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Education as an element of integration policy – comparative analysis

KEYWORDS

education, immigrant children, integration, integration policy

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to present and evaluate the main activities that support the education of immigrant children in Poland and in selected European countries as well as to compare the models of integration in the field of the education of immigrant children in respective countries. The article uses the following methods: critical analysis of the literature and deductive reasoning techniques. The paper consists of three parts. The first part presents the role of education in integration policy and the objectives of the main models of integration in the area of the education of immigrant children. The second part presents legal regulations and key data relevant to immigrant children in Polish schools. The third part of the article presents integration models in European countries and compares the models of integration in Poland and in other European countries. The research hypothesis is the following: education of immigrant children as an important aspect of the policy of integration is characterised by diversified activities in respective European countries.

Foreword

One of the global phenomena in the contemporary world is migration. In the face of globalisation, migration is becoming an important element of the functioning of modern states and societies. Migration processes create multiple opportunities, but also threats for countries. These challenges are mainly associated with the functioning of the education system and the labour market. States focus their integration policy measures specifically on education. The purpose of the article is to present and evaluate the main strategies and solutions supporting the education of immigrant children in Poland and selected European countries and to compare the models of integration in the area of immigrant children education in the respective countries. The spatial spectrum of the analysis covers 11 European states: Poland, Austria, Cyprus, France, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg

and Italy. The respective states were selected in such a way as to compare the Polish integration policy in the area of education with the integration policies of the states analysed in a study performed for the European Commission. The article uses the following qualitative methods: deductive reasoning and critical analysis of literature and legal regulations issued by national and international organisations. The article discusses the following research thesis: education of immigrant children as a vital element of the integration policy of states differs between respective European States in terms of activities and initiatives implemented. In order to verify the validity of the assumed research objective, three research hypotheses were subjected to falsification. First, it was assumed that education was one of the key areas of the integration policy of states. Secondly, it was presumed that education systems and related activities in the area of teaching immigrant children differ between the respective European countries. It was also assumed that Polish integration policy in the area of education is mainly characterised by pro-integration activities.

The role of education in integration policies

Migration as a global phenomenon is a challenge for many countries across the world. According to the United Nations, the number of international migrants grew by more than 77 million (55%) between 1999 and 2013, and in 2015 reached 244 million people (De Paola, Brunello, 2016: 10-11; United Nations, 2016: 1, 6). Speaking about migration globally, absolute data are not sufficient. Also, the dynamics is important, and in the period from 2010 to 2015, the dynamics represented 1.9%, which means that it dropped significantly compared to the 3% in the period from 2005 to 2010 (United Nations, 2016: 1, 6). Although the dynamics of global migration flows dropped in recent years, the challenges associated with human migration still exist and various events, especially of political nature, render them more and more acute.

Economic, political, social and cultural factors accompanying migration processes have a major impact on the migration policies of states, understood as a catalogue of instruments created and implemented by a given state, or the components thereof. In the context of migration policies, immigrant integration is very important, especially in the area of education. Thus, a major challenge for Poland as well as many other states is to develop an effective integration policy that would promote social and economic cohesion (Kaczmarczyk, Okólski, 2008: 12, 134-135). The idea of integration policy is to prevent social exclusion of foreigners and

strengthen their future labour market position. Thus, integration policy is understood as a set of instruments that help foreigners integrate in their new environment. An important element of integration policy is education policy targeted at integrating foreigners in the area of education (Szelewa, 2015: 8).

Education of foreigners is embedded in the context of ethnical, religious and cultural differences. The origin of immigrants may have a major impact on the degree of their integration. Thus, it is important to provide for the diversity of cultures and teaching traditions on various levels of education. Education in the context of the integration policy is also associated with specific learning needs and various barriers encountered by foreign students in the process of adapting to new conditions. The major problems faced by foreign students in the process of adapting to new conditions include: the language barrier, traumatic experiences, culture shock, no motivation to learn and “false friends” (words that have similar sound or that sound shocking or surprising for foreigners) (Gzyra, 2015: 35-36). Integration within the education system should also focus on the specific needs of immigrant students, such as, in particular: cognitive and mental needs as well as healthcare and material support (Mirośław, 2015: 18). The fact that education plays a special role in the integration policy makes the states undertake various measures and initiatives targeted at foreign students.

