Exploring the role of teachers and the community in the inclusion of migrant students in the contemporary Greek school context

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ABSTRACT

The present research study seeks to examine secondary teachers' perceptions regarding migrant students' inclusion in the contemporary Greek school environment. Qualitative methodology was followed, and a semi-structured interview tool was used to collect the necessary data. Using the convenience sampling technique, eight teachers participated, and the data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings emphasize the important role of teachers, since they shape the classroom environment, provide emotional support and enhance academic learning. They seem to have a positive attitude toward migrant students' inclusion, and they do their best to facilitate academic progress and emotional well-being. They find ways to overcome language barriers by providing differentiated material, individualized teaching and, when possible, use English as lingua franca or multimedia, videos, diagrams and collaborative learning. However, despite their good intentions and initiatives, they claim that migrant students' academic and social inclusion meets a lot of obstacles and challenges. There are not enough reception classes and supporting structures, the material is inadequate, time and curriculum are pressing, and the educational process is lacking a spirit of interculturalism. Finally, the community role of migrants remains unknown, and there is a strong demand for teachers to undergo further professional development and training.

Highlights of this paper
- The current study depicts the educational reality that secondary education teachers face while working with migrant populations.
- Specifically, teachers' perceptions regarding migrant students' inclusion in the contemporary Greek school environment were examined.
- Qualitative methodology was followed, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the necessary data.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern societies have received mass movements of migrant population (Palaiologou & Karanikola, 2021) and the world has been transformed into a global place where individuals of different language, religion, origin, culture are called to coexist (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). The number of international migrants worldwide amounted to 272 million in 2019, which corresponds to 3.5% of the world population, according to the International Organization for Migration (2020 as cited in Karanikola (2024)) whereas all the contemporary western societies are characterized by "superdiversity", a term used to "emphasize the sense of addressing what is above and beyond the diversity that was previously there" (Palaiologou & Karanikola, 2021). In this vein, "new features of migration in superdiverse societies yield new challenges for cross-cultural communities of practice which are mirrored in our education systems" (Vertovec (2023) as cited in Aksay-Aksezer, Demiryontar, Dorrity, and Mescoli (2023)).

As far as the Greek context is concerned, the inflow of immigrants and refugees in the last five years has been impressive, with the number of refugees exceeding 160,000. In 2015, approximately 860,000 refugees entered Greece by land and sea (Greece United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Data Portal (see land arrivals, 2023). Nevertheless, it is not the first time that the Greek education system has undertaken the task of integrating non-Greek speaking students; the period between 1996 and 2011 presents a considerable number of presidential decrees and laws regarding the official Greek state's effort to handle diversity in formal school units by putting particular emphasis on foreign students' integration and on the reduction of dropouts (Karanikola & Pitsou, 2015). Mostly European programs are organized and implemented to support schools and the social inclusion of returnees and foreign students, educate and train teachers and education executives, inform the educational community and the local society, raise awareness, support school units with appropriate educational material, and enhance the language and communication skills of students through reception classes and remedial teaching (Karanikola & Pitsou, 2015).

However, teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach the migrant and refugee student population (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). According to the European Commission (European Commission, 2019, p. 9), migrant students "underperform and express a lower sense of well-being in school compared to native-born students in most European countries" which shows that school does not fulfill the pedagogical, inclusive role but rather reproduces inequalities. In addition, everyday practice shows that school units do not implement inclusive practices, and migrant students are expected to adapt and fit into the existing educational environment and dominant culture (Montero-Sieburth, 2023).

In light of the aforementioned, this study attempts to shed light on secondary teachers' representations regarding their role in migrant students' inclusion in the contemporary school environment and could also constitute a starting point for further qualitative and quantitative studies to examine the issue of inclusion more deeply. Specifically, the participants were asked to respond to the following research questions:

- How do you perceive the notion of the inclusion of immigrant students?
- What are the emerging challenges and difficulties of the inclusion of immigrant students?
- What is the role of teachers in the inclusion of immigrant students?
- What is the role of the community in the inclusion of immigrant students?

