relationship with their mother tongue. In this regard, building relationships between educators and families could be helpful. However, this does not always seem possible (Bešter and Medvešek, 2016). Furthermore, Wofford and Tibi (2018) suggest including children and families in school language learning programs.

In our research, local families' essential role in accepting and including migrant students in school also emerged in addition to a request for more in-depth and comprehensive studies aimed at a richer understanding of migrant children, youth and their families social and learning needs and their expectations, requirements and challenges.

1.2. Integration/inclusion. An ongoing debate

Considering the diversity of project partners' cultural and academic backgrounds and traditions, "integration" and "inclusion" were problematised from the beginning. As discussed by Sedmak et al. (2021), at the European Community level,

> The concept of inclusion is integrated within its understanding of integration; for instance, the Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals argues that 'integration of third-country nationals is and should be an integral part of efforts to modernize and build inclusive social, education, labor market, health and equality policies, in order to offer meaningful opportunities for all to participate in society and the economy' (EC 2016: 4). (p. 21).

However, integration is often understood and practiced

> As a normative (policy) concept and a governing practice, which includes specific assumptions about what good integration is, how it is problematised, what are its objectives, how it is to be achieved, what are indicators of successful integration. Migrant integration in this regard refers to national or supranational decisions, specific proposals, program, theories or models that guide this specific

field and have impact on people's lives to achieve the desired state of affairs and outcomes (*Ibid*, p. 21–22).

European countries, and all those receiving significant volumes of migrants, put the "integration" pressure, the responsibility of becoming, in our case, 'good and faithful Europeans' on migrants (Islam et al., 2019, p. 7).

On the other hand, there is an ongoing debate on integration vs. inclusion in education. It started with students with special needs who were, for years and years, excluded from education systems, then integrated, and finally included–at least in some countries, in an ordinary school for all students (Vislie, 2003). It continued with Banks's (2010) proposal for a multicultural education framework to include ethnic minorities and immigrants in education. He argued for the need for a reform movement "to change the schools and other educational institutions so that students from all social-class, gender, racial, language, and cultural groups will have an equal opportunity to learn" (p. 4). Even in business, authors such as Banishoeib (2017) make a significant distinction between integration and inclusion. For her, integration is the assimilation into society or organizations, such as schools, of individuals from different groups. That is the case for institutions that generate a dedicated group for minorities, such as immigrant children. At the same time, inclusion means that anyone has the same rights, access, and choices as others in a community. For this author, inclusion is a universal human right.

Inclusion and integration notions seek to contribute to constructing a cohesive society in which all its members have opportunities to participate on equal terms in political, economic, social and cultural life. However, it seems that inclusion makes it possible to overcome one-dimensional and normative visions of "identity," indicating that there can be many ways of feeling like a good citizen in the host society.

Along the MiCREATE project, inclusion and integration have often been synonymous in this context. In the case of Spain, we have always stressed the most positive aspects of inclusion.

1.3. The research project

MiCREATE European Project brought together a group of 15 institutions (Universities, Associations and NGOs) and more than 70 researchers from 10 European countries deeply engaged in encouraging the educational and social inclusion of diverse migrant children. As already argued, the project adopted a child-centered perspective to make visible migrant children's experiences, knowledge, and positions at educational and policy levels. The project tried to overcome the predominant colonial and adult-centered approaches to education. From the need to revisit the existing reception and inclusion policies, the research project aimed to comprehensively examine the contemporary inclusion processes of migrant children to contribute to their empowerment. The project was problem-driven and exploratory at the same time. Its exploratory part mainly concerned a child-centered approach to understanding integration challenges, migrant needs, and well-being.

The project's specific aims were: (a) Identify existing migrant children integration measures and programs at the regional and local level through literature and secondary data analysis. (b). Analyze these integration programs' social and cultural impacts through case studies

in the 10 participating project countries; and through qualitative and quantitative child-centered research. (c). Develop possibilities for cultural integration approaches and identification of social investment, particularly in educational policies and school systems that aim to empower resilient children in an ethnically diverse society. In the implementation process, we created a space allowing children to express themselves and their interests.

We divided the research into several stages to achieve the project's objectives. In the following section, since this article builds on the Spanish context, we briefly refer to the content of these phases and the material and methods used in Spain.

2. Methodology

2.1. Materials and methods

This article draws on data gathered in the MiCREATE project in Spain, one of the participant countries. The research had an empirical methodology, combining large-scale and small-scale data collection. At the same time, different groups linked to education and migration participated. That is why, for this paper, we have drawn on all the data collected in the extensive fieldwork but focus on the role of families in migrant children's inclusion in schools. As explained later, the fieldwork consisted of different phases. Different types of groups participated in each phase to respond to different objectives. The following table summarizes the fieldwork carried out connected to this paper's objectives (Table 1).