In the literature, two main models of school reception and teaching of immigrant children are described: integration and separation models. The main difference between the two models is the level of immigrants’ knowledge of the host country. According to the integration model, immigrant children are obliged to participate in normal classes. In this model, language classes are extra to regular classes. On the other hand, in the separation model, immigrant children learn in separate groups until their knowledge of the language of the host country enables them to join the compulsory classes (Todorovska-Sokolovska, 2010: 7; Lachowicz, 2015: 3). On the one hand, separation systems (separate classes) make it possible to adjust the curriculum to the individual needs of immigrant students. On the other hand, however, they make it difficult for them to integrate with other, non-immigrant children.

One of the main problems of immigrant children in the integration process is to learn the language of the host country. The respective countries have applied different solutions to this problem. However, there are three main models for assisting foreign students in learning the language of instruction in the respective countries. The first model involves immediate inclusion of students in education and individual language assistance for each immigrant student (direct integration model). The second model focuses on providing students with assistance individ-

ually or in special groups (assistance may last between a few weeks and even two school years), while at the same time students participate in regular classes with all the other students. There is also the third, so-called comprehensive model, which combines the first and the second models. In it, immigrant students are placed in “transition classes” (for a few weeks or months, but in any case no longer than for 1 school year). Foreign children may also participate in classes that do not require advanced knowledge of the language (e.g. physical education) (Płatos, 2010: 1).

Support for immigrant children education in Poland

In order to better understand the scale of immigrant children in Poland, it is worth noting the number of foreign children in Polish educational institutions. As on 30 September 2011, there were 5,238 non-Polish students in Polish educational institutions. Most foreign students attended primary schools (2,876 persons – appr. 55%), and the others were either preschoolers (1,285 persons – appr. 24%) or junior high school students (1,104 persons – appr. 21%) (Unicef, 2013: 58). The number of foreign students in Polish educational institutions is not high, which, however, does not mean that there are no problems in this area. The main problems foreign students face in Polish schools include: the fact that schools are not prepared to receive foreign students, problems with determining the right stage of education for individual students, lack of financial support and trained staff, the fact that some immigrants do not understand that education is obligatory and negative attitude of other students towards immigrants (Szelewa, 2015: 33-35). Foreign students in Polish schools create many new obligations and challenges for educational institutions. They include: learning to understand the needs of immigrant children, preventing conflicts, teaching tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions, and providing teachers with relevant competencies. It is also important to monitor the situation of foreign students in schools (Błeszyńska, 2010: 113-114).

New obligations and challenges require certain solutions that will help achieve the goals and objectives of integrating a migrant community with the host community. Among the most important postulates and assumptions of the integration policy (in the context of the education policy) with respect to persons seeking refugee status are to provide foreign children with access to school and preschool education (outside reception facilities) and professional language teaching. Also, the main guidelines for teaching foreign children covered by international protection have been determined. These guidelines include: promoting the employment of assistant teachers for foreign children, offering pedagogical training for assistant

teachers, preparing (at university level) teachers to work with foreign children, promoting close cooperation between subject teachers and the teachers of Polish as a foreign language, giving grades for extra classes to increase student motivation to learn (also for Polish as a foreign language classes), establishing special schools for children with major educational gaps, introducing intensive, 6-week Polish language courses for children (before they start attending regular classes), offering the option of learning Polish instead of regular classes (for 1 or 2 months), if a child does not know Polish at all, and numerous organisational arrangements such as obliging school principals to employ assistant teachers, if the number of foreign children reaches a certain threshold and changing the method of remunerating assistant teachers (subsidies instead of grants, identifying subsidy funds) (Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2013: 5, 15-16). In order to fulfil the articulated objectives and guidelines, it is necessary to implement relevant solutions and measures promoting the integration of a migrant community with the host community. The main instruments containing solutions for the education of foreign children in Poland are: the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej), the Education System Act of 7 September 1991 (Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty) and the Act on Amending the Education System Act and Certain Other Acts of 20 February 2015 (Ustawa z dnia 20 lutego 2015 r. o zmianie ustawy o systemie oświaty oraz niektórych innych ustaw).

Pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej), (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 1997, no. 78, item 483, Article 70.1), every child has the right to education and until the age of 18, education is compulsory. Polish regulations also determine that non-Polish nationals who are subject to compulsory education are entitled to education and care at: public pre-schools, other public or non-public (if an institution is subsidised (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 1997, no. 78, item 483, Article 90.1c), forms of preschool education, public primary schools, junior high schools, art education institutions and public art schools until the age of 18 years or until graduation from a junior high school on the same terms and conditions as Polish nationals. Pursuant to the Education System Act of 7 September 1991 (Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty) (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 1991, no. 95, item 425, Article 94a.1, 94a.1a, 94a.4 and 94a.4a) non-Polish nationals who are subject to compulsory education or compulsory learning are also entitled, cost free, to attend extra Polish language lessons (if they do not know it or if their knowledge of Polish is not sufficient) as well as to the assistance of a person speaking the immigrant's heritage language, and that person may be employed by the school principal as assistant teacher (no longer than for 12 months). The main task of a person employed as an assistant

teacher is to assist the student in learning and overcoming problems associated with language and cultural differences (Todorovska-Sokolovska, 2010: 10). A person employed as an assistant teacher should know the language and culture of foreigners but does not need to be a teacher or even have pedagogical training, instead it is important that he or she is communicative and outgoing and has conflict solving skills. The duties of a person employed as an assistant teacher are, among other things: to provide emotional support for students of foreign origin, to nurture their cultural identity, to take various actions helping students integrate in the new environment, to be in contact with parents and help them participate in the class and school community, to organise multicultural activities for all students in the school, to attend teacher meetings and to teach the heritage language of foreign students (Lachowicz, 2015: 10-11; Gzyra, 2015: 31). According to the Project of the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy entitled "*Polish Foreigner Integration Policy – Objectives and Guidelines*" (Polska polityka integracji cudzoziemców – założenia i wytyczne), there are a handful of assistant teachers in Poland and most of them are employed by non-government organisations (Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, 2013: 15-16).

The provisions of the new Regulation of the Polish Minister of National Education also introduced many arrangements facilitating the teaching of foreign students, such as school reception and orientation interview in a foreign language, culture and mother tongue courses in small groups (organised by a foreign diplomatic or consular office or a cultural and educational association) and remedial classes to cover differences in the curricula. Overall, there may be no more than five hours a week of extra classes (Polish language and remedial classes). Other arrangements (valid as of the school year 2015/2016) were also introduced pursuant to the Act on Amending the Education System Act and Certain Other Acts of 20 February 2015 (Ustawa z dnia 20 lutego 2015 r. o zmianie ustawy o systemie oświaty oraz niektórych innych ustaw) (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 2015, item 357, Article 44zzq.7 and 44zzq.9) for students who take external exams but their limited knowledge of Polish does not allow them to understand written text. The first provides for adjusting to the educational needs and psychophysical abilities of a student the form and conditions of the first part of the primary school graduation test or the first or second part of the junior high school graduation examination. The second concerns adjusting to the educational needs and psychophysical abilities of a student the conditions of the secondary school graduation examination. The consent of the teacher board is required to apply these arrangements for a particular student. Polish educational institutions also undertake numerous practical measures to promote the integration of students of foreign origin (see table 1).

Table 1. Selected practical solutions promoting foreigner integration in Polish schools
(source: Lachowicz, 2015: 8-10, 12-13; Gzyra, 2015: 32).