2. MIGRANT STUDENTS' INCLUSION AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Inclusion, as a concept, was first restricted to the field of special education (UNESCO, 1994) but then it was generalized as an umbrella term for the right of all students to receive an education that caters to their diverse needs (UNESCO, 2000). Inclusion, in terms of migrant students, is mostly seen as a flexible, dynamic, long-term process that requires and encourages the linguistic and cultural interactions which enrich individuals and societies and do not threaten them (Smythe, 2024). However, it seems that in most European countries, policymakers have followed either assimilationist policy, focusing on social unity, or integrationist policy, intending to absorb diversity within the dominant culture (Vertovec, 2019).

The role of the school in complicated contemporary societies is to ensure the inclusion of migrant students in both social and academic fields. Using the cultural repertoire and capital of students and promoting culturally responsive teaching enhances the academic performance of migrant students (Gay, 2018). School communities should also create interactive and inclusive environments in which the newly arrived migrant students can socialize with the other students (Mackey & Gass, 2015), and the school should support language learning, ensure that migrant students can follow the curriculum (Baker, 2001), fight against inequality and discrimination, and promote social justice (Bell, 1997).

In this vein, teachers, as basic actors of the school community, can play a key role in students' inclusion, as they are the ones who form the classroom atmosphere, shape the learning environment and influence students' motivation (Dunne & Gazeley, 2008) despite the fact that their work is mostly determined by the legislative and regulatory framework (Yeo & Yoo, 2022).

However, teachers often encounter obstacles in their efforts to integrate migrant pupils. To some extent, their dominant ideologies, perceptions and expectations influence their teaching practices and methods (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Papadopoulou, Palaiologou, & Karanikola, 2022). In addition, they often have lower expectations of migrants, especially newcomers (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012), and their perceptions are often related with poor academic performance or even dropouts (Montero-Sieburth, 2023). It can be easily concluded that the aforementioned perceptions cannot promote students' inclusion and academic progress. Covert racism, the rejection of migrants' backgrounds, beliefs, cultural values and worldviews, and the homogenization of education does not permit teachers to make use of students' funds of knowledge and does not promote inclusion (Montero-Sieburth, 2023).

Regarding everyday school life, teachers often feel uneasy handling diversity (Stathopoulou & Dassi, 2020) as they feel unprepared to work with a diverse school population due to a lack of training. They have no connection with the heritage cultures and languages of their students; they do not recognize bilingualism and address their students as a homogenous and monolingual group. In addition, students may have behavioral issues and difficulties with adjustment that teachers do not know how to manage, the study material may be inadequate, and teachers are untrained on migrant students' educational needs (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). Thus, teachers should be trained to apply practices and techniques such as translanguaging, adaptation, simplification or differentiation of the curriculum (Smythe, 2024; Spyridonos, Karanikola, & Palaiologou, 2024). Montero-Sieburth (2023) argues that education should move from a teacher-centered approach to community-directed ethnographic approaches in order to create space for different values, habits, beliefs and identities to provide a rich, open and inclusive learning environment.

Educational policies should also take into account that family and community can play a fundamental role in the integration of migrant students and should therefore be included in the educational process (Sacramento, 2015). The role of the community is very important for immigrant integration (Zhang, You, Pundir, & Meijering, 2023). The community can have a positive impact in either formal or informal ways; migrants and the community can interact in formal, organized settings or in informal, everyday situations (Ji, Chui, Ni, & Dong, 2020; Wen & Hanley, 2016).

Informal interaction between communities and individuals creates a sense of belonging and encourages social cohesion.

In this context, strategies that develop the participation or empowerment of the migrant community are important. A good practice could be to recruit school staff with an immigrant background so that students can identify with them and have a positive role model (Sacramento, 2015). In addition, strengthening the community itself through group meetings where immigrants can share experiences and challenges, find solutions, and express themselves, would act as a system of connection and emotional support and increase their sense of belonging (Zhang et al., 2023). A meaningful collaboration between school, family and community would prevent early school dropout, enhance academic growth and promote the social integration of migrant students (Sacramento, 2015).

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Research Aim and Research Questions

The research design comprises a literature review, theoretical framework, aim, research questions, research tools, sampling technique, data collection and analysis, researchers' reflection, and ethical considerations. In addition, it focuses on the philosophical paradigm of constructivism as individuals engage with their environment, seek understanding, and construct meaning which is subjective, to a great extent, depending on factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, educational level or political ideas (Walt, 2020).

