Title School practices to involve parents in the integration of Newly Arrived Migrant Students

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Abstract

Although education remains a key factor in receiving and integrating Newly Arrived Migrant Students (NAMS), local school practices differ among countries. This is particularly true regarding practices that schools adopt to involve parents of NAMS in the integration of their children into the school system. Literature in the field suggests that the more involved parents are in school life, the more successful integration is. However, school practices to involve parents are under-represented in this literature. In an attempt to fill this gap, this chapter investigates school practices regarding NAMS parental involvement within the specific national contexts. These contexts are representative of a large multinational European project on receiving Newly Arrived Migrant Students (NAMS) in European countries such as Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Turkey. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological system model, the results imply that the mesosystem between the school and the family is clearly influenced by the exosystem, through top level policies. The findings suggest that there are many initiatives and effective practices at both top level and local level initiatives, which implies adopting a whole education approach perspective on each site. It appears that these initiatives and practices meet with varying degrees of success in inclusion of NAMS. The findings also suggest that the issue is larger than parental involvement; school practices and top level policies may need to give further consideration to dimensions such as wider school family relationships and the role of community.

Keywords: Newly Arrived Migrant Students, migrants' integration, parents, school programs, education policy

Introduction

This chapter results from the work of TRIBES, WG2 which focuses on the policies and practices put in place for schools to deal with integration of immigrant students. The research centres

specifically on the mesosystem aspect of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979; 2005) as it explores the interaction between two significant factors of a child's microsystem; the family and the school. This interaction is considerably crucial for NAMS and their families as they settle in a new community. Such interactions are not unreceptive to the exosystem, in this case top-level national or regional policies. Different contexts trigger specific top-level policies in terms of education and migration; they also offer a range of experience in receiving NAMS, and policy range (Meehan et al, 2021). However, practices on the ground at local school level, remain relatively unexplored in the literature. Bronfenbrenner's theory highlights complex interactions at different levels; with a focus on both top level (exosystem) and local or school level (microsystem) initiatives in integration of NAMS, this chapter draws on a Whole Education Approach, which has recently been highlighted by O'Higgins Norman et al (2023) to have a potential to facilitate integration of NAMS. Based on the interconnection among schools, wider community and top level initiatives, the Whole Education Approach is framed around 9 core components: (1) strong political leadership, (2) safe psychological and physical school and classroom environments, (3) training and supporting for school staff, (4) curriculum, learning and teaching to promote caring school climates, (5) reporting mechanisms with support and referral services, (6) collaboration and partnerships between the education sector and a wide range of partners, (7) involvement of all stakeholders in the school community, including parents, (8) student empowerment and participation, and (9) evidence: monitoring of school bullying and evaluation of responses (O'Higgins Norman et al., 2023). We analyze data from six case study schools, one in each of the following countries: Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Turkey. The choice indicates a geographical distribution with different experiences of migration. For a detailed description of the six case study schools see Appendix A, Table 1.

Whole Education Approach Component (7): involvement of all stakeholders in the school community, including parents.

The aim of the chapter is to analyze what practices the schools in the participating countries (PCs) adopt to promote the involvement of the parents of migrants in order to facilitate the integration of their children. Parents are crucial to the integration of students, and schools have a very important role in the involvement of parents in the integration process (Baquedano-López, 2021; Singh, 2020; Laho, 2019; Kraft, 2016, Simopoulos & Magos, 2020). Indeed, the European Commission framework of educational support of migrants highlights the importance of parental involvement for integration of migrant children (EC, 2013). According to Sheldon & Epstein et al. (2002), effective family-school cooperation enhances the learning environment and students' behavior, decreasing the incidence of bullying. The chapter addresses the following question: What practices do schools adopt to involve parents in the integration of Newly Arrived Migrant Students (NAMS)? By NAMS, we mean 'first generation migrant children and young people who, as they enter the formal education system of the host country, may qualify for additional support measures to assist their integration into schools (e.g., preparatory classes, additional classes in the language of schooling, etc.) (Eurydice, 2019, p.169). Findings suggest that there are many initiatives and effective practices at local level. However, some i'nitiatives and practices may not be addressing effectively the needs of parents in supporting their children regarding inclusion and education. Seeking support from other parents and increased digitalized communication, which refer to the chronosystem in Bronfenbrenners' framework, may however be beneficial. The chapter also discusses how wider school-family relationships and the

community may play an important role for inclusion of migrant children in the school and society, and that this should be given further consideration in top level policy.