Practical solutions	Objectives
- Receive students of foreign origin in different institutions;	- Enable working with a child individually; - Prevent conflicts among foreigners;
- A form systematising information about a student during school reception interview;	- Collect student's personal information required for school records;
- Translate into the migrant's mother tongue the school's rules of conduct, translate and deliver a guidebook concerning the Polish education system;	- Support the adaptation of foreign students, prevent discrimination, develop mutual understanding and respect;
- Organise workshops and other pro-cultural activities;	- Develop tolerance and intercultural competencies among students;
- Organise general meetings for Polish and foreign parents;	- Discuss the key issues of integration;
- Equality education practices (e.g. organising a foreign language day or competitions about other cultures, etc.).	- Develop the ability to respect human differences.

Another crucial factor in the teaching of foreign children is the goodwill of teachers, parents and local communities. The initiatives they undertake to support immigrant education may significantly contribute to the integration process. Thus, it is important to develop the competencies of the teaching personnel. In Poland, teachers and school principals who have immigrant children in their schools may use the assistance of the Contact Point and the Team for the Teaching of foreign children, which offer various possibilities for improving competencies related to working with foreign students¹.

To sum up, pursuant to two major documents governing the education of foreign children, in particular the Education System Act of 7 September 1991 (Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 1991, no. 95, item 425, Article 94a), an integration model exists in Poland. An integral part of the integration model in Poland are solutions implemented to help learn Polish as the language of instruction at the respective educational institutions. In Poland, foreign children attend classes together with other students and have extra Polish language courses after compulsory classes. Thus, it can be concluded that the second model best reflects the method of teaching the language of the host country in Poland, which consists in enabling children to learn Polish in dedicated groups or individually.

¹ Warszawskie Centrum Innowacji Edukacyjno-Społecznych i Szkoleń, Instytucja Edukacyjna m. st. Warszawy, *Zespół ds. nauczania dzieci cudzoziemskich*, <https://www.wcies.edu.pl/punkt-kontaktowy-oraz-zespol-ds-nauczania-dzieci-cudzoziemskich>, (accessed on: 18.03.2016).

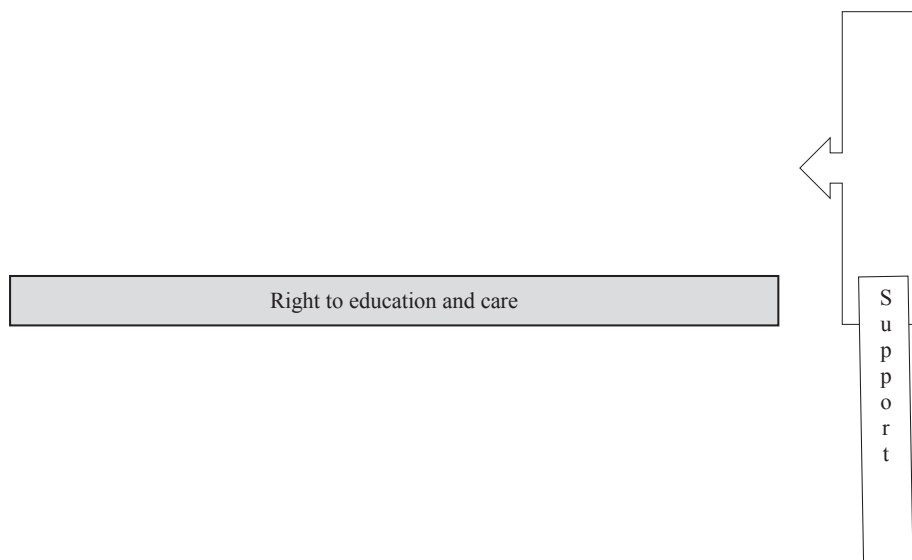


Fig. 1. Integration model of school reception and teaching of students who are not Polish nationals (source: Education System Act of 7 September 1991 (Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty) (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 1991, no. 95, item 425, Article 94a; Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 1997, no. 78, item 483, Article 70.1), Act on Amending the Education System Act and Certain Other Acts of 20 February 2015 (Ustawa z dnia 20 lutego 2015 r. o zmianie ustawy o systemie oświaty oraz niektórych innych ustaw) (Journal of Laws /Dz. U./ of 2015, item 357)