Given that the main target is to understand and deepen our knowledge on a social phenomenon (inclusion) and analyze participants' (teachers) perspectives on their everyday social domain (school) (Haenssgen, 2019), this study seeks to examine secondary teachers' perceptions regarding migrant students' inclusion in the contemporary Greek school environment. Specifically, the participants were requested to provide answers to the following questions: How do you perceive the notion of the inclusion of immigrant students? What are the emerging challenges and difficulties of the inclusion of immigrant students? What is the role of teachers in the inclusion of immigrant students? What is the role of the community in the inclusion of immigrant students?

3.2. Methodology and Research Tool

The qualitative methodological approach was followed as it offers a deep investigation of the research topic, and it is not restricted to depicting the social reality of the 'what', but it also reflect on the 'why' and the 'how' of social phenomena (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). In addition, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the theme holistically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to analyze the participants' experiences and perceptions and gain a deeper understanding of the sociocultural characteristics of school classes (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020).

The interview questions were divided in two parts. The first part covers the demographic and professional information of the participants (age, gender, level of education, specialization, years of school experience, and years of experience with migrant students), and the second part, the main body of the interview questionnaire, consists of 20 open-ended questions. All interviews took place either in person or through Webex and Viber meetings, and each lasted approximately 20 minutes.

The present study employs a case-centered thematic analysis of the individuals' answers to questions focusing on the content. The steps followed are: (a) becoming familiar with the data by collecting the questionnaires and reading the answers more than once; (b) codifying the answers given by the participants; (c) structuring and organizing the codes into meanings; (d) reviewing the meanings and identifying which are the most common; and (e) defining the meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, the thematic analysis model did not follow a distinct linear route but a more circular, flexible and reflective route.

3.3. Research Population

The sample of the study consists of eight secondary school teachers who work in public schools in the Athens region and have different specializations and different levels of educational experience during the 2023–2024 school year. The participants were chosen through a convenience sampling process, with the main criteria of: (a) being teachers of different specializations in secondary education; (b) working in Greece; (c) having experience working with migrant students.

3.4. Validity, Reliability and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data generated, the pilot interview technique was used. Three pilot interviews were conducted to verify that the questions were understandable and clear as well as accurate and easy to answer. A thematic analysis of the pilot interviews was carried out to reveal which questions needed to be modified in terms of their relevance to the research questions and their ability to answer the questions according to the literature review. Finally, the revised version of the questionnaire was used to conduct the interviews.

Regarding ethics considerations, informed consent was obtained from all participants, the research was conducted in a manner that minimized potential harm to the participants, confidentiality was assured, and building trust between the researcher and the participants was of the utmost importance (Gay et al., 2012).

3.5. Research Findings

3.5.1. Demographic and Professional Data

Regarding the demographic and professional data, seven participants were female, and one was male, and their age ranged from 36 to 55 years. Their general teaching experience varied from 4 to 24 years. In addition, three teachers had 1–3 years of teaching experience with students belonging to a diverse cultural and linguistic background, three had 6–7 years, and two had 14–16 years. The majority had completed one master's degree, and regarding their teaching specialty, the sample consisted of one mathematician, one computer science teacher, one biologist, one theologian, and four philologists.

3.5.2. Teachers' Representations on the Inclusion of Migrant Students

Although teachers perceived the concept of inclusion from different perspectives and emphasized different aspects, the majority of the respondents argued that Greek schools do not include migrant students. T1 considers inclusion as a main political concept strongly related to the economy, stressing that the Greek state is not interested in including migrants in order to control and manage them with lower wages. She argues that integration requires stable, systematic educational policies and stresses that the philosophy of Greek education is far from integration. Greek education policies on integration are limited to superficial declarations and, in practice, there is no integration for political and economic reasons. Another teacher (T7) argued that there is a gap between theory and practice since there is a theoretical background for bilingual students, but it is not put into practice. T4 differentiated integration from inclusion and pointed out:

> "Inclusion implies adjustment and change of the school environment in order to facilitate migrant students to respond to the class and participate in the social life of the school."

While another teacher (T5) viewed inclusion from the opposite scope:

> "Inclusion implies that students are adjusted to the new school environment and have been accepted by the rest."