Parents in the Integration Process

Scholars emphasize the need to integrate students from migrant families into national education systems to promote both language and other subject learning, and social cohesion (Baquedano-López, 2021; Singh, 2020; Laho, 2019; Kraft, 2016, Simopoulos & Magos, 2020). In addition, school-based educational programs become important as migrant students' experiences in this first environment influence their participation and involvement in other social institutions of the host country (Chan, 2020; Simopoulos & Magos, 2020). Successful integration of newly arrived migrant students (NAMS) depends on the collaboration of the school and migrant families and the involvement of parents in the integration processes (European Commission, 2013). However, research by Pacini-Ketchabaw (2007) found that some migrant parents neither collaborate nor communicate with the teachers of their children. Other migrant parents lack trust and believe that their opinion will not matter anyway (Banks, 2014). Various cultural, social, and economic factors influence the frequency and type of parental involvement (Singh, 2020). The language barrier is an obvious obstacle preventing the parents of NAMS from cooperating and creating a partnership with schools. In addition, persons of refugee origin who have experienced various traumatic events need psychological and emotional support in order to feel safe and communicate effectively with teachers of their children (Mitchell& Ouko, 2012).

On the other hand, the spread of new technologies has intensified communication between school and family (Patrikakou, 2016). Parents, teachers, and students increasingly use digital means to communicate. Thompson et al (2015) found that parents and teachers mostly communicate via e-mail; in the second place is face-to-face communication. Communication through social media and by text messaging is increasing, as parents are becoming more receptive to communication with social media and text messaging. Learning Management Systems (LMS) technologies such as Schoology, Google Classroom, Canvas, and Moodle allow schools to provide information generally, while simultaneously interacting with specific families on an individual basis (Laho, 2019). However, Kraft (2016) asserts that school-home communication is "rare and unsystematic in most schools" (p. 15).

Singh (2020) notes that parental involvement should be understood in terms of complex social and cultural aspects. Migrant families bring to the school new perspectives, different experiences, and expectations. Their involvement can reshape the norms of parental involvement and provide new insights into school-parent relationships, thus, the efforts to increase migrant parent involvement are very significant (Singh, 2020). When delving into school practices to involve parents in the integration of NAMS, it is important to discuss what parents expect from that involvement. Singh's (2020) findings showed that

> the definitions of family involvement, as proposed by the mothers, are: help for homework; communications with teachers; encouraging children academically; encouraging children emotionally; meeting other parents to stay informed; reading about pedagogy and child psychology; school visits; taking part in parents' associations, taking part in decision-making processes. (p. 64)

The main obstacles delineated by parents were: 'lack of communication', 'too official parent-teacher collaboration', 'being less culturally involved', 'language proficiency', 'lack of

knowledge about the school system' (Singh, 2020, p. 64). In a recent Norwegian study investigating schools' involvement of immigrant parents regarding bullying cases it was, however, found that the immigrant parents were more satisfied with the communication with school, but not with other parents, compared with non-immigrant parents (Fandrem & Støen, 2022). This may be due to lack of knowledge about the school system in the new country; parents may see their role as different in different cultures (Antony-Newman, 2018). Moreover, immigrant parents may also feel the need for more cooperation, as they are maybe more vulnerable because of the acculturation process (Berry, 1997; Fandrem & Støen, 2022)

Cooperation between migrant families, schools, and the local community is another important factor in increasing the inclusion of NAMS (Alkaher, & Gan, 2020; Housel, 2020). Conversely, participation in schools can assist parents of NAMS in their general interactions with the public, local community, business, or non-governmental sectors (Alkaher, & Gan, 2020). School partnerships with different actors in the local community provides students and their parents with authentic learning experiences related to real social and cultural issues. Such experiences increase integration (Alkaher, & Gan, 2020) and decrease the incidence of bullying. The primary goal of the family-school-community partnership is to promote each student's success and achievement in school (Housel, 2020). According to Epstein (2010), such a partnership can help new students feel supported and motivated to learn well, thus acting as a bullying preventive measure.

Six Schools, Six Countries
This chapter employs a qualitative multi-site case study design to explore practices for involving parents in the integration of NAMS in six schools across six countries including Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Turkey. This qualitative design enables the researchers to better understand how individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2009). In addition, adopting a multi-site case study design provides an international and comparative insight into the issue addressed (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995).

Purposive sampling was used in alignment with the larger project. The primary criterion was including schools with experience of NAMS. In each country was selected one school from our contacts, and through the school leader, who indicated the teacher and the parent. After that, were scheduled the interviews with the three participants. The participants included one school leader, one teacher who teaches NAMS, and a NAMS parent from each site with a total of 18 participants from six different countries. For a list of anonymized participant designations, see Table 2 in the Appendix.