Based on the objectives of the integration model of school reception and teaching of students who are not Polish nationals, a number of main elements may be identified. The basis (foundation) of the integration model in Poland is the right of foreign students to education and care on the same terms as Polish nationals. Moreover, the main components of the integration model are: cost free extra Polish language courses, the right to use the assistance of a person employed as assistant teacher who speaks the immigrant's language of origin and various remedial classes. Another important aspect of the Polish integration model are diverse practical measures supporting the teaching of immigrant children, such as culture workshops.

Presentation and analysis of the Polish integration model enables comparison of its main objectives with corresponding solutions adopted by other European countries. It is worth presenting here the classification of integration policies of European States according to a research prepared for the European Commission.

Integration models targeted at newly arrived migrant students in European countries

A study on the integration policies of states towards newly arrived migrant students prepared for the European Commission enabled identification of more detailed integration models than the separation and integration models discussed above. The main problems faced by newly arrived migrant students were defined as: access to quality education (although in European countries it is usually granted regardless of the migrant's status) and segregation (placing migrants in lower quality schools that have fewer funds) (European Commission, 2013: 6). On the basis of the study, five main models supporting the education of immigrant children were identified.

The first is the comprehensive support model adopted by Denmark and Sweden. This model is characterised by: high school autonomy, comprehensive support covering: linguistic skills, teaching of school subjects, teaching of the mother tongue (Sweden), cooperation with parents, focus on intercultural education and creating a positive school environment. However, Denmark and Sweden have two different approaches to the provision of comprehensive educational support. In Denmark, the efforts to ensure integrative education do not differentiate between newly arrived migrants and the rest of students of foreign origin, and the integration policy may be defined as restrictive. Also, there are linguistic support centres for bilingual students in Denmark. On the other hand, Sweden is an example of a targeted approach to integration: newly arrived migrant students are defined as a separate target group. Moreover, Sweden has a more open immigration policy (especially concerning persons seeking asylum or refugee status). Other characteristic features of Sweden are the collective responsibility of all teachers and assistant teachers employed by local governments (Platos, 2010: 6; European Commission, 2013: 7, 72-73).

The second model is the non-systematic support model and it exists in Cyprus, Greece and Italy. It is characterised by: lack of a clearly articulated policy on the national level to support the integration of migrant children (or inefficiency of solutions adopted under the integration policy) and lack of well-pronounced instructions for the academic support of immigrant children (with respect to teachers, parents and local communities). The same as in the case with the previous model, there are major differences between the countries representing the non-systematic support model. First of all, the Italian education system is highly centralised but schools are quite independent in their actions, which means that the provision of support and assistance for immigrants depends solely on the good

will of teachers, parents and local communities. Moreover, in Italy, cultural and linguistic mediators who mediate between teachers and parents play an important role in immigrant integration. On the other hand, in Cyprus and Greece, there are well-pronounced national guidelines, however, they are not fully implemented due to lack of dedicated funds. Also, although Greece declared to provide support in all the four analysed areas (linguistic support, academic support, outreach and cooperation, and intercultural education) in all intercultural schools, it was reported that few teachers of Greek spoke the mother tongue of immigrants (European Commission, 2013: 6, 8, 73; Płatos, 2010: 4-5).

The third model is the compensatory support model that exists in Belgium and Austria. Its main objectives are to: implement all the types of the support strategy (however, the support is not so strong as in the case of the comprehensive support model), provide mother tongue teaching (for the most numerous groups of migrants in a given institution), provide remedial support for newly arrived immigrants, ensure early ability tracking and group children in order to reduce the existing differences (however, at the expense of the problem of unequal chances), and encourage parents to cooperate with schools (e.g. by ensuring interpreter services) (European Commission, 2013: 8, 74). Also, in Belgium as well as in Austria, advisory and information role in the area of education is performed by local institutions. In Belgium, the national government finances various local integration projects, while Austria has an educational counselling centre for migrant families and schools (Płatos, 2010: 5).

