

CHAPTER 4

Integrating Migrant Children in Primary Education: An Educator Survey in Four European Countries

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Abstract: This chapter describes the findings of a survey focusing on migrant education of children conducted in four European countries. The survey was carried out as part of the interdisciplinary Erasmus Plus funded project OpenEYE (Open Education for Young Europeans through History, Art and Cultural Learning), with the aim of shedding light on the attitudes and perceived needs of educators (n = 255) working with children of migrant backgrounds relating to pedagogical challenges, learning priorities, institutional support, and desired training. The chapter begins with a description of the aims and participants in the project and an outline of approaches to migrant education in the four countries in question: Greece, Italy, Norway, and Slovenia. The second part of the chapter reports and discusses the findings from the needs survey, highlighting findings that are especially relevant for language teachers, teacher educators and other stakeholders working with multilingual and multicultural children. The findings indicate a need for appropriate further training opportunities for educators working with migrant children, especially concerning multilingualism and the learning potential of cultural expressions to aid integration and language development.

Introduction

This chapter reports on findings from a European ERASMUS-funded project, OpenEYE (Open Education for Young Europeans through History,

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Art and Cultural Learning), an interdisciplinary project that includes stakeholders in four countries: Greece, Italy, Norway, and Slovenia¹

The project was designed in response to the refugee crisis in 2015–2016, which led to increased migration to all four countries involved, and which produced questions relating to appropriate educational models and approaches for migrant children renewed currency and urgency. The topic is highly relevant still today, not least due to the recent outbreak of war in Europe. In addition to educational specialists from the University of South-Eastern Norway, who have coordinated the project, this interdisciplinary project involves a primary school and continuing education center from Slovenia, the Museum of Natural History in the province of Livorno, Italy, the Museum of Greek Children's Art as well as a research consultancy institution in Greece.

The aim of the OpenEYE project is to enable educators in primary school education (formal and non-formal) to support migrant children in language learning and integration in their school and community. The project develops and tests learning methodologies and tools based on cultural expressions (music, dance, heritage, painting, storytelling, theater etc.) that will be applied in formal and non-formal primary education in order to help migrant children integrate in their new communities in the respective four countries. Although the aims of the project are cross-curricular, i.e., they relate to language learning and intercultural learning in all subjects, they are not least timely for English Language Teaching (ELT) in second and foreign language classrooms.

The present chapter reports and discusses findings from a survey carried out initially in the OpenEYE project to gain insight into the stakeholders' attitudes, practices, and needs regarding the integration of migrant children. Attitudes and self-perceived practices are important to study, since research indicates that there are inconsistencies and sometimes contradictions or incompatibilities in what educators express (De Angelis, 2011). Moreover, attitudes and self-perceived practices mutually

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influence actual practices (Barcelos & Kajala, 2013). The study concentrates on the following research question:

What are educators' attitudes and practices in four European countries regarding the integration of migrant children and use of cultural expressions to promote integration?

We will describe the findings and discuss their relevance for language teaching in general and ELT in particular.

Integration and the use of cultural expressions

In recent years, the population of children in Europe has become increasingly diverse both linguistically and culturally, leading to what Vertovec (2007) refers to as *superdiversity* or *trans-culture*. Educators need to adapt to super-diverse, or pluralistic, groups of children (García, 1991), since all children have the need to be acknowledged, cared for, and appreciated (Honneth, 2006). This requires active measures on the part of educators to facilitate integration, for example in intercultural education, where various cultures, languages, backgrounds, differences, and similarities are highlighted and discussed (Lahdenperä, 2004). Amongst other things, educators need to engage in conversations with the children through which intercultural understanding can be developed and reflected by their own practices. Not surprisingly, children who experience intercultural education where their backgrounds are acknowledged and used, and where education is adapted to their needs, have a higher chance of feeling included and being successful in school (Persson & Persson, 2012).

Intercultural education is important for migrant children in particular since they are often socially, economically, and politically marginalized (Gearon et al., 2009). However, as argued by Miller (2004), *all* schools have a moral obligation to provide such education that provides conditions which challenge the marginalization of migrants. According to this view, integration means using teaching and learning methods that address all learners, taking care not to exclude or marginalize migrant children due to language or culture requirements which cannot be expected of them.