First, we collected data on each school and the context in which it was working. Every school filled out an information form about the location, type and context of the school, the courses of study it offers, characteristics of the school population including demographics, student/teacher ratio, number and percentage of migrant students as well as their origin and socio-economic index, and school policies and practices regarding NAMS.

We then collected data through semi-structured interviews with participants at each site. Having developed common interview forms in advance through a consultative process, each researcher used the same common interview forms on their sites. In a similar vein, each researcher obtained the institutional approval and individual consent forms from participants on each site. The

interviews were conducted in Spring and Fall 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic context, some interviews were held online. Where parents were not proficient enough in the host language to participate comfortably in interviews, interpreters were hired.

Audio recorded data from the interviews were transferred to a common set of datasheets. Since a looser initial framework for data analysis in multiple case research can cause impracticality in cross-case comparisons, data analysis started with initial themes oriented on the research focus and moved gradually to a more inductive analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The overall approach to data analysis was inductive thematic analysis (Braun, & Clarke, 2006).

Like the task division in data collection, each researcher started the analysis of the interview data obtained from their sites by individually using first-cycle coding under the initial framework that was based on research focus and questions. After these preliminary analyses were circulated to each researcher, an online consolidation meeting was held to consolidate these preliminary codes for emerging themes. Researchers agreed on four emerging themes as 'school practices to involve families', 'centralized programs and school initiatives', 'communication with parents', and 'school partnerships'. A second-cycle coding under these emerging themes was employed by each researcher on the data set obtained on their sites and shared their findings with the research team. During the final analysis, some emerging themes appeared to somehow overlap, and thus researchers decided to modify these themes by reducing them into three as 'centralized programs and school initiatives', 'school practices to communicate with parents', and 'school partnerships'.

What practices do schools adopt to involve parents of NAMS in the integration of their children?

The findings regarding the question of school practices to involve parents of NAMS in the integration of their children reflect three main themes: school practices result from centralized programs and school initiatives; school practices often focus on communication with parents; and the importance of partnerships in engaging parents of NAMS. The abbreviations in Table 2 in the Appendix are used when presenting the results from the different countries:

From centralized programs to school initiatives

Centralized programs are those that emerge from top level policy in the host country. For instance, top level policy in Portugal attempts to address the issue of NAMS parental engagement through the top-level Intercultural School Seal program. The school leader explains:

> We invest in the REEI (Network of schools for Intercultural Education) principles, in the community integration, family integration, in the curricula, and the normal activities of the school, for example lunches from each country, cultural fairs, from each nationality. This is the richness of the diversity. (PT_L)

The programs in the six Participating Schools (PSs) reflect the different contexts and challenges each of the PCs is facing. The particularity of the migration flow within the receiving country is

part of the context. For instance, the high percentage of refugees and asylum seekers coming to Turkey from Syria is an example of how the particularity of migration flow shapes centralized programs: PIKTES (Promoting integration of Syrian kids into the Turkish education system) is the top-level program established to address the influx of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The dominance of return migration in Romania is another example of how context shapes policy and practice. The Romanian school does not have any specific program or practices for supporting migrant children or their parents. This is because most NAMS and their families are returnees, are familiar with the socio-cultural context and do not have a language barrier.

However, regardless of context and specific challenges, one common theme is the efforts by schools to involve the parents and families of NAMS in the life of the school. All PSs seem very conscious of the importance of involvement of parents of NAMS, and make efforts, sometimes considerable efforts, in this regard. These efforts meet with varying degrees of success. School leaders and teachers in the Turkish school claim that notwithstanding the efforts of the school, it is very difficult to engage the parents of NAMS. They attribute this to various reasons such as family structures and commitments: The teacher from Turkey describes how "*They look reserved…they inform us they could not visit the school due to their heavy workload and responsibilities*" (TR_T). A finding from Ireland indicates that the parents of NAMS may limit their involvement in schools because, being in a new country, they lack a support network or because of economic circumstances. For instance, parents may not be able to attend school meetings because of childminding difficulties or shift/evening work obligations.

On the other hand, the realities of these refugee families/ economic migrants seem quite different from the context of some migrants in Malta and Lithuania. The teacher from Lithuania states that "*Parents of (NAMS) students always come to school events, participate in activities with children*" (LT_T). Whereas some migrant families in the Maltese context are financially stable, even sending "*a cab to pick up the children from school if they are sick*" (MT_L), there are cases where children reach the Maltese shores by boat through irregular migration. The data suggest that the level of parental engagement with the school depends to some extent on the circumstances of the family.