In the first stage, we created an updated and in-depth State of the Art focused on reviewing the conceptual and methodological literature on migration and integration/inclusion of children and youth through a cross-disciplinary approach. It allowed us to assess migration policies across the country, collect activities undertaken in different regions and contexts in Spain, and identify national agencies involved in migration/integration processes in schools. For this paper, we have considered data relating to activities and practices in schools in which families are involved.

The second stage started from the premise that host societies' context is one of the most critical aspects affecting inclusion processes and provides ways of understanding immigrant groups' experiences in a given country. This phase involved different methods for gathering data: interviews with stakeholders and experts; analysis of datasets; review of political and media discourse analysis related to refugees' and migrants' insertion; and the analysis of existing public opinion polls in Spain. For this paper, we use data from interviews with stakeholders since issues related to the role of families were present. We carried out interviews with 14 stakeholders from the following fields: Ministries of Education and Social Welfare and Family, other governmental departments at regional and local levels, state agencies and offices for inclusion, Human Rights ombudsman, NGOs, independent institutions with expertise in education and migration, and academia and research institutions.[2]

2   For an ethical question, we anonymised the interviews by coding them as: E1, E2, E3 ... E14.

TABLE 1 Overview of the fieldwork linked to research objectives.

Stage	Participants	Context	Fieldwork	Objectives
1	-	-	Literature Review	Collecting practices and activities involving families for better migrant children's inclusion in schools
2	Stakeholders/Experts	-	Literature Review + Interviews (14)	Collecting practices, activities, and issues related to the role of families in migrant children's inclusion in schools
3	Members of the educational community (managerial team, teachers, school staff, parents)	15 schools	Interviews + Focus groups (45 teachers, 19 parents and 16 members of the educational community)	Gathering issues related to the role of families in migrant children's inclusion in schools: conceptions, perceptions, and practices.
4	Children	6 schools	Interviews + Focus groups (204 students from primary and secondary schools)	Identifying issues related to the role of families in migrant children's inclusion in schools: conceptions, perceptions, and practices.

Source: Own elaboration.

The interviewed participants addressed the assessment of stakeholder needs and identified gaps for program development and further research directions. In this sense, the stakeholders were engaged as change enablers and potential adopters in discussions early enough to provide insight into what they needed and in what form. The third stage focused on fieldwork with the educational community. It involved a first round of interviews with school leadership teams from different regions of Spain and a second round of interviews and focus groups with schools in Catalonia.

The aims of this stage were (1): To explore how the educational community perceives migrant children's integration/inclusion and cultural and religious diversity. (2) To examine the strengths and weaknesses of the policies and (best) practices adopted by the educational community to address the challenges related to migrant children's integration and cultural and religious diversity. For the first part of the fieldwork, we selected 16 schools with high levels of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in those regions of Spain with a long tradition of hosting migrant families.[3] We interviewed school management teams from Andalusia, Aragón, Basque Country, Catalonia, and Madrid. This part involved a total of 26 participants. Later, we focused on Catalonia as one of the Autonomous Communities with more experience in terms of inclusion and cultural diversity in education. For this additional empirical fieldwork, we selected five (one of them for primary and secondary school students) of 16 schools placed in Catalonia, where we carried out: (1) individual semi-structured interviews with different members of the educational community (families, teachers, social workers, and school staff); (2) two focus groups per school: one with a group of teachers, and another one with families. In this case, a total of 45 teachers, 19 parents and 16 members of the educational community were involved. These interviews and focus groups allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and opinions on issues related to the dynamics and processes of migrant children's inclusion.

Finally, the last stage involved students from the five schools in Catalonia. The study emphasized examining migrant children and

young people's inclusion considering age (from 10 to 17 years old), gender, religion and ethnic background, socio-economic status, and legal condition.

The specific objectives of this stage were: (1) to improve our understanding of the children's experiences of life in social and cultural environments; (2) to examine the conceptualisations of well-being and what is important to them in their present situation (about living conditions, socio-economic status, cultural background, gender, religion, language proficiency, etc.) and to learn how children prioritize their needs; (3) to examine migrant children's satisfaction with their new life in the host society through their self-perceived opportunities, choices and feeling of control over their own life and future; (4) to identify belonging processes, advantages and weaknesses of existing models of migrant children's integration and to assess their experiences and views regarding the shortcomings of integration support services. This paper focuses on fieldwork with children, educational community members and policymakers in Spain and Catalonia.