The importance of intercultural pedagogical approaches is reflected in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which is used as a basis for language curricula throughout Europe (Council of Europe, 2001). We would like to extend these principles to non-formal educational settings, such as museums and libraries that offer educational workshops for children, since children learn, play, and interact with others in several other contexts in addition to a formal school context.

Before the 1990s, it was not uncommon to consider language and culture studies as separate entities; from the 1990s onwards, the strong relationships between language learning and culture have been highlighted and elaborated on (e.g., Byram, 1997; Kramsch 1993). However, studies on teachers' attitudes towards intercultural language teaching in various national settings indicate that while teachers are generally positive towards such an approach, few say that they pursue this in their day-to-day teaching (Oranje, 2021). This may be due in part to a lack of emphasis on this area of language teaching in teacher education programs in the past. However, a growing number of empirical and theoretical research, as well as pedagogical textbooks on the topic, indicate increased interest and emphasis on the practical implications of this area of language teaching (e.g., Dypedahl & Lund, 2020; Houghton et al., 2013; López-Jiménez & Sánchez-Torres, 2021).

A core assumption of the OpenEYE project is that a focus on cultural expressions, i.e., history, art, and culture, can be especially useful in supporting learners with highly diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the areas of second and foreign language learning, literature, storytelling, film, and drama are established tools for developing linguistic and intercultural competences. Literature and film have traditionally been valued both because they provide authentic examples of language use and because they can provide insights into different cultures and differing individual perspectives (see for example Bland, 2020; Heggernes, 2021; Villanueva, 2020). These objectives have also been at the core of drama-related approaches in language learning. Research has indicated that drama can in an especially effective way challenge learners to step into different situations and viewpoints in addition to communicative skills, including vocabulary range and fluency (see for example Wagner, 2002).

Visual approaches in language teaching represents a notable strand of research on multilingual and intercultural education. Together with his colleagues, Jim Cummins has developed the concept of “identity texts” with the aim of fostering linguistic and cultural inclusion (Cummins et al., 2015). Several recent studies have examined the benefits of this approach in highly diverse multilingual classes (e.g., Kalaja & Pitkänen, 2020; Krulatz & Iversen, 2019). Kalaja and Pitkänen-Huhta (2020) provide a review of research on “arts-based methodologies” which highlights the usefulness of visual narratives for exploring learners’ subjective and lived experiences with multilingualism in the context of the EFL classroom. Art-based approaches such as these exploit the pedagogical benefits of multimodal texts, where relationships between image and text are central, both as objects of study and as tools for language learning (Rimmereide, 2020). Like drama, art helps learners to visualize language, thereby vitally supporting the cognitive processes of language acquisition, particularly for young learners.

Context

The effort to integrate migrant children into the primary school system, has in recent years placed the partner countries’ educational authorities and schools under considerable stress; in Greece and Italy, the need to integrate great numbers of children – especially after 2015 – was urgent and put pressure on the respective educational systems, while in Norway and Slovenia the need to integrate newcomers to the educational system has put schools under pressure, especially in areas with a high concentration of migrant children. Key features of the national frameworks for the integration of migrant children into primary education are presented below.

Greece

Based on the core principle that every child has both a right and obligation to go to school, the Greek Ministry for Education formulated a plan in 2016 for the integration of children up to the age of 15 to the

national school education system (Ziomas et al., 2017). Daily 4-hour afternoon classes (Reception Classes) on the Greek language, English, Math, and cultural activities were introduced in selected public schools, while Education Coordinators were introduced at the refugee camps to assist children in attending school.

In parallel to the processes and tools put in place by the Ministry for Education, NGOs and cultural organizations (e.g., museums) support migrant children with their integration in the formal school education through non-formal learning activities that usually take place either in the camps or in the organizations' facilities; these focus on developing the language skills of the children in Greek as well as providing them with psychosocial support.

Italy

In Italy, it is established by law that migrants present in the national territory have the right to education regardless of residence status in the same forms and ways provided for Italian citizens. Migrant children must be enrolled in the class according to their age and considering their skills, abilities, preparation, and courses attended or qualifications acquired in their country of origin. A board of teachers located at each school decides how to adapt teaching for individual students, creating a personalized education plan for each child. While the authority given to schools to define their own methods and criteria gives them the flexibility necessary to cope with the heterogeneous nature of migrant children in Italy, it results in a lack of a clear common strategy.