T6 stated that inclusion implies that students have the opportunity to live a decent life in the host country, educate themselves and find a job but without losing their cultural heritage and ethnic identity. Finally, the interviewees do not view school inclusion as being disconnected from social inclusion and believe that schools should prepare and qualify students to integrate into the host society (T2, T6, T8).

3.5.3. Challenges and Difficulties in the Inclusion of Migrant Students

One of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews was the challenges and difficulties that teachers identified in integrating migrant students. Most teachers point to the lack of support structures, such as reception classes, inclusion classes, and supplementary remedial classes (T1, T2, T5, T7, T8). There are not enough reception classes despite the volume of the migrant student population, and where they exist, they are understaffed and ineffective, as the teachers in most cases are substitute teachers who have not been employed since the beginning of the school term. Students attend formal classes without any language support, regardless of their level of language proficiency and previous schooling (T7). There is huge heterogeneity in classes consisting of pupils of different language levels, which makes the teachers' work difficult (T5). One teacher complained strongly:

"In the school where I work, there are no supporting structures – no reception classes, no special classes to promote inclusion. There are some after-school tutoring classes, but they are not useful for migrant students. The classes are extremely diverse, and the language level of the pupils is extremely low; they cannot read or write and cannot in any way meet the requirements of the formal secondary school classroom."

Teachers use the same books and school materials, which are inadequate for migrant students (T8). They suggested creating more reception classes and programmes for teaching Greek as a second language (T5 and T7) and stressed the need for individualized educational programmes to meet the needs of migrant students (T5). What teachers need is substantial training, guidance and support on how to effectively manage such heterogeneous and diverse classes (T5).

According to T4, among the factors affecting the integration of migrant students are the curriculum, teachers' beliefs and attitudes, and the parent–teacher association. He recommended that intercultural education and training programmes would be beneficial in combating stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. T1 pointed out that inclusion requires a broader shift from individualism and the individual responsibility of modern society to a more collective, inclusive culture.

Finally, integration is influenced by economic, social and cultural factors. Migrants are mainly characterized by poor social and economic statuses, face economic and social difficulties, and have to deal with traumatic experiences (T8). Migrant students, in some cases, work and do not have stable and continuous school attendance, which affects their integration (T2). However, T2 and T6 claimed that migrants themselves resist integration; they do not want to join for fear of losing their cultural identity (T2) or because of the racism and discrimination they have experienced (T6).

3.5.4. The Teacher's Role in the Inclusion of Migrant Students

Most of the teachers mentioned that the role of teachers and schools (T2) are very important, but they pointed out that teachers have no support, and everything depends on individual responsibility (T1–T5). Specifically, T1 stated that "Teachers are charged with individual responsibility, but not everything can be left to the individual initiative and responsibility of the teacher concerned."

The task of teachers in integrating migrant students is multiple, difficult and complex (T7), as they have to respond to the different needs of students, support students' learning, and at the same time provide social and

psychological support. T6 believes that psychological support is primary in relation to the learning objectives, and T5 reported that they try to communicate with migrant students during break time to make them feel welcome and accepted. Almost all of them focused on the teacher's role of providing emotional support for migrant students, although T1 criticized this concept, stating that it is wrong to limit the role of teachers to love, affection, sympathy and support, as these are all part of philanthropy, whereas what is needed is governmental concern and specific, organized educational policy. T4 emphasized that:

"Teachers have to support migrant students but also sensitize and motivate the rest of the students in order to include their migrant classmates." Among the roles of teachers, according to this respondent, is to be more open, inclusive and receptive towards the "other," "different" and vulnerable population, as there is a tendency toward excellence and superiority that excludes and rejects anything different. Moreover, it is important for teachers to cooperate with each other and have a common attitude toward migrant students in order to support them (T5).

Regarding their expectations, most teachers (T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8) admitted that they have fewer or different expectations of migrant students in terms of their learning progress, although they acknowledge that this is not right, but they have no choice. They take into account the starting point and language limitations of migrant students, and sometimes their expectations are limited to oral comprehension (T7). Finally, two of the respondents (T1 and T2) stated that they have the same expectations of their migrant and Greek students.