The Irish case study provides an example of a successful school initiative to engage NAMS parents. Some years ago, the school decided to run non-language dependent classes for parents in a deliberate attempt to foil the language barrier and 'draw in' parents of NAMS (IR_L). The emphasis in these classes (for instance cooking/crafts) is social and community, rather than information giving/formal learning. Both teacher and parent (IR_T and IR_P) referred to the importance of these gatherings where the conversation and information sharing among NAMS parents emerges organically. This was confirmed by the parent who says that rather than a formal integration strategy, the school demonstrates '*a culture of inclusion . . . to do with the ethos of the school.*" (IR_P). Outreach to parents is well developed in this school, with teachers voluntarily giving of their time and expertise to extracurricular activities and intercultural events with the specific intention of integrating all students and their families. However, such school led initiatives are dependent on the limited resources of the school, including the goodwill and generosity of teachers. They are also dependent on the ability of parents to attend.

Other PSs take more ad hoc initiatives to engage with the parents of NAMS. These are still in the exploratory stage reflecting the dynamic nature of migration in all six countries. For instance,

MT_L reports that the school would like to do more and is seeking to improve communication with NAMS parents, for example through informal meetings and social gatherings. Respondents from all PSs agree that school organized events/programs give the opportunity to parents of NAMS to socialize: *"those activities like Portuguese nonmaternal language for the parents and other activities for the parents help them to get together with other parents"* (PT_P). Such encounters create a sense of community and a support network.

Apart from top-level initiatives and school-based initiatives, it is clear that individual educators take personal initiatives to support NAMS and their families to settle into the new education system, with varying degrees of success The teacher from Malta explains how she creates situations and encourages the students during the lesson to talk about their culture and where possible to talk their language. She feels that *these small initiatives help. They are proud of their identity and look forward to speaking about their culture"* (MT_T). The Turkish teacher explained that she *"changed the seating arrangement in such a way that migrant students from different cultural backgrounds were to sit together* (TR_T). She tried to mix them and gave them *some tasks to be done interculturally. It was really challenging. Different identities and languages can cause chaos all of a sudden* (TR_T).

School Practices for Communicating with Parents

Top level supports for communicating with parents

Top level support for communicating with parents/families of NAMS is available in all countries, in varied and context bound ways. For instance, in Ireland, the position of English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher is a government funded initiative; these teachers have an important role in communication with NAMS and their families (IR_L, IR_T, IR_P). The EAL teacher explains how *I have developed a questionnaire for parents (reflecting GDPR protocol) to develop a support file for each EAL student . . . Some migrant students come to us even at 15 years of age who are illiterate.* (IR_T). In the Irish case study, at least one EAL teacher speaks a number of languages, which has been very helpful to the school in its integration of migrants. Additionally, the school qualified for a government funded Home School Community Liaison teacher, who liaises between these three sectors with the aim of bridging the communication gap and integrating all students into the education system. In Portugal, the reference teacher occupies a similar role, acting as the designated person who communicates with family, school and students.

Lithuania also referenced top level support for communicating with parents of NAMS, for instance the government led TAMO diary initiative. This electronic diary acts as a *school management system and communication tool between teachers, parents and students, which is currently actively used by 879 educational institutions in Lithuania and more than 530,000 regular users* (LT_L).

In Turkey, enactment of top-level initiatives is coordinated by the centralized governmental authorities and their representatives in local cities. The Provincial Directorate of Migration and the elected head of the local district, (i.e., the mukhtar) have a role in communicating with migrant parents when their children present an absenteeism issue. The school leader noted that they contacted the Provincial Directorate of Migration to get these students' addresses and other

contact details preceding home visits with mukhtars. Such home visits to migrant families are also highlighted in the PIKTES project - one of the top-level initiatives of integrating migrant students in the country.

Malta is an exception in this regard, with no data emerging that related to top level support. Help comes at the local level: in the case study school, an assistant head of the Maltese school is tasked with outreach to families of NAMS in extraordinary circumstances. This is not a dedicated position determined by top level policy but rather a school-based initiative. If required, community liaison officers are called to school for specific students.

School led channels of communication

Across all six countries, general communication with NAMS parents follows the same system as with parents of local children i.e., by means of circulars and social media, telephone calls and emails, online platform (apps) and websites. Ireland was alone in citing Twitter and Instagram as additional communication tools. As particular issues arise, communication normally occurs by telephone/in-person meetings.