One particularity carried out in fieldwork with children was using narrative, visual and art-based approaches (Knowles and Cole, 2008; Riessman, 2008; Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015; Riera-Retamero et al., 2021; Riera-Retamero and Hernández-Henández, 2021). The aim was to make children feel more comfortable participating in adult research. By approaching children and young people from a position based on relational ethics (Clandinin et al., 2018; Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2018; Schippers, 2020) and applying research methods that went beyond words and traditional forms of representation, they were encouraged to express their feelings, perceptions, ideas, and attitudes about: friends and socialization, school, family, local environment, identity, plans, past achievements and wishes. Even more, topics such as multiculturalism, immigration, integration/inclusion, current social and political events in the country and beyond, etc. Among the arts-based methods used with children, one explicitly focused on addressing issues related to their families. It consisted of every child drawing a map of their family through printed emojis. That allowed researchers to elicit conversations with children about their families and observe how children's words were represented visually. In addition, the other arts-based methods also reported ideas about children's families and their role in the inclusion processes.

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3   For an ethical question, we anonymised the schools coding them as: S1, S2, S3, S4 … S16.

2.2. Data analysis

All the interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed. We followed the ethical protocols of the European Commission, and all participants were anonymised. We analyzed the transcriptions through thematisation (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun et al., 2014; Nowell et al., 2017). The procedure was to search those sentences that included one of the following roots: family* and parent*. After this, we grouped those sentences with similar topics to create a complex dialog crossing different participants' perspectives, approaches and sensations. After analyzing all the contributions, we decided to group them into two main blocks. The first one is related to the difficulties migrant families face in getting involved in school life. The second collects practices and initiatives that improve migrant families' involvement in school life. The following section (Results) provides evidence on the most relevant issues and concerns about the crucial role of immigrant families in the inclusion of their children in the educational system and society. It also refers to some schools' most common practices and specific projects or activities to foster the relationship and involvement of families.

3. Results

Considering consortium partners' discussion, as stated in section 1.2 (Integration/inclusion. An ongoing debate), school inclusion focuses not only on students and schools but also on families as fundamental actors in their emotional, social, and cognitive development and the whole educational community (Ball, 1998). In the MiCREATE project,

> The process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals [and as groups….Integration] refers to a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies…[and implies] consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose. (MiCreate Consortium, 2019, p. 1).

It relates to social cohesion, tackling bias through anti-discrimination, and promoting mutual understanding. It draws on concepts and measures from various contexts that speak to critical terms relating to migrant integration through education, such as adaptation, rights, and obligation.

Conceptually, educational professionals argue that integration as inclusion in school should target migrant students and families (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003), especially when they do not speak the language and their socio-economic situation is complicated. During the fieldwork with children and youth, they shared their positive perceptions of their well-being and life satisfaction. They mostly expressed being happy and having a 'good life'. They repeatedly cited factors such as family, friends, local community and school as the basis of their well-being. According to Sabolova et al. (2020), children commonly identified these factors as key in enhancing or inhibiting their well-being. Especially the family (and extended family) plays a vital role in children's lives and everyday experiences, as well as in migratory experiences and patterns.

The following section exposes the main results of the MiCREATE research project concerning two topics: (1) difficulties migrant families face in getting involved in school life; (2) practices that make their involvement in school life more manageable. From our reflections shared with the participating schools, they made an active effort to build affective support, a space of trust and care for students and their families (Estalayo et al., 2022). However, they also face some difficulties.

3.1. Difficulties migrant families face in getting involved in school life

3.1.1. Language barrier

Migrant families usually do not speak the host country's official language. In the case of Spain, the official language in all public schools is Spanish. That means that except for those coming from Latin American countries, migrant families need to speak Spanish to get involved in school life, such as official meetings, meetings to follow up on their children's performance at school, or other projects, activities, or festivals. However, in Autonomous Communities such as Basque Country, Galicia, Valencian Community, Balearic Islands and Catalonia, the priority language of most schools is the respective local official language: Basque, Galician, Valencian, and Catalan. In Catalonia, where we conducted most of our fieldwork, the official language is Catalan, only spoken by 9,1 million people worldwide. According to the Survey of Linguistic Uses, conducted by the Generalitat's Directorate General of Linguistic Policy and the Statistical Institute of Catalonia in 2019, 94% of the population understands Catalan; 81.2% can speak it; 85.5% read it, and 65.3% can write it (Geli, 2019). That makes it more difficult for families to get involved in school activities and proposals. According to the school leadership teams from S5 and S6 (placed in Catalonia), engaging parents who do not speak any Catalan or Spanish in school life is challenging. When the family members do not master the host society's language, they cannot communicate well with the school or dare to go to meetings. Some students referred to this:

> Yes, but my mother … As she doesn't understand the language [Catalan] … And as she's also busy with work and all of that, she can't [get more involved]. (Student from S6).