3.5.5. Community's Role in the Inclusion of Migrant Students

Most of the respondents reported that there is no cooperation between school and community. There are some relations only when migrant students belong to an organized structure, e.g., they attend a Bulgarian or Ukrainian school (T1) or live in a camp (T2) at the same time. According to T2, who had teaching experience in both formal schools and an intercultural school, there was no cooperation between the formal high school and the migrant community compared to the intercultural school, which had a close relationship with the community. T7 pointed out that it is difficult to have a relationship with the community, and this can only take place when there are specific, organized frameworks, e.g., associations or clubs. However, almost all the participants admitted that the community plays an important role for migrants and that cooperation between school and community would positively affect the integration of migrant students (T1, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8). Migrants can develop a sense of belonging and feel accepted and safe through community relations. At the same time, the community helps to maintain identity, since migrants retain traditions, customs and beliefs, as is the case with Greek communities abroad (T7). In addition, the community can support migrants, especially newcomers, in practical matters that facilitate their adaptation to the new country; it can provide guidance, mentoring, information and even organize host language courses (T6).

The school's cooperation with the community could build relationships of trust and create a safe, open and friendly environment conducive to the integration of migrant pupils (T8). Two interviewees (T2 and T4) were skeptical about the positive role of the community, highlighting the risk of ghettoization, as this tendency often exists in vulnerable populations (T4). The teacher argued that:

"Immigrant communities can play a negative role as they reproduce stereotypes or the cultural status of their host countries and, as a consequence, students do not easily integrate into the school or refuse to integrate, choosing to be closely associated only with members of their community and not interacting with Greeks."

4. DISCUSSION

Diversity is one of the main characteristics of contemporary school environments. As the participants mentioned, classes consist of students of different ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, levels of knowledge and difficulties, which is

in line with research that highlights the diverse reality of Greek schools (Bachtsiavanou, Karanikola, & Palaiologou, 2023). According to the respondents, this diversity makes teaching difficult and challenging (Palaiologou & Karanikola, 2021; Panagiotopoulos, Christopoulou, & Karanikola, 2022), and scholars argue that the education system often seems incapable of responding to these profound changes (Moore, 2014). Our findings suggest that while there are legal provisions and declarations regarding the inclusion of immigrant students, the Greek education system cannot adequately support their inclusion.

In practice, our findings reinforce the results of other studies that highlight that the education and integration of migrants faces many obstacles: reception areas and classrooms are understaffed, or the staff consists of substitute teachers who are untrained in intercultural education (Kantzou, Manoli, Mouti, & Papadopoulou, 2017), there are no organized educational materials that meet the needs of migrant students (Anagnostopoulos, Triantafyllou, Xylouris, Bakatsellos, & Giannakopoulos, 2016), and integration is reduced to superficial tolerance and acceptance without deep knowledge of the principles of intercultural education (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012).

The most common challenge that teachers face in educating migrant students is the language barrier, which affects their academic progress as well as their social integration within the school. Students are unable to follow the curriculum and as a result they have low academic achievements (Falzon, Pisani, & Cauchi, 2012) but are also marginalized, not participating in school life and are in some ways 'invisible' (Montero-Sieburth, 2023).

Another challenge is the different levels of knowledge of the students. There is a huge disparity between migrant pupils in terms of knowledge and previous schooling; some have no previous schooling or no continuous and stable schooling, and others have insufficient knowledge of their first language. In addition to the educational challenges of responding to such a diverse student population, students have to learn how to behave and follow the rules of a new school system (Antoniadou, Palaiologou, & Karanikola, 2022) as they may exhibit delinquent behavior. Regarding educational materials, teachers argue that the current curriculum and textbooks are inappropriate and inadequate for migrant students (Pečenković & Delić, 2023). Thus, in order to support students, teachers create their own materials (Antoniadou et al., 2022), but it is still difficult to implement them effectively in practice, as there is a lack of time and pressure from the curriculum. They are also testing differentiated teaching, stressing the need for individualized educational programmes that address the needs of migrants and use technology, pictures, video, multimodality (Kress, 2000; OECD, 2018; van Werven, Coelen, Jansen, & Hofman, 2023) and teamwork to foster positive relationships among peers.