All PSs organize periodic meetings with parents (parent-teacher meetings/parents' days). This formal structure is usually on an annual (e.g. Ireland)/biannual (e.g. Malta) basis. Discussions on these occasions generally have an academic focus. MT talked of parents of migrant students eagerly attending parents' days. They closely follow the teachers' comments, ask for feedback on the child's performance, and often request academic resources such as extra hand-outs and book lists. One Maltese parent commented that she found Parents' Day very useful. The Lithuanian data echoed this: *Parents ... come to school events and participate in activities with children.* (LT_T).

A noteworthy practice in Romania is that of representatives from the parents' committee mediating communication when needed. Another interesting departure was the role of the psychologist in Lithuania who monthly communicates with the students' parents and provides the necessary assistance. In general, the data indicate that parents closely follow the academic progression of their children but not necessarily their social integration.

School-home communication is sometimes limited to one-way notifications of what the school expects from home. However, both Malta and Ireland report NAMS parents sending emails to teachers when their children have problems with the homework and teachers welcoming and responding positively to this. MT_P also talked of informal communication between the teachers and the families through the students, and the willingness of teachers to support NAMS and their families in this regard.

In all countries, NAMS parents, as other parents can participate in the School Council/Board of Governor elections. However, in some PSs, the parents interviewed were not aware of this possibility (e.g., Malta). The Lithuanian, Turkish and Irish school leaders reported that although they try their best to encourage migrant families to take part in school governance structures such as parent councils, the uptake is regrettably low. IR_L reported ongoing conversations around the challenges of language, language as a source of social division, and the pressure on children to act as translators. This also emerged from the Maltese data, with reports of the students acting as translators for their parents at Parents' Day meetings.

Little evidence emerged of approaches to communicate specifically with NAMS parents. On the other hand, some PSs have adopted practices such as intentional relationship building with the parents of NAMS at the point of enrolment (Malta, Ireland). In both cases, when a NAMS enrolls, the parents meet a designated member of staff who ascertains the specific needs of the child within the framework of top-level policies. This includes entitlement to top-level support (usually language/academic). As specific issues emerge, that member of staff continues to communicate with parents, for instance in matters related to educational progression, behavior, class dynamics and/or social integration.

Whereas school leaders in Ireland, Portugal, Romania and Malta generally feel that communication with parents and children works adequately and that parents are generally responsive and involved in school activities, the opposite was true of the Turkish data set. Here, the school leader and the teacher explicitly note that they were not able to integrate the parents in school activities adequately despite their repeated efforts. Schools even have difficulties contacting family members. The teacher explains that some NAMS end up living with grandparents as a result of the situation in Syria. Evidence showed a variation in how NAMS parents considered the adequacy of school communication. In Ireland and Portugal, parents seemed happy with the level and nature of school communication. On the other hand, the Maltese parent felt that she could not communicate her cultural practices such as birthday celebrations to the school and made her feel like an outsider. I *think they are not open to understand our culture. I know we are in [their] country, it's not mine. But for us, some actions make sense for us, and are important for us* (MT_P).

A final finding to emerge under this theme was that of inter-parental communication. In four PSs (Ireland, Portugal, Lithuania and Malta), parents are getting information and clarification from local parents and from other NAMS parents. Parents get in touch with other parents either through personal interaction, for instance at the school gates, or through social media. PT_P reported how mothers meet in front of the school, and parents in Lithuania, Malta and Portugal have formed Facebook groups: *I know that some parents of migrant students have set up Facebook groups themselves and communicate with each other* (LT_T). Developed examples came from both Malta and Portugal, where parents of NAMS are included in WhatsApp groups with local parents. NAMS parents really appreciate this type of communication, generated by parents for parents, and in some cases want more: *I would like to have more communication between the parents, not only in the school but outside the school* (PT_P). MT_P also voiced appreciation for her network of Maltese parents, from whom she seeks clarifications about the system. Interestingly, the data from the migrant parent in the Turkish context are not parallel with this finding. TR_P asserts that his family does not want to get in touch other migrants from their home country and that the parent encourages his children to build friendships with Turkish students:

> *We do not interact with Iraqis much because we cannot get on well with them. We are in good relationship with our Turkish neighbors and friends. This keeps us away from troubles and helps us improve our Turkish language skills. (*TR_P)

School partnerships to engage parents of NAMS

> *Partnerships between schools and the local community*

Schools across the six countries reported a number of partnerships with local community organizations. For instance, the Romanian school has national and international and local partnerships. RO_L reported how the school has good connections with public local authorities and with local NGOs, and is part of several international projects such as intercultural exchanges with partner schools from Hungary, which *"increase the openness of the students to cultural diversity"* (RO_L). These partnerships and projects are not specifically devoted to NAMS support, but to inclusive education in general. Ireland and Portugal have several partnerships with local community groups and NGOs. For instance, in Ireland, the TEAL project[1] run by a local third level college resulted in a lot more communication between NAMS-receiving schools and with the families of NAMS in the area. IR_L considers this very beneficial 'particularly for the teachers in the school because they can learn from other teachers who have similar experiences. They share ideas and strategies for the classroom (IR_L).*" Voluntary groups at local level are 'very helpful"* (IR_L), for instance, local group Doras Luimní - an independent non-profit organization, working to support and promote the human rights of NAMS and their families in the region. This group provides practical help, for instance English classes for parents and translation services to the school.

