



Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity

CREID BRIEFING 46

Teaching that matters for migrant
students (TEAMS)

TEAMS Project Policy Briefing

July 2023

The TEAMS project studied levers of integration of students from migrant backgrounds in schools in Scotland, Finland and Sweden.

□ Key Findings

Education policies and migrant support systems differ from universalist approaches in Scotland to more targeted strategies in Finland, and mixed provision in Sweden.

Migrant students and families face unfamiliar systems and may not be aware of their entitlements and availability of the various professional services.

Teachers and other school staff exercise professional agency to help students navigate the institutions working within and around the procedures that they perceive as enablers or barriers for migrant integration.

In all schools there are examples of teachers using specialist support to **incorporate knowledge of students' experiences and cultural heritage in teaching.**

Staff with migrant backgrounds are seen by colleagues as a valuable resource for supporting migrant students, e.g. due to shared language or deeper knowledge of cultural experiences.

Staff in some schools have developed ways of working together within and beyond departments that allow them to routinely discuss and address matters of student diversity.

□ Context

In Scotland newly arrived migrant students are **immersed directly in mainstream educational provision**, supported by English as an Additional Language services (EAL), where available.

The **welcome packs** exist at different levels, e.g. the one produced by the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS) contains most of the relevant information, with translations.

In Scotland, **professional agency is encouraged in policy** (e.g. the GTC Scotland Professional Standards for Teachers refer to teacher agency and collaboration to engage children and their families), **but can be restrained in practice.**

A safe, **collegial environment is needed to discuss/ question practices and allow for different perspectives** to be voiced and heard taken in all aspects of school life, e.g. food, languages, stories.

Generally, the diversity of the **teaching workforce does not reflect the diversity of the student populations** in schools and societies.

Migrant integration within wider efforts to develop practices that are generally more inclusive for everyone **accept diversity as a normal, common feature of schools today.**

□ Implication

Decrease in 'specialist' staff, including EAL, implies the need to **use specialist support as a resource for developing capacity of all staff to support migrant children.**

Schools need to ensure that they **make migrant students and their families aware of their entitlements** through this or other material or other approaches developed locally.

Teachers **need to be empowered to recognise and exchange the vast amount of tacit knowledge** in the school communities. They need time and support for collaboration, e.g. guidance/pastoral staff supported by management to engage with migrant families.

This has profound implications for teacher development, and **creating conditions for collaborative and inclusive school practices**, e.g. to promote equality and diversity in schools.

Teacher recruitment and education providers could consider how to **encourage individuals from different backgrounds to enter the teaching profession and to apply for vacancies.**

Conditions that enable teachers to develop **inclusive forms of collaboration include time for such collaboration built into the daily school routines.**

The TEAMS project studied levers of integration of students from migrant backgrounds in schools in Scotland, Finland and Sweden.

More about the project...

The TEAMS project (Teaching that Matters for Migrant Students) studied how teachers, schools and education systems facilitate migrant integration in schools including conditions that support the migrant students' academic success, socialisation and the development of their 'sense of belonging' in the school communities.

The project has been conducted in seven secondary schools across three countries (three in Scotland and two each in Sweden and Finland) from September 2020 until March 2023 by teams of researchers at the University of Edinburgh, Stockholm University and the universities of Jyväskylä and Turku.

The TEAMS project focused on professional relationships and collaboration that facilitates migrant integration in schools. The research mapped school social networks to examine to whom professionals reach out to in schools in order to support children from a migrant background, and how their interactions facilitate inclusive practices. The 'voices' of the migrant students in their schools were included to understand how staff in schools support them.

A mixed methods approach was used to collect data for the project. Data from surveys, online logs, interviews and observations across all the schools were analysed by a multinational research team and outcomes from the project include knowledge exchange activities, publications and reports.

The schools in this project differed in terms of numbers of migrant children in the school, their socio-economic location (whether affluent or deprived) and the institutional structures depending on the country in which the school is located. The study demonstrates the challenges faced by migrant students in the current receiving systems as well as ways of working within these systems that can help students better navigate their way through an unfamiliar school curriculum in an unfamiliar country. This was the case across social-economic contexts and institutional structures within different countries.

Further information

For more information and resources visit the project website:
migrant-education.net

For knowledge exchange opportunities, please email:
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