It is worth noting that the findings highlight the multiple roles of teachers; they are not only responsible for imparting knowledge and working with educational materials but also providing emotional support, encouraging migrant students and creating an open, welcoming and accepting classroom environment. This multidimensional role of teachers has also been highlighted by other scholars (e.g., Arvaniti (2018)). On the one hand, they want to include students and do their best in terms of learning and emotional support, but on the other hand they do not know how to manage the diversity of their students. They feel alone without tools and resources to meet these demanding challenges. They claim that they need support, practical guidance and training on how to manage such heterogeneous and diverse classes (Cobb & Couch, 2018; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2022; Parmigiani, Jones, Kunnari, & Nicchia, 2022).

Another interesting finding that emerged from the interviews is that teachers' views and perceptions largely determine their educational principles, approaches and practices, which is in line with the argument of Papadopoulou et al. (2022) that teachers' ideologies shape their perceptions and consequently influence their educational practices and language policies in the classroom. Teachers should also be free from prejudice and racism, respect students' backgrounds, and work with the cultural and linguistic resources that students bring (Antoniadou et al., 2022; Hanna, 2023). According to the present study's findings, most teachers reported that the community can play an important

role in the integration of migrant students for both psychosocial and practical reasons. Firstly, through a close relationship with the community, migrants can develop a sense of belonging and feel accepted and less marginalized. Moreover, the results show that the community helps migrants to maintain their cultural identity, customs and traditions. At the same time, community members can provide newly arrived migrants with information on practical issues and integration procedures in the host country (Bunar, 2023; Gkaintartzi, Kompiadou, Tsokalidou, Tsioumis, & Petrogiannis, 2020; Ji et al., 2020; Wen & Hanley, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023), and they could engage in their children's schooling by making choices about the school setting, monitoring their children's learning attainments, and supplementing what the school offers (Reddick, 2024).

However, despite the important role of communities, the participants stated that there is no collaboration between the school and immigrant communities, which is consistent with Sacramento (2015), who found that communities remain invisible to schools, and this has a negative impact on the inclusion of immigrant students. The only exception cited was the case of intercultural schools and organized structures. In this case, communication and engagement with the immigrant community was more feasible, as organized structures, immigrant organizations and a specific, formal network facilitated communication and participation.

5. CONCLUSION

This research study explored teachers' representations of the inclusion of migrant students in secondary education as they can portray educational reality in a clear and explicit way. This is crucial to help realize the inadequacies, difficulties and challenges of the current education system with regard to migrant students, but at the same time drive changes that will create a more effective and inclusive education system.

Modern schools are characterized by diversity and thus have to adopt a different ideological framework in order to respond to these societal changes. They need to abandon traditional teacher-centered, monolingual and monocultural policies and shift toward multilingual, intercultural principles and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2014) where students can exist with their cultural, linguistic repertoire and multiple identities. The majority of teachers are positive toward students' mother tongues and cultural heritage, but they admit that they lack the tools, resources and support to turn this positive attitude into educational practice. It seems that intercultural training is needed to equip teachers with knowledge and strategies that can be applied when working with migrant student populations. Apart from teacher training, deeper, profound, systemic changes are needed; reception classes should be expanded, permanent trained staff should be employed, and the curriculum and material should change according to intercultural principles. Making these changes would reflect the ideological orientation of the education system. The inadequacies of Greek schools regarding migrant students' education presented in this research may be attributed to general malfunctions and disorganized school structures but may also reflect the dominant ideology model where the 'other' and the 'different' have no space and should be absorbed. However, education has to fulfil several roles in addition to providing academic knowledge, including facilitating the inclusion of migrant students, preparing them to live in diverse societies, building strong identities, and cultivating solidarity and equality (Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2011). In this light, educational policies should adopt and reflect inclusive intercultural principles and see school settings as complex social systems that are open to society, families and communities.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Despite the efforts made to conduct a reliable and valid survey, it has limitations, which include the geographical area where it took place and the limited sample size. Regarding future exploration, a larger sample of different professions and greater experience would give a more thorough and in-depth analysis of the research topic. Finally,

the semi-structured interviews could be empowered by other tools such as observations, and it would be valuable if interviews from principals, parents or community members were included as they would provide richer data regarding the factors that affect the inclusion of migrant students.

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