Successful Lithuanian partnerships are primarily with NGOs, particularly Caritas Center in Kaunas, which promotes *socio-cultural integration, takes care of migrant families' free time, and provides legal and psychological counselling* (LT_T). Caritas is a Catholic NGO which *mediates in communication with state and public institutions, in finding housing and work, or in seeking opportunities for learning and development. They especially help the parents of our students* (LT_T). Although appreciated, participants across the board were unclear about the long term sustainability and success of these partnerships and the ability to keep up with changing circumstances. The changing circumstances and the varied needs of the families of NAMS present significant difficulties and attempts to involve the local community and NGOs can be challenging.

In Turkey, the Provincial Center for Counseling and Research, is a unit that serves the Provincial Directorate of Ministry of National Education. The partnership between this center and the school displays well-grounded partnership with a local community. The school leader elaborates on this partnership.

> *We do not have a school counselling unit in our school. Last year we tried to handle the issues with class teacher guidance. When the issues increased to critical levels, we contacted and got help from the provincial center for counselling and research. We made the students get counselling from the consultants in the center.* (TR_L).

On the other hand, the school leader reports a lack of cooperation with local universities. There are three state universities in the city and two of them have both psychology and psychological counselling departments. At one point they attempted to collaborate on integration of immigrants, yet it was interrupted due to the pandemic outbreak. The school leader made the lack of cooperation on this issue explicit in the interview.

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[1] TEAL (TED EAL), an initiative of the TED (Transforming Education through Dialogue) Project, through the Curriculum Development Unit of a local university.

Partnerships between schools and top level agencies

All six countries referenced the importance of top level supports from governmental departments, for instance The National Agency for Education (Agency) in Lithuania and the Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (TEIP) group of schools in Portugal. Maltese partnerships exist primarily with top level educational services or agencies within the system such as the Migrant's Learners Unit, Anti-Bullying Section, and Child-Safety Services and national sports associations. The Irish school described the government funded positions of Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) coordinator and English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers, as hugely helpful. *The HSCL coordinator is critical here, working with community groups, families and other schools both at primary and second level. Part of their role is 'to advocate for all students and their families and be that key link* (IR_L). In many cases however, these supports target inclusion in general, rather than specific supports for parents of NAMS.

At the same time, critique of the inadequacy of these provisions emerged from the data. For instance, IR_L described how the school has to make its case for EAL hours (with the government) every year, which is very time consuming, and there is no allowance/help from the top to help students and their families deal with the transition to the Irish education system (IR_L, IR_T). Data from other PSs support this finding.

Different contexts, different challenges

The selected countries reflect six different migration and educational contexts. However, the literature provides scant evidence on how such diverse settings deal with the challenge of engaging with parents of NAMS at school level. This chapter is an attempt to address the gap: the schools acting as case studies in this chapter reflect the specific national migration contexts, creating the premise for a solid analysis.

The first finding reflects how schools employ top level policies to help them engage with parents of NAMS. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological system model (1979; 2005) we can say that the mesosystem between the school and the family is clearly influenced by the exosystem, through top level policies. Our results show that the actions of the six PSs reflect the different contexts and challenges of these PCs. For instance, the Romanian context where most NAMS parents are returnees may explain both the lack of top-level policy and school practices in this regard. In this case the top level factors in the exosystem are determined by the sociohistorical conditions of the chronosystem.

Since the demands of NAMS and their families are evolving and migration patterns are becoming more dynamic, the learning and provision curves for professionals working in schools are proving to be challenging. School leaders emphasize the need for an adaptive and responsive approach, in order to better adjust to NAMS' characteristics and needs. At the same time, many teachers and schools are motivated to revise their approaches for the benefit of migrant students. However, despite centralized programs, and school and personal initiatives, our data suggest that all schools have difficulty in involving NAMS parents in the life of the school. In line with the literature (Singh, 2020), this is related to different factors including socio-economic and cultural characteristics, particularly language proficiency obstacles. Although Banks (2014) emphasizes that some immigrant parents lack trust and believe that their opinion will not matter, our findings

indicate, in line with recent findings from Støen and Fandrem (2022), that the opposite is true. Teachers and school leaders in the PSs are open to considering and implementing alternative strategies that would engage parents of NAMS in order to help overcome NAMS' educational hurdles. This is particularly true around academic achievement, which remains a primary concern for parents of immigrants (Singh, 2020).