In addition to formal education, it is quite common for migrant children to attend other educational institutions, both public (libraries, museums, regional or local services) and private (NGOs, private educational agencies), which provide extra language classes and/or special activities.

Norway

In Norway, children who do not speak Norwegian or Sami at home have a right to individual language support in Norwegian at school. Migrant

children in Norway receive different types of schooling depending on the model chosen by the local municipality in primary and lower secondary education (Ministry of Education and Training, 2012). One of the three models below providing different levels of integration into the mainstream schools is usually adopted by municipalities for integrating migrants:

- A partly integrated model, in which migrant children are placed in a mainstream class of a school but receive part of their learning in separate groups.
- A non-integrated model in mainstream schools, where migrant children attend introductory classes based in mainstream schools, but most commonly receive all their teaching in a separate class.
- A non-integrated model in reception schools, where migrant children receive separate teaching based in a reception school for up to two years before transferring to mainstream schools.

The main criterion for transferring a migrant child to a mainstream school or a mainstream class is the student's competency level in Norwegian. This normally takes place after a year in reception school or in introductory classes at mainstream schools.

Civil society organizations offer complementary learning services and support. The Red Cross, for example, assists children with homework support during after-school hours.

Slovenia

According to the Primary School Law in Slovenia, children who are foreign citizens or stateless persons and reside in the Republic of Slovenia have the right to compulsory primary education under the same conditions as citizens of the Republic of Slovenia (European Commission, 2022). The primary school determines which class a child will join when enrolling, based on the submitted evidence of previous education, the child's age as well as their ability level in the Slovenian language. Students with migrant backgrounds may advance to the next class level

in individual subjects without having been awarded formal grades, the only exception being the ninth grade, the final year of primary school, where pupils are assessed in order to advance to upper secondary education. Overall, schools in Slovenia enjoy a great level of autonomy and flexibility in implementing these guidelines. The first two years of school for a migrant child are commonly regarded as an adjustment period.

Method

Sample

Most participants of the survey in all countries are educators working in formal primary education. The participants in Greece, Slovenia and Italy work with heterogeneous classes (a mix of migrants and non-migrants) with a small percentage working only with migrants (around 25%). The teachers who responded in Norway work in classes where migrant children are a majority (this is due to the sampling technique followed in Norway, where schools with a high percentage of migrant children were approached). Most participants in Greece and Italy are from NGOs and cultural organizations; they are working exclusively with migrant children. When it comes to specialist training for working with migrant children, the participants in Norway and Greece stand out with the largest proportion having received pre- or in-service training, and Italy and Slovenia having participants with the least training.

Data collection

For the purpose of identifying educators' attitudes, practices and needs, an online questionnaire was distributed to educators in Greece, Italy, Norway, and Slovenia in the spring of 2020. The questionnaire was based on a survey carried out with stakeholders in adult education for newly arrived migrants in a previous project. It targeted representatives of stakeholder organizations (i.e., teachers, learning facilitators, school leaders etc.) active in the field of primary education regarding 1) their experience and needs when it comes to working with migrant children, and 2) their views on cultural expressions. By using a purposeful convenient

sampling, the questionnaire was distributed to educators who belong to the partner institutions' professional networks. For example, in Norway the questionnaire was sent to the principal of a primary school, and she distributed it to relevant teachers (the ones who are involved in educating migrant children). The questionnaire was translated into the native languages in Greece, Italy, and Slovenia. In Norway, the questionnaire was used in English due to the high level of English competency amongst teachers. In total, 255 educators responded to the online questionnaire. The number of participants varied quite a lot between the countries due to the Covid19 pandemic.

The questionnaire consisted of a set of background questions (6 items) in addition to 20 closed and open-ended items. The open-ended items provided in-depth elaborations of the numerical data. The questionnaire was divided into three main parts:

1. Experience in multicultural classrooms (8 items). Example of an item from this scale: "What are the obstacles in adapting your teaching material and methods to accommodate the multilingual and multicultural diversity in the class?" The response was given on a Likert scale; it also gave the opportunity for "other" responses:

"Please rate "1-Not important at all," "2-Of some importance," "3-Of great importance"