> No, my family doesn't participate so much. It's because my mum doesn't know how to speak (…) it's very difficult for her, so she says 'no, I'm not going'. (Student from S6).

The language barrier also affects the support families can give to their children's homework.

3.1.2. Cultural clash

In some cases, migrant families have different perspectives than schools toward their children's education. The family's assessment of the value of school education affects their children, mainly if it is negative (Valencia, 2002; Fuligni and Fuligni, 2007). In this regard, the school representative of S3 points out that some families "do not see the relevance nor do they fully understand the need and

function of the educational system […] they do not see the importance of involving themselves in the education of their children." That leads to certain absenteeism and lower involvement of families and their children in daily school life, affecting migrant children's performance and constructing their identity. Teachers from S4 talked about this duality of identity that some migrant children have to face to accomplish their parents' culture and religious traditions while trying to find their own identity in a new context that also proposes a different social identity.

In this regard, cases linked to intersectionality were also reported (Lutz et al., 2011; Cho et al., 2013). Considering the expectations in migrant students' school performance, a social worker from S2 and the headteacher of S15 reported that parents often have higher expectations of their daughters than of their sons. The social worker of S2, explained:

> "It seems to be that boys lack more identity references. There are no male migrants in parliament or in schools as teachers. What are our models? How many migrants appear on television? And when they appear, why and how do they appear? On the other hand, some women have done a lot of work in terms of empowerment: writing, going to university, giving testimony, mentoring… all this natural networking (and it is a hypothesis). I think it has given girls more perspective and empowerment than boys".

Other teachers reported that disengagement is more extended in high schools, especially within the gitano population. As they are close to 16, students do not go to school. The family wants them to stop going to school to start working if they are boys or to get married and have a family if they are girls. Although, according to some teachers, little by little, things are changing and happening less, it is a reality that still exists. Also, in two cases (S2 and S14), teachers and school leadership teams noted that newly arrived families from specific countries, where the educational system is very different from the Spanish one, do not understand the functioning of the schools. The school is not authoritative enough for them, and they had the impression their children only played instead of learning.

Finally, according to the Secretary for Equality, Migration and Citizenship of the Catalan Government and the Director of Projects in Jaume Bofill Foundation, we cannot consider the participation of immigrant and local families in the same way. Migrant families do not always understand our educational system logic. Some do not speak Catalan, so they cannot participate to the same degree in their children's studies as local families. In addition, the Representative for Children and Youth at the *Síndic de Greuges* (ombudsman, E8) points out the lack of facilities for these families to know what entities, procedures or aid they may have access to different services.

3.1.3. School segregation

In Spain and Catalonia, there is a non-solved problem of school segregation. In 2018, according to a report by Save the Children, 9% of Spanish schools had more than 50% of socio-economically disadvantaged students. To eliminate school segregation in Spain, 31% of the most vulnerable pupils would have to move from one school to

another.[4] That is due to several factors. In terms of migration, the first factor is that in Spain, at the administrative level, several issues still need to be solved (such as easier processes for legalizing migrant families' situation and regrouping or how to include minor migrant children in the educational system). On the one hand, there is an uneven distribution of enrolments. The current system allows those schools that, at the beginning of the academic year, have not filled the maximum number of students per class to receive students throughout the year.

On the other hand, families can choose schools so that schools with a high percentage of migrant children are the last ones to be chosen by local families because of an unresolved social issue of stigma and invisible (or open) micro-racism. That is the case when migrants are seen as belonging to a category of socially undervalued individuals because of their physical or intellectual characteristics, habits, place of residence, religion or social or economic position (Goffman, 2001; Alcaraz, 2012). Thus, newly arrived migrant families usually cannot choose a school. They are assigned to a school based on where they live or where there are vacancies when they enroll their children. Instead, local families can choose their children's school many months before school starts.

This social discrimination toward immigrant families is also evident in the attitudes of some local families. In interviews and focus groups with teachers and families, participants report that some local families have an aversion to the presence of migrants in the school. According to the school representative of S14, "we have a lot of families of foreign origin, and that makes some families here in the city not want to come to our school. We have already seen this very clearly." This negative attitude comes from social and political groups that are not always directly involved with the school. They see the presence of migration as a stigma.

Nevertheless, many educators from schools with a high migration percentage see it as a challenge and an educational opportunity. For example, the headteacher of S13 commented: "It's a reality, it's a challenge, but not a stigma." In this line, the S5 principal confirmed, "Many local families are increasingly valuing the school project beyond personal prejudices." A mother with a migrant background (S2) appreciated the work done in school to give all students (regardless of their background) the tools to deal with migration and racist issues in their daily lives.

