Editorial

Understanding School Success of Migrant Students: An International Perspective

Elena Makarova ^{1,*} and Wassilis Kassis ^{2,*} ¹ Institute for Educational Sciences, University of Basel, 4132 Muttensz, Switzerland² Institute for Research & Development, School of Education, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, 5210 Windisch, Switzerland

* Correspondence: elena.makarova@unibas.ch (E.M.); wassilis.kassis@fhnw.ch (W.K.)

Despite existing educational inequalities, the literature provides hardly any empirically validated insights into the school success pathways of migrants.

One of the main challenges migrant students experience while adjusting to the mainstream culture of the country they have moved to is acculturation. The term acculturation refers to behavioral and attitudinal changes among individuals of different cultural heritage, that occur under conditions of direct and continuous intercultural contact. The most common conceptualization of acculturation is bi-dimensional and suggests that it is possible to maintain or avoid the culture of the host society and simultaneously retain or lose one's culture of origin [1]. The most recent research on acculturation, in the context of school, stresses the necessity to understand and to assess acculturation as a reciprocal process among native and migrant youths, where the school itself functions as an agent of acculturation [2]. The outcomes of acculturation in the school context can be measured in terms of students' sociocultural and psychological adjustment. There is empirical evidence that adjustment to the new teaching and learning environment, as well as to the new academic culture, is a highly challenging process for migrant students [3,4] and that its success depends on resources which serve as protective factors [5,6]. It is therefore important to consider the risk and resource factors that can affect the process of acculturation and its outcomes, when discussing the academic success or failure of migrant students.

Deliberation about how to address the specific risk and resource factors for school success in students' lives often starts a conversation about resilience, but is still rare. We endorse Masten's [7] definition of resilience, as follows: "The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development" (p. 10). Related to this, the OECD [8] pointed out that migrant students' school success should become one of the central pillars of educational policies internationally. However, the stability of school resilience in the developmental pathways of migrant students under various risk factors is almost entirely unknown.

Therefore, the aim of this book is to empirically identify the school success pathways of migrants for policy actions in schools and communities, in order to tackle barriers to migrant students' school success. These resilience pathways highlight differences in individual and social risks and identify protective factors for young migrants, to help them overcome obstacles linked to discrimination and low educational outcomes. It presents international empirical research comparing and explaining school success factors for migrant students in various countries, namely Germany, Greece, Russia, and Switzerland.

Zuzanna M. Preusche and Kerstin Göbel analyzed the role that minority students' (bi-) cultural identity plays in successful school adjustment. Their study used survey data from 457 seventh-grade students in North-Rhine Westphalian schools who, according to their self-identification, belong to at least one culture in addition to the German one. The findings of the study highlight that minority students who develop a strong bicultural identity are more likely to successfully adjust to their school culture, as they indicate significantly

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higher emotional, cognitive, and behavioral school engagement than their peers with a weaker bicultural identity, even when gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and cultural capital are controlled for.

Nanine Lilla, Sebastian Thürer, Wim Nieuwenboom and Marianne Schüpbach empirically investigated the meaning of students' acculturation orientations for their academic self-concept. Based on data from the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), comparing outcomes among migrant and non-migrant students, the acculturation profiles of students were related to students' general and domain-specific academic self-concept. This study suggests that migrant students' academic self-concept is influenced by their acculturation orientations and that this relation can serve as a protective factor and a source of resilience for migrant students.

Chulpan Gromova, Rezeda Khairutdinova, Dina Birman and Aydar Kalimullin present the results of a qualitative study, conducted in multicultural schools in the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia). Based on interview data collected among elementary school teachers who work with migrant children, this study focused on teachers' educational practices aimed at facilitating the school adjustment of migrant children. The results of the study show how teachers adapt their pedagogical practices in order to foster the psychological adjustment of migrant students. The study suggests that teachers' adaptive teaching and communication strategies could serve as resource factors for the successful school adjustment of migrant students, especially when institutionalized support is lacking.

Christos Govaris, Wassilis Kassis, Dimitris Sakatzis, Jasmin-Olga Sarafidou and Raia Chouvati adopt the theoretical approach of recognitive justice and the degree of students' recognitive experiences, with regard to empathy, respect, and social esteem, focused on educational inequalities in the multicultural school and the factors that affect their appearance and reproduction in a sample of secondary school students in Greece. By applying an intersectional approach, the authors were able to identify that migrant students, and students from families with a low level of education, experienced a significantly lower degree of recognition. Additionally, differing levels of recognition among teachers explained a large amount of the variability in academic achievement and self-esteem.

Albert Dueggeli, Maria Kassis and Wassilis Kassis analyzed the school success of young male migrants in Switzerland, particularly those who are at a higher risk of not completing upper secondary education and do not have the same opportunities to put their educational resources to use in existing educational contexts. By applying the resilience concept of navigation and negotiation as proposed by Ungar [9], the results show, firstly, that inter-individual processes of navigation and negotiation differ depending on the specific people involved and their objectives. Secondly, different forms of the development of navigation and negotiation are seen within a single individual. Thirdly, the importance of institutional flexibility becomes apparent when adolescents experience successful processes of navigation or negotiation.

Overall, the studies published in this book demonstrate that the school resilience of migrant students can be manifested in different ways, related to the dynamics of the acculturation process, gender, socioeconomic status, and individual differences. Because of this complex conceptual framework, it is important to take international comparisons into account, when including students' responses about processes towards school success and educational outcomes. Moreover, it became clear when analysing the data on migrant students' school success that we need to address the interplay of structural and procedural risk and protective factors, for a better understanding of resilience pathways. School resilience is better understood if protective and risk factors are modelled not only on individual factors, but also on contextual factors, such as those at the family and class, or school levels. If we continue to structure our analysis of migrant students' protective and risk factors only in terms of individual traits and characteristics, we also continue to run the risk of victim blaming, that is, turning back to the individual migrant student as the sole source of explanation for why resilience is not achieved.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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