 - Lack of support from the educational framework (policy, curriculum, management etc.)
 - Lack of time
 - Lack of relevant learning methodologies/guidelines/resources
 - Lack of relevant skills
 - Increase in workload
 - Other: _____"
2. Experience with cultural expressions A (3 items; for those who respond that they do not have any experience using cultural expressions in working with migrant children). Example of an item from this scale: "If you don't use cultural expressions in your work with multilingual and multicultural classes, to what extent do the reasons given below play a role?" Here the response was also given on

a Likert scale: “Plays a huge role / Plays a role to some extent / Plays no role

- I don’t know enough about what a cultural expression is
 - I don’t know enough about how to use cultural expressions
 - I am personally not interested in cultural expressions
 - I’m not encouraged to use them in my organization
 - I don’t have enough time and resources in my organization to use such methods
 - I don’t think they are relevant to my teaching”
3. Experience with cultural expressions B (9 items; for those who respond that they have experience using cultural expressions in working with migrant children). Example of an item from this scale: “To what extent could cultural expressions be used to support newly arrived pupils in need of extra support in their learning and development?” The response was given on a Likert scale here as well: “Rate “1-Not at all”, “2-To some extent”, “3-A great deal”.
- Language learning
 - Basic skills training
 - Mental well-being
 - Overall performance in school

The analysis was based on the topics of the items and was related to the three main parts of the questionnaire:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Part one: | Experience in multicultural classrooms |
| Categories: | Challenges and learning priorities, and support and practices |
| Part two and three: | Experience with cultural expressions A and B Categories: |
| | Experience using cultural expressions; benefits of using cultural expressions; and further education needs. |

Findings

The following sections respond to each of the two parts of the research question posed in this chapter.

Part one: Experience in multicultural classrooms

Challenges and learning priorities

Respondents in all four countries agreed that working with migrant children requires a different approach to classes of non-migrant children only. Results ranged from 97.6% in Norway to 84% in Greece. Among the respondents who disagreed with this statement in Greece, several highlighted the principle that differentiation is a necessary concern with all children regardless of background. They also pointed out that it is important to create a learning environment that favors the development of language skills for pupils with different mother tongues.

In all four countries, the issue of migrant children's language difficulties was identified as most important (Means on a three-point Likert scale: Greece $M = 2.8$, Norway $M = 2.9$, Slovenia $M = 2.9$; Italy $M = 2.6$). Concerns about children's different ability levels were highlighted as the second most important issue in Norway ($M = 2.6$) and Italy ($M = 2.5$), while 59.5% of all the respondents marked communication problems between teachers and parents as highly important. Respondents in Greece ranked communication problems between educators and children as the second most important issue ($M = 2.3$). As in Norway, communication problems with children's families were ranked as the third most important issue here. In Slovenia, communication problems between educator and children, migrant and native children within the class, as well as between teachers and parents were highlighted as the second most important issues ($M = 2.7$). The relevance of social issues such as classroom management challenges, conflicts between groups of children or bullying is ranked lowest in all four countries.

Respondents were asked to rank the learning priorities for the integration of children of migrant backgrounds to the school community. Developing teamwork skills is ranked as the top priority in Greece ($M = 3.0$), Norway ($M = 2.9$), and Italy ($M = 2.8$). In Slovenia, acquiring competence in the native language and developing verbal and non-verbal communication skills were identified as top priorities (2.9 and 2.8 respectively). In Greece, Italy, and Norway, developing verbal and non-verbal communication skills and competencies in the native language were also

ranked as highly important. In the following open-ended item, respondents in Slovenia highlighted amongst other things learning cultural and behavioral patterns of the new, local environment, while teachers in Norway emphasized learning social codes in playing and the values of the school community. The need to develop skills in English as a foreign language is ranked lowest in all countries (Slovenia $M = 2.0$; Norway $M = 2.0$; Greece $M = 2.1$; Italy $M = 2.0$).

Support and practices

The vast majority of the respondents in the four countries stated that they have to adapt their learning material and methods in order to accommodate the multicultural and multilingual character of their classes (100% in Greece; 97% in Norway and Slovenia; 90% in Italy).

In Norway, access to relevant learning material and resources stand out as the most significant factors in supporting work with migrant children ($M = 2.8$). Support from management and support from pupils' parents are seen as highly significant as well ($M = 2.8$). Eighty percent of participants highlight the support of native children as a factor of great importance ($M = 2.6$). In Greece, the vast majority recognizes the great importance of all factors proposed in the survey. In Slovenia, all factors were rated as highly important by a majority of participants, with support from management as the most important factor ($M = 2.9$), and support from children's families ($M = 2.8$) as second. In Italy, respondents highlight the importance of necessary resources ($M = 2.8$) and support from management ($M = 2.7$).