3.1.4. Migrant families' environment

When migration is mentioned as a problem by school staff, it is not because of the different cultural backgrounds from a racist approach. The problems relate to the difficulties in communication and the emotional and social disadvantage of these families compared with most local families. Many migrant families live in somewhat disadvantaged situations. According to the General Director for Immigration. Department of Social Welfare and Family (Catalonia) (E4), "We lack a lot of pedagogy. Because we have some families that are not legally regularized. And the stress of feeling illegal is enormous, especially if you have children." Sometimes the living conditions of families directly affect the social, cultural, economic, and material

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4 https://www.epdata.es/datos/segregacion-escolar-espana-datos-estadisticas/304

thinking of migrant students. For example, a student from S6, described her house as "uncomfortable" because she and her family are currently living in temporary housing while searching for a house. Other students reported living with their families in shared rooms, making a lack of privacy and intimacy evident.

In addition, migrant families and children usually undergo intense migratory mourning (Calvo, 2005; Larriva, 2017) and significant and unpredictable changes at all levels. Sometimes, they have to deal with family regrouping. It is common for some students to be raised in their countries of origin by their grandmothers or aunts while their parents try settling in the new country. When these children arrive in the host society, they do not even know their mothers or fathers. That creates profound emotional instability and very complex situations for them. And it takes time to overcome it. At the educational level, there is another difficulty with children of migrant families who are legally local (they were born in the country and had all the documentation in order) but are socially considered migrants and do not feel fully included in society yet. In both cases, it affects the children who suffer behavioral and emotional difficulties at school.

3.1.5. Primary school vs. secondary school

There is a difference between the involvement of families in primary (from 6 to 12 years old) and secondary schools (from 12 to 16 years old). In primary schools, family members' involvement is more intensive. Teachers meet families at the beginning of the school year or even before and usually stay in contact during the whole school year. In this research, schools' principals assessed the collaboration with migrant parents as good. The situation is completely different regarding secondary schools: families usually contact the school at the beginning of the school year, but there is no collaboration or contact between both parties after that period unless problems occur. At secondary school, families' contact with the school weakens, and often they pay less attention to events that schools propose to families and meetings to which teachers invite them.

Such a situation influences the establishment of links between schools and families and between different families. According to a student from S7, "now at the secondary school, as my father does not come to pick me up, he does not know the other parents (…) he knows the ones who have been with me since primary school." Another student from the same school comments: "my mother seldom comes here. It is not the same as when my mother used to go to primary school, interact, etc. For example, most of the boys and girls come alone to the secondary school, so there is no relationship between parents being at the door talking." In this sense, it works better when schools offer both primary and secondary studies, as reported by a student from S6 (secondary school) who was at S5 (primary school), which belongs to the same institution. Enrolling at the same school during primary and secondary studies enables stronger links: "The relationship between the school and the families… Well, it depends on which families. For example, many families have been here since their children were 3 years old and those get along well with the school's staff."

3.2. Practices that facilitate migrant family involvement in school life

The data collected at the different stages of the project have allowed us to identify the more usual practices and the specific projects or activities carried out in some schools to foster the relationship and involvement of families.

3.2.1. More usual practices

In the literature review and fieldwork in schools, one of the more usual practices that came out is building an educational network involving families. This way, families living in the host country feel invited to participate in the school's activities -or even be part of the organization. Some schools also involve families in pupils' assessments. This strategy also seeks to involve extended family members (e.g., uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc.) that live in the country of origin. That helps migrant children to overcome processes of mourning and separation better. As a student from S3 states: "I am lost, and I want to go back to my country. Not to live, but to see my family." In response, some schools connect migrant children with their country-of-origin families through ICT tools in school.

Another essential factor that helps children feel more included in school, especially newly arrived children, is having relatives at the same school. For example, a student from Honduras explains that her inclusion process in school was much more smoothly because her cousin was already there:

Q: How did you feel when you arrived?

A: They embraced me very quickly. Do you know? They were very open. […]

Q: In the other schools, was it the same?

A: No, it was very different. They left me alone…

Q: When you came to S6, was it easier to make friends?

A: Yes, mainly because my cousin was also studying here.

To facilitate the conversation between teachers and migrant families that do not speak Catalan, schools use different techniques, depending on school resources and translation policies: hiring a translator, inviting family members who can speak both languages so they can translate everything, inviting intercultural mediators, to invite social integrators, to count on the help of students who speak the language, etc. In some cases, the school decides to translate some documents into the most widely spoken languages of the school (for example, S1 and S10). On the other hand, the language difficulties of some families can become an opportunity to stimulate cooperation and sympathy between families. As the school principal of S5 and S6 stated, "When we have individual tutoring, parents organize themselves for translations." During interviews with pupils, a student from S7 explained his case: "Sometimes my father came to the meetings because my mother could not. She understands Spanish better than him. So, when my father came, it was necessary to try to understand what he said. And sometimes I went to help too, but when I could not, teachers tried to help him."