The fourth model is the integration model existing in Ireland. It is characterised by: reduced importance of language teaching, strong focus on intercultural education, ongoing cooperation between the school community and parents, promoting intercultural education in daily school life and implementing various strategies in the area of intercultural education (such as the IES – Intercultural Education Strategy), and initiatives aimed at ensuring equal chances at schools (European Commission, 2013: 74-75). The persons and institutions responsible for immigrant student integration at school and local government level are coordinators appointed from local communities, English teaching assistants and offices responsible for diversity and social integration matters (Płatos, 2010: 4-5).

The final model is the centralised entry support model that exists in France and Luxembourg. This model is based on: centralised reception of migrant children, academic support, well-developed support programmes (e.g. targeted support for under-achieving students), elements of intercultural education and support for the families of foreign children (e.g. linguistic assistance) (European Commission, 2013: 8, 75). In Luxembourg, there are also institutions advising immigrant fam-

ilies on the education system. In France, the same role is performed by regional centres that support communication between schools and migrant families (Płatos, 2010: 4-5).

According to the study performed for the European Commission, the best is the comprehensive support model adopted by Denmark and Sweden. It was also concluded that delivering equality of opportunity was critical for the integration of children. On the other hand, systems that focus on the early tracking of the abilities of immigrant children were considered to intensify inequality between migrant children and their native peers. Moreover, it was determined that decentralisation is an important engine for the adjustment of the education system to the needs of migrant children, as it contributes to the success of various initiatives. It was also suggested that the respective support systems should, as far as is reasonably possible, address the individual needs of students (European Commission, 2013: 8-9).

Some objectives of the above models are also implemented through the integration model existing in Poland. In terms of the comprehensive and compensatory models, Poland in particular: supports the linguistic skills of foreign children and offers remedial classes, and some schools (usually at the initiative of teachers) organise intercultural events. The solutions concerning immigrant education in Poland are undoubtedly centralised and many of them have been established on the national level (which is a characteristic feature of the centralised model).

Conclusions

It may be concluded that integration policy is definitely interdisciplinary in nature, and as such it requires cooperation between numerous organisations: national and local governments, local communities, school principals, teachers, parents and students themselves. Education is one of the key areas of the integration policy of states and it is determined by political, economic, social and cultural factors. Among the main models of school reception and teaching of immigrant students, the integration and separation models were identified. In terms of teaching the language of the host country, three main models were identified. The first is integrative in nature: it provides for immediate inclusion of students in the education process. The second and third models are more separatory, as they opt for teaching the language of the host country in separate groups. The integration model adopted in Poland focuses mainly on linguistic and academic support. The proposed solutions for the teaching of foreigners in Poland are undoubtedly integrative in

nature. Also, the various forms of support and practices are targeted at students, parents and teachers alike. Integration models in terms of school reception and teaching immigrant children differ between the respective European countries. A comparative analysis of the integration policies in the area of education showed a number of similarities between Poland and the analysed European countries. The most important of them are: supporting the linguistic skills of foreign children, organising remedial classes and implementing elements of intercultural education.

It should also be noted that teachers have a major impact on the integration of a migrant community and the host community, as the outreach to parents, students and even local communities often depends on their initiative. Thus, it is recommended to develop and introduce, on the central or local level, solutions that would help develop and better implement intercultural education (not only in respective schools but also outside them), and to strengthen cooperation for the achievement of common objectives, one of which undoubtedly is knowledge-based economy founded on educated and able to learn individuals.

An important problem and challenge for European countries is the lack of a proper system for the collection of information on immigrant education and the discriminatory practices associated with this situation. Thus, it is particularly important for academics as well as various national and international organisations to research into the integration of immigrant children in the area of education. Accordingly, it is necessary to start and maintain research into the education of immigrant children. Also, exchange of experiences in the teaching of foreign children between respective countries may be of value.

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