In Greece and Norway, over 70% of respondents stated that they must adapt their material and methods often or very often. In Italy and Slovenia fewer respondents reported that they did this to a great extent (45% and 42% respectively). Between 15% and 20% in these two countries say that they rarely do so. Regarding the constraints respondents face in adapting teaching material, lack of relevant learning methodologies is highlighted as the most important issue in Greece ($M = 2.7$) and Italy ($M = 2.6$). Respondents in Slovenia identified lack of support from the educational framework and increase in workload as the most important issues ($M = 2.4$).

Other factors highlighted in different countries are lack of time and lack of support from the educational framework. Notably, lack of relevant skills was among the two least highlighted constraints in all countries.

Part two: Experience with cultural expressions

Experience using cultural expressions

A majority of the respondents in all four countries have experience working with cultural expressions, although the amount varied significantly in the four countries (Greece 79%; Italy, 65%; Norway 69%; Slovenia 56%). The respondents who do not yet have experience with using cultural expressions in their work attributed this mainly to a lack of knowledge of what cultural expressions are and how to use them in a learning environment as well as the lack of time and resources in their organization to use such methods. It is also important to note that a large majority of these participants are interested in cultural expressions and think they are relevant to their work; moreover, receiving encouragement from their organization to use them is not a decisive issue (Greece $M = 1.5$; Italy $M = 1.6$; Norway $M = 1.7$; Slovenia $M = 2.4$).

The participants who had at that point experience in using cultural expressions in their work were invited to state which types of cultural expressions they have used in their work with pupils having a migrant/refugee background. In Greece, over 70% stated they had used art, photography, and design in their work. In Italy, storytelling (80%), and working with cultural heritage objects and topics (69%) were the most popular answers, while in Norway, music (89%) and literature (86%) were most widely used. In Slovenia, storytelling (68%) and music (66%) were the most popular items.

Asked to give examples of themes and activities carried out in this regard, responses included “creating collages of images, presentation of customs from the countries of origin, narration of fairy tales and stories from the homelands of students, flavors and traditional foods from the different countries represented in the class, using ethnic dances and musical instruments” as well as “international days and UNESCO and Comenius projects”.

Benefits of using cultural expressions

The respondents were invited to rank in terms of importance the different ways in which learning through cultural expressions can help migrant children. In Greece, most weight was placed on the cultural expressions' ability to help and encourage migrant children to develop their self-esteem, express difficult emotions, be active in class and increase their feeling of happiness and wellbeing ($M = 3.0$). In Italy, easing children's integration into the school community and encouraging them to be active in classes receive the highest score ($M = 2.8$). In Norway, the benefit highlighted by most participants is the potential for cultural expression to help children discover cultural similarities ($M = 2.8$). In Slovenia, the benefits highlighted the most are encouraging children to be active in classes ($M = 2.7$), supporting them to learn a new language ($M = 2.6$), helping them to develop an understanding of the new country's culture ($M = 2.6$), and easing their integration into the school community ($M = 2.5$).

Respondents were also asked whether, in their view, the use of cultural expressions could have any potential negative effects. Although the vast majority of respondents did not think so, some described possible challenges. For instance, among the respondents in Norway, two mentioned issues related to stereotyping and insensitive student reactions:

If the teacher isn't aware of and follows up on negative or condescending reactions to cultural expressions that co-students perceive as strange or funny.

Younger children often laugh at/make fun of cultural expressions from a foreign country, without thinking. This has, in my experience, led to unpleasant experiences and memories for others, and has discouraged them from talking about their own cultures at school and even resulted in them being embarrassed by their cultural backgrounds.

Respondents in Italy raised similar issues and underlined the importance of mediating between different ideas and stressing the positive values of diversity.

Respondents who saw negative effects in Slovenia (14%) perceived a danger in the over-use of cultural expressions, stating amongst other

things that “immigrant pupils involve too much of their culture in thinking and inclusion in the system... some do not even try to speak Slovene as they think we understand them in some way”.