In this regard, many schools offer programs for families with the following aims: (1) to include not only students but also families in school language learning programs; (2) to create ways for reciprocal learning between families or communities and schools; (3) to offer psychosocial support (or at least, a sense of caring) for families and students. Some schools incorporate the welcoming of families in the reception plan for international students and establish a relationship of care with them, not only in the reception period but permanently. A student from S3 shared his experience with it:

Q: Do you think the school has welcomed your family correctly?

A: Yes, I think so. Because they always take their opinion into account to manage my issues.

As reported in a focus group with teachers in S1, these strategies are essential because migrant families *"can integrate into the neighbourhood, help their children, even feel part of the school."* They also facilitate the connections between migrant families and teachers to establish a space for relationships and trust with the families and exchange ideas and experiences about school life.

3.2.2. Specific practices

Spanish schools foster family involvement through different vias, such as personal interviews with the teaching staff, family association (AFA) and School Board (*Consejo Escolar*). In addition, according to the Representative for Children's and Youth at the *Síndic de Greuges* (E8), "In Catalonia there are some schools that they call High Complexity, which have specific professionals: social workers, who, in some way, also fulfill this function of helping families throughout the process, and accompaniment so that, in the end, this will revert positively to the children." One of the most common practices is the reception policy. All schools have some reception policy. Although they usually focus on welcoming children, in some schools, this reception policy also includes specific actions to receive families. For example, during the focus group in S2, teachers stated, "We are in charge of welcoming both families and children." In many schools, it consists in organizing a welcoming meeting in which both families and their children are invited to get to know the teachers and the managerial team of the school. They explain to them the rules, the curriculum and the general functioning of the school and the educational system, and give them a tour of the school. In addition, some of them also provide the information in their language of origin, inform them of grants and scholarships they can access to, as well as, help them to fill the required documentation.

We have also identified specific practices and projects implemented in some Spanish schools in collaboration with governmental and educational institutions, NGOs or non-formal education organizations. Among these initiatives, we find: (a) Social mentoring (traditional and reverse mentoring). (b) Accompanying minors and their families in the process of insertion into the school system. (c) Improving the intercultural and co-educational approach of school teachers. (d) Considering the cultural identity of immigrant children and their families. (e) Consolidating community-based educational leisure in the neighborhoods. (f) Detecting the academic disaffection in children and involving the family and the school mediation service to facilitate contact between the newly arrived students' families and schools. (g) Promoting courses for parents and children. Some of these initiatives are:

- *The project Cambalache* (funded by the Ministry of Work and Immigration of Spain, 2012).[5] It aims to improve the socio-educative process of inclusion of children from diverse sociocultural origins by engaging the whole educational community, starting from schools and connecting with other contexts of socialization such as the street, family and group of peers. It involves accompanying minors and their families in the insertion into the school system.

- *Mus-e program.*[6] It is a program run by the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation that fundamentally seeks to maintain the cultural identity of immigrant children, help them with adaptation issues in school, and accompany their families. All this is approached through art.

- *Aprenem. Famílies en Xarxa* (AFEX, We Learn: Families in Network).[7] Promoted by the City Council of Barcelona. It is a reverse mentoring project, so young people (students in the 4th year of ESO, 14–15 years old) mentor their parents. Also, there is a gender objective in this program to empower girls and engage them to continue their studies.

- *Open schoolyards (Patis Oberts/ Instituts Oberts).*[8] The school opens up as a more communitarian space in the neighborhood beyond class time. The aim is to promote spaces so that parents can attend literacy courses and children some extracurricular activities. Barcelona City Council promotes it.

- *Baobab Program.*[9] It is an educational program promoted by the Barcelona City Council through the Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB). It aims to consolidate community-based educational leisure in neighborhoods where the leisure network is weak or nonexistent.

- *Enxaneta Project (Projecte enxaneta).*[10] Promoted by the University of Vic to detect children's academic disaffection and involve the family in their school education.

- *L'Associació Mares enllaç (Mothers Link Association).*[11] Promoted by *Associació Mares Enllaç*. They propose a school mediation service that facilitates contact between the families of newly arrived students and schools. As a teacher and researcher at the University of Vic (E12) explained, "Women from different origins make bridges with those of their community."