In general, schools recognize the importance of communicating with parents as crucial to the inclusion of NAMS, as reflected by our results. Across the six countries, general communication with NAMS parents follows the same system as with parents of local children i.e., by means of circulars and social media, telephone calls and emails, online platform (apps) and websites. In accordance with Thompson et al. (2015) communication with all parents, including parents of NAMS is becoming more digitized. At the same time, parents are opening communication channels with other parents, both local and NAMS. Our results show that this practice is both beneficial and valued by them, as the exchanges are not restricted to school issues, but extend to more general aspects.

This result may indicate that the communication provided by the school might not be clear enough for parents of NAMS. The fact that they seek support from other parents could reflect for example a language barrier, other acculturative challenges (Berry, 1997) and/or a level of discomfort in communicating with school (Singh, 2020). For instance, the data from Malta suggest that regular school correspondence (mostly by email and circulars) might not be the most efficient mode of communication with NAMS parents who are not familiar with the education system and what are considered the norms for local families. This shows how cultural differences may hinder, or influence, involvement (Anthony-Newman, 2018). On the other hand, NAMS parents seeking information from other parents may indicate that sharing school related information is a way of integrating socially, and/or that schools struggle with insufficient personnel/time to deal with all parental queries.

Reflections

The novelty of this chapter is the exploration of school practices regarding parental involvement in the NAMS integration process within specific national contexts. Our reflections on the findings suggest that:

- Top level programs and school initiatives reflect the different contexts and challenges in each of the participating countries (PCs). Apart from top-level programs and school-based initiatives, it is clear that some educators take personal initiatives to support NAMS through outreach to their parents.
- Schools adopt a variety of methods to communicate with parents and families of NAMS. In general communication follows regular channels of communication common to all parents and is not specific to those of NAMS. However, parents of NAMS are connecting and communicating with other parents (both NAMS and local) sometimes in person but particularly through social media (e.g., Facebook/ WhatsApp).
Schools across the six countries report a number of partnerships with local community organizations/charities/NGOs with the aim of involving parents of NAMS in the integration of their children. These partnerships and projects are often not specific to NAMS, but to inclusive education in general. However, they seem organized on an ad hoc basis, rather than systematized, and there is a lot of variation between countries.

The arrival of NAMS in schools creates a heterogeneous social milieu that challenges the status quo of traditional practices. The case studies from the six PCs indicate that the schools and the teachers are driven to review their practices for the wellbeing of immigrant students and their families. However, this adds pressure to schools, many of which are already stretched in terms of finance and personnel. The pressures around continuously adapting and trying to make resources stretch add to what is already a complex learning/provision curve. The circumstances in schools are changing continuously due to the dynamic migration flows and the arising needs of NAMS and their families. The school leaders and teachers in the case-studies are receptive to considering and adopting other practices that would further engage parents of NAMS in the education and integration of their children.

However, little evidence emerged of approaches to engage specifically with NAMS parents. This reflects a key message from the European Commission (2013) study on an integrated approach to NAMS' inclusion: 'policy makers should pay more attention to the overall structure of the education system and its effects on NAMS' inclusion rather than the individual support measures targeted at NAMS' (p. 5). The dynamics between the different factors that determine the interaction between NAMS families and schools are an example of the complexities of the interactions between the different factors and systems of Bronferbrenner's ecological theory, irrespective of the different contexts as evident in the six case studies. The Whole Education Approach which is promoted by O'Higgins Norman et al. (2023) seems to have a considerable potential to facilitate the NAMS integration policies with presenting its core components and highlighting interconnectedness among top level, local level and school level initiatives. A second key message is that identification of NAMS as a specific target group is not a prerequisite for having a good and comprehensive integration policy. Universal and loosely targeted education mechanisms aimed at supporting 'all underachieving or immigrant students' are often more beneficial for NAMS. However, our findings indicate that face-to-face gatherings/classes specific to NAMS, whether language or social in focus, are much appreciated by them. In the same line, data suggest that partnerships with local community groups and NGOs or religious charities are really helpful; schools, as well as parents, are very appreciative of these. Again, these partnerships are not specifically devoted to NAMS but to inclusive education in general, with a lot of variation between PSs.