Regarding the extent to which the cultural expressions can be used to support different fields of learning and development of migrant children, the vast majority recognize that cultural expressions can be of great use in language learning, basic skills training, mental wellbeing, and children’s overall performance in school. Asked to expand on an open-ended question, respondents added the following comments:

- “The use of cultural expressions can be used in all fields of learning and personal development, including the pupils’ integration into the school and local community” (Greece).
- “Adult learning activities involving parents” (Italy).
- “Inclusion in the social and cultural system outside schools (sport, after school activities, leisure, etc.)” (Italy).
- “Social skills, cooperation, respect, identity affirmation” (Norway).
- “Native learners learn about different cultures and will welcome newcomers with less prejudice. Newcomers will thus be accepted more easily and integrated more easily into the peer groups” (Norway).
- “Developing a positive self-image and making friends” (Slovenia).

An additional open-ended item invited respondents to state in what way they believe their own practice would benefit from the increased use of cultural expressions. Most responses focus on the cultural expressions’ ability to facilitate the learning process and offer opportunities for the development of new learning techniques and making teaching more interesting. Examples of comments made in the open-ended question are:

- “Gain new educational tools for multicultural classes and all kinds of students” (Italy).
- “Explore new kinds of educational activities” (Italy).
- “Facilitate the relationship between teacher and migrants/refugees” (Italy).

- “Adds more color to my teaching. Gives pupils shared experiences across cultural backgrounds, which in turn makes the class more unified” (Norway).
- “I will have a greater variety of materials to use in teaching. I too will learn something new about other cultures” (Norway).
- “Improved relations with students and their families” (Norway).

Further education needs

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate what form of training or material they would find more helpful in order to implement or better employ cultural expressions in their work as educators. In Norway and Slovenia, inspirational material with good examples of activities gained the highest score as being very helpful ($M = 2.8$ and $M = 2.7$ respectively). In Greece, training on how to communicate the importance of using cultural expressions ($M = 2.7$) as well as ready-made modules ($M = 2.6$) were seen as very helpful by most respondents. In Italy, basic training courses ($M = 2.8$) and modules that are easily adaptable ($M = 2.9$) were seen as most helpful. The greatest variation in this item relates to the usefulness of gaining more theoretical knowledge about cultural expressions. While a majority of respondents in Greece found this very helpful ($M = 2.5$), participants in the other countries rated this factor as much less important: in Norway ($M = 2.2$) and Italy ($M = 2.4$), less than one-third of respondents highlighted this factor, while in Slovenia just above one-third rated this very helpful ($M = 2.3$).

Respondents were invited to comment on further factors that would help them implement cultural expressions in their practice. Highlighted factors included the following:

- More time for preparation (Slovenia and Norway).
- Building a local network of educators to share experience and good practices (Italy).
- Websites and/or Facebook pages with examples and tools for educators (Italy).
- Experience sharing among entire school staff and creating common methodologies within schools (Italy).

- The need for immigrants to learn Slovene before they enter school, which would make it easier for all (Slovenia).
- Opportunities to work in smaller groups with a mentor/supervisor (Slovenia).

Discussion and implications for ELT

Concurring with research charting the needs of people with multicultural and multilingual backgrounds (García, 1991; Lahdenperä, 2014), the respondents in the present study to a great extent agree that migrant children need different types of learning activities than the ones they usually use, even though it is worth noting that a smaller number of respondents say they actually carry this out in practice (compare Oranje, 2021). The need for appropriate learning material has been highlighted in a number of studies on teachers in migrant education (e.g., Burner & Carlsen, 2017, 2019; Illman & Pietilä, 2018). Teachers of introductory classes interviewed in Norway stated that they are constantly looking for resources and textbooks to vary and adapt their teaching approaches to migrant children. Finding and using adapted material and approaches is a challenge when national educational authorities maintain the same curricula and tests for migrant children as with non-migrant children and expect the same results. Perhaps it would be wiser to adapt curricula and tests to migrant children's needs and abilities, then progress and expect more of them the longer they have lived in their new country. When not doing so, the experienced gaps between what migrant children can do and say compared with non-migrant children may be perceived as problematic. Evidence of this is found in the present study when the respondents highlight differences in the children's "language abilities" (general language abilities even though they probably mean the target language) and communication problems as challenging.