4. Discussion

Too often, schools are supposed to deal by themselves with the main challenges of welcoming migrant students into educational systems, forgetting the role and responsibility of the rest of the social and political actors and the structural dimensions of education. In the MiCREATE European project, we have tried to overcome reductionist views of educational research by considering the systemic complexity of migrant students' inclusion. We avoid extractive approaches ('take data and run') by promoting participatory scenarios not to do *research on* but *with* participants (Elliott, 1988; Wilmsen, 2008; Nind, 2014; Abma et al., 2019). From a child-centered positioning and using a mixed methods approach, we contacted most actors and institutions responsible for children's well-being.

The results of our research highlight the role of the school and the support of the entire educational community, especially families, as a

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5 https://acoge.org/cambalache/

6 https://fundacionyehudimenuhin.org/programas/mus-e/

7 https://cutt.ly/CZPqY6R

8 https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/educacio/ca/patis-escolars-oberts

9 https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/ca/bones-practiques-socials/programa-baobab

10 https://mon.uvic.cat/greuv/category/projecte-enxaneta/

11 https://www.asociate.es/cataluna/osona/associacio-mares-enllac/

fundamental part of the emotional, social and cognitive development of children and young people. Educational professionals argue that inclusion in school should target migrant students and families (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003), especially when they do not speak the language and their socio-economic situation is complicated. Several participants also reported this idea during the research. Although they have pointed out the difficulties these processes entail, they have also informed us how many schools, collaborating with administrations, NGOs or other institutions, are proposing practices and strategies to overcome them.

The language barrier is one of the most challenging issues for migrant families and schools. Lack of proficiency in the school language hinders communication and understanding of the functioning of the education system and prevents families from supporting their children in their school work. That is more evident in those Autonomous Communities with another official language than Spanish. In this regard, schools offer language courses and programs for families. Another fundamental issue is the psychological and emotional conditions of migrant families. Some studies emphasize the importance of considering the intense migratory mourning that these families are dealing with (Calvo, 2005; Larriva, 2017). In this sense, schools propose different ways to organize informal and relaxed meetings with families, aiming to know and support each other. On the one hand, in these meetings, teachers can get closer to the cultural and educational context from which immigrant families and their children come. On the other, they allow a space of trust in which educational staff can improve communication with families and get aware of their situations (legal status, job situation, housing, regrouping, unaccompanied minors, etc.).

According to our research findings, schools should not ignore the social, cultural, geographical and identity uprooting that families may suffer. Some of them are newcomers to the country, others have been living there for years, and others, although born in the host country, are still considered migrants by society and suffer from having a transnational extended family with whom they remain in contact. And especially secondary schools need to put more effort since the research showed that some teachers reported that disengagement is more extended in young people.

As Mlodinow (2012) proposes, the family environment profoundly affects people's learning process beyond school. When it comes to belonging, feeling safe and having a sense of well-being, the family plays a key role and can be seen as the most critical anchor point (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016). Due to this relevant role played by the family in the child and young person's learning process, it seems necessary to improve relationships, participation, and cooperation between the migrant students' families and the school system. In this sense, all participating schools are actively generating processes of support, affection, trust and care for students and their families. Moreover, some practices and projects offer spaces for interaction between children and families and foster networking among migrant and local families. These practices, which can be broadly defined as "social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness" (Putnam, 2007, p. 137), play a crucial role in social capital formation (Bourdieu, 1980; Coleman 1988) and the recognition and development of people's "funds of knowledge," "these historically accumulated and culturally-developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). In the case of migration, it is necessary to facilitate community formation and

settlement (Portes, 1995). Putnam (2000) has also highlighted the bridging potential of social capital, where social connection transcends the boundaries of ethnicity or socio-economic status.

Attending school and forming friendships and social networks for students is possibly the primary site of social capital acquisition because it allows them to foster relationships that connect them (and, perhaps, by extension, their families) to the local community. As Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) suggest, schools are critical sites for welcoming migrants and their families, helping them to develop 'footholds' through schooling and other support measures (Arun et al., 2021). Although many projects and practices exist, as well as reception policies to welcome families and to care for and accompany them, in Spain, there is still a significant problem of school segregation (Bonal and Albaigés, 2009). There is an uneven distribution of enrolments and a need to improve the detection of children in vulnerable situations (Vicens, 2021). Some local families tend to avoid schools with high percentages of migrant children because of an unresolved social issue of stigma and invisible (or open) micro-racism.

To Arun and Bailey (2019), there is a distinction between the perception or racist behavior in the educational system between old and new EU countries.