The chapter suggests that parental involvement in school impacts NAMS' integration in various ways. Where integration and inclusion are successful, bullying is less likely to occur. Parental involvement has a demonstrated effect on bullying, by increasing the students' awareness and reducing exposure to being discriminated against (Kolbert et al., 2014; Hale et al., 2017). Efficient strategies to deal with NAMS bullying at school strongly emphasize the importance of integration and inclusion, and the value of communication with parents and school programs to engage with parents in this regard (Eurydice, 2019). Schools must be places where both students and their parents feel free to express themselves and feel heard. Therefore, in the case of NAMS, the parental involvement at school in its various forms, as identified in this research, should be considered as a needed mediation factor for the success of anti-bullying interventions. In a dynamic migration environment, impacted by recent war crises and new waves (and types) of NAMS such as Ukrainian families and pupils, these results may be relevant for policy makers and for school practitioners.

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Appendix A

Table 1. Details of the case study schools

General description of the school		Countries
School location	periphery of the capital/ suburban	Portugal, Malta
	City center / more than 850,000 inhabitants	Turkiye, Lithuania
	small city, approx 100,000 inhabitants	Ireland, Romania
Type of School	Public school	All countries (In Ireland Public school with Catholic ethos)
Course of study	general secondary education including lower and upper secondary public school context	Portugal. Turkiye, Ireland, Malta, Romania
	general education program: preschool education (kindergarten); pre-primary; primary education (grades 1-4); basic education program for grades 5 -10; secondary education (gymnasium classes) programs.	Lithuania
Network	Belongs to a group of schools	Portugal, Lithuania, Malta
	No network	Turkey, Romania
	Part of a lay Catholic trust body with second level schools all over Ireland.	Ireland
Student/teacher ratio	19/1	Ireland
	14/1	Romania
	11/1	Portugal
	10/1	Turkiye
	8/1	Lithuania
	6/1	Malta
Number of migrant students	347	Portugal
	343	Malta

	120	Ireland
	94	Lithuania
	54	Turkiye
	20	Romania
Percentage of migrant students overall the whole school population	44%	Malta
	42%	Turkiye
	40%	Ireland
	16,7%	Portugal
	8%	Lithuania
	5%	Romania
General socio-economic index of the students and socio-economic index of migrant students	Low and medium-low. All social classes are represented.	Portugal, Turkiye, Malta, Ireland
	Most students belong to the middle class.	Romania
	General socio-economic index of the students is good.	Lithuania
Place of origin of migrant students	30 countries, most from Portuguese speaking African countries, Brazil, East Europe.	Portugal
	Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Iran.	Turkiye
	15 countries, especially Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Poland, Lithuania, Brazil and Ukraine.	Ireland
	Multiethnic school, being the only school with a dedicated line of study in Hungarian. There are ¾ Hungarian speaking classes/students, ¼ Romanian speaking classes. In a smaller share there are Roma students, enrolled in classes for both Romanian or Hungarian speakers. NAMS are Romanian returnees from various European countries (Sweden, Spain, Italy).	Romania
	Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine, Chechnya, Russia, Israel, Philippines, Venezuela, Iran, Mexico. Students may use different languages: Lithuanian, Russian and English.	Lithuania
	The place of origin of the students varies greatly with 45 different countries. Dominant from Libya, but also EU member states, Africa, Asia, North and Latin America.	Malta
ratio of migrant students and local students' ratio per class pre established?	No pre-established ratio.	Portugal, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Romania
	The school policy is on integrating these students with local ones so a balanced ratio of migrant student and	Turkiye

	local student is considered while assigning students into classes.	
Does the school have additional financial means to manage diversity?	No financial means for diversity management	Portugal, Romania, Malta
	Yes, as part of the PICTES project, a national project of the ministry of education funded by the EU, the school gets extra funds for the integration of migrant students.	Turkiye
	Yes, primarily for disadvantaged students. It is what's known as a DEIS Band 1 school.	Ireland
	Yes, the state allocates 30 percent for migrants. The school gives 5 percent to teachers who work with migrant students. The money is also given for the additional lessons of Lithuanian language for migrant students.	Lithuania

Table 2. Anonymized designation of participants

Country	Role of participant	Anonymized designation
Ireland	Leader	IR_L
	Teacher	IR_T
	Parent	IR_P
Malta	Leader	MT_L
	Teacher	MT_T
	Parent	MT_P
Lithuania	Leader	LT_L
	Teacher	LT_T
	Parent	LT_P
Portugal	Leader	PT_L
	Teacher	PT_T
	Parent	PT_P
Romania	Leader	RO_L
	Teacher	RO_T
	Parent	RO_P
Turkiye	Leader	TR_L
	Teacher	TR_T
	Parent	TR_P