As the responses on learning priorities show, the language of the new country is, understandably, considered to be the most important language. Some open-ended comments from educators in Slovenia emphasized this point especially forcefully, stating that students should learn the language of schooling before attending school and that focusing too

much on students' cultural diversity can hinder their willingness to integrate. Similar attitudes have been described in international studies on teachers' attitudes towards migrant students and multilingualism, among other things resulting in school policies prohibiting the use of languages other than the language of schooling (De Angelis, 2011; EU, 2015).

Interestingly, the migrant children's third language, English, has low priority among the respondents. This echoes results from our own studies in Norway, which showed that EFL classes were sometimes reduced or neglected in order to spend more time on Norwegian (Burner & Carlsen, 2017, 2019). To explain this reaction, English teachers interviewed in these studies expressed a belief that migrant children learn English through the language of the host country. However, for successful integration to take place, we recommend concurrent stimuli of children's entire language repertoire – first language (mother tongue), second language (the language of the new country), and not least any other foreign languages (such as EFL) (García & Wei, 2014).

Sometimes all the demands put on educators can seem unbearable. As pointed out by the respondents in the present study, it's important for them to have a reduced workload and more support from the leadership. As evidenced in the study, working with migrant children requires different approaches and a larger toolkit. It cannot be expected of educators that they increase their competency and find new and exciting resources and methods without receiving enough support and time to do so in return.

In terms of implementing culture-based approaches, differences between stakeholders in the four countries were clearest on the topics of perceived benefits. Respondents in Greece highlighted the potential of personal development, such as strengthening self-esteem. Respondents in Norway, Italy and to a lesser extent Slovenia, emphasized pedagogical aims, such as students' integration, concurring with the research focus of Cummins et al. (2015) and Kalaja and Pitkänen-Huhta (2020). Interestingly, language acquisition aims received relatively low scores in Norway (under 50% of respondents rated this area highly important), which perhaps indicates a lack of awareness about the potential of using art-based approaches, literature and other cultural expressions as a basis

for language development. It is noteworthy in this connection that the perceived need among respondents to gain greater insight into the theoretical foundations of culture-based learning received a low score in the item related to professional development in all countries apart from Greece.

It is clear from the survey that educators in all countries see benefits for both their students and their own teaching practice. As respondents in Norway highlighted, including a variety of cultural expressions from different countries can “add color” to their teaching and help them gain greater insight into different cultures. However, it is also worth noting the possible challenges raised by focusing on students’ diverse cultural backgrounds, as these are rarely highlighted in research on this topic (but see Houghton et al., 2013). Comments from educators in Norway and Italy underline the importance of cultural sensitivity in planning, managing and choosing appropriate material to avoid stereotyping and, in the worst case, ridicule and bullying. This practical perspective points to the potential pitfalls of intercultural education. This sensitivity among educators can be related to Byram’s notion of “critical cultural awareness”, i.e., the “ability to evaluate critically and based on explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram, 1997, p. 63). Understandably, highly diverse cultural settings provide additional challenges for teachers in this respect, not least given the lack of suitable teaching material. As analyses of textbooks used in Norwegian primary schools have shown, insensitive and stereotypical portrayals of cultural groups, for example representations of indigenous cultures, are all too common in teaching material (Brown & Habegger-Conti, 2017).

Concluding remarks

This chapter has reported on approaches to migrant education in four European countries who have participated in the OpenEYE ERSMUS project and on educators’ views regarding the integration of migrant children in primary education. The findings provide a small contribution to the under-researched field concerning the ongoing work with

including migrant children's language and culture in their new education setting. On the one hand, the findings highlight a high degree of awareness among educators about the need to adapt teaching methods and material to meet the needs of migrant children. On the other hand, the results also show the need for appropriate continuing education opportunities for educators working with migrant children, especially concerning multilingualism and the learning potential of cultural expressions to aid integration and language development. This is highly relevant for the instruction of English as the children's third language. It needs to be nurtured and used both to advance their language repertoire (goal) and build bridges to their first and second language (means). Finally, one of the main positive outcomes of the project described in this chapter has been its interdisciplinary nature, above all the exchange of expertise, experiences and working methods in migrant education between different educational and cultural institutions in four distinct European countries. We call for further empirical research that explores interdisciplinary and culture-based approaches in highly diverse student groups more broadly in ELT as well as formal and informal educational contexts.

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