> In Western discourse we observe the denial strategies in reference to discrimination recognition. People and researchers are distancing the problem (racism and prejudice only in small towns and villages, where there is no migrants), attach the definition with the intent, diminishing and scaling down the problem, accusing migrant pupils of politicizing racism–pulling the racist card whenever pressured or expected to perform better (Jensen et al., 2012). In Central and Eastern Europe, experience of racist behavior is seen as a common experience of migrants and minorities, something inevitably connected with their presence in the host country. In both Worlds the academic discourse is focused on the possible remedies and shaping the integration process in a way that could eliminate the conflict and other problems caused by racism and discrimination (Arun and Bailey, 2019, p.13).

Long-term migrant families choose to enroll their children in schools with a high migration percentage precisely to feel more accompanied and be more in contact with migrant communities. In interviews and focus groups with teachers and families, it was reported that some local families have an aversion to migrants in the school. On the contrary, the newly arrived migrant families usually cannot choose the school because they are assigned according to their place of residence now to enroll their children or to schools with vacancies in the municipality.

School segregation has recently increased in Spanish cities like Barcelona (Síndic de Greuges, 2016). As a result of this reality, there is a distribution of children in schools based on their household income. Among the causes of this phenomenon is that only some schools have live enrolment, assuming most newly arrived migrant students. In turn, the concentration of migrant students causes the rejection of some families who seek alternatives to avoid stigmatized schools through different strategies, favoring school segregation (Bonal and Albaigés, 2009). Thus, there is school segregation for political, economic, and social reasons (Estalayo et al., 2021). Therefore, pupils' needs are not always met, as equal opportunities are not guaranteed, contradicting the principles of social equity and equality established

in the Education Law. Schools alone, without the support of societies, cannot compensate for personal, cultural, economic and social inequalities (Bernstein, 1970). Therefore, equal opportunities for all children (new, long-term, and local) are not guaranteed. Moreover, this situation is exacerbated when schools lack the needed resources (human and material resources).

Networks with migrant communities can be relevant in signposting resources to children enabling them to form friendships with individuals with similar backgrounds. However, researchers warn that close-knit ties with only one's community can lead to segregation and limit a person's ability to access existing resources and improve their social positioning (Putnam, 2007). Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen relationships between the local and migrant communities. In this paper, we have focused on the importance of local and migrant families in including migrant children in schools and enhancing their inclusion process in the hosting community.

5. Conclusion

Researching such a sensitive and complex phenomenon as the inclusion of immigrant children and young people in the educational and social systems of the host countries is not easy. This article addresses the role of families in the inclusion/integration of immigrant children and youth. It provides evidence on the difficulties of immigrant families in getting involved in school life and collects existing practices that facilitate their involvement based on a MiCREATE research project. To meet this challenge, we set out to research *with*,—not *on*, all participants in the education community. We understood all participants as subjects with a voice and the capacity to share their perceptions, ideas, and critical perspectives. All collaborators appreciated this ontological and relational ethics positioning (Clandinin et al., 2018), recognized the need for this study, and were grateful for what it has allowed them to think. Hence the relevance of the child-centered approach and the participatory scenarios.

The paper evidences the need to understand the inclusion process as a very complex reality that it not only involves migrant families but the whole educational community (e.g., school staff, municipalities, and local families). It is essential to consider the voices and experiences of educational communities dealing with the increasing migrant population and its related issues. A critical contribution of the paper is to put in dialog voices from different contexts, such as experts from administrative, NGOs, universities, and other institutions, and members of the educational community: school staff (school leadership teams, social workers, and teachers), families, and children. To make evident from a multilayered perspective the crucial role families have in the educational and social inclusion process of migrant children, considering prevailing cultural discrepancies. Based on all this evidence, schools, their communities, policymakers, and society must be aware of families' different local contexts and cultural diversity in children's inclusion process.

All the above arguments imply the need for European projects such as MiCREATE and other international research projects that deepen these issues. That is especially necessary for contexts without the tradition of involving families and communities with the educational system. As addressed by the MiCREATE project and this article, it is also fundamental to consider different points of view and embrace mixed methods that enhance the scope of the study shedding light on relevant aspects of a highly complex and multilayered phenomenon such as the impact of migration in education.

As with any research, not only in Social Sciences, ours has limitations. Despite the enormous volume of evidence collected throughout the project in each participating country, the issues addressed were so complex and contextual that it was impossible to reflect "all realities." But, at the same time, this constitutes one of its most significant contributions because it has allowed us to underline the importance of approaching the study of the phenomena once again from their conditions and peculiarities, providing new insights from a more participatory and inclusive perspective.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of Barcelona's Bioethics Commission. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants.

Author contributions

JO-S, SC-S, and JS-G conceived and designed the analysis, collected the data, contributed data and analysis tools, performed the analysis, and wrote the paper. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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