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# Editorial: Engaging communities in education to foster social inclusion and cultural diversity

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## Editorial on the Research Topic

### Engaging communities in education to foster social inclusion and cultural diversity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The US-focused article (Naiditch) offers an insightful blueprint that presents so-called "push and pull" strategies for integrating immigrant families into the community. Push strategies refer to those developed by the school to offer families resources and connect them to an array of services that assist immigrants. Pull

strategies focus on bringing families from the community to the school building and creating mechanisms to include them in curricular and extra-curricular activities to strengthen their sense of belonging and identity.

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

## Author contributions

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

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## Conflict of interest

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

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