Counteracting Threats to Societal Security at School: A Polish Way Towards Multicultural Education

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Abstract

As Poland is becoming a more attractive destination for immigrants, Polish schools need to develop relevant solutions that can assist the integration of immigrant students into Polish society. The objective of this study is threefold. Firstly, the paper aims to discuss the role of schools in counteracting threats to societal security resulting from increased migration. Secondly, the study investigates immigration policy and educational solutions in Poland. Finally, we evaluate educational solutions implemented in schools to facilitate the integration of immigrant children, their safety, as well as discuss the difficulties and advantages resulting from the presence of foreign students in Polish schools. The study shows that schools play a special role in educating young people about societal values, personal safety and societal security. Educational solutions aiming at immigrant integration need to be investigated in the context of multidimensional legislation on immigration. The findings of the quantitative analysis relate to the solutions adopted by Polish schools that assist the integration of foreign students. They also shed light on the problems and benefits of having heterogeneous classes. Most schools in Poland offer foreign students a number of educational opportunities related to Polish language acquisition, academic performance (e.g. remedial lessons) and social integration. Inability to speak Polish is the greatest problem at schools, which is the root cause of other complex problems, such as foreign students' falling behind with schoolwork, slower pace of the lesson, and discipline problems.

Keywords: societal security, multicultural education, migration, immigrant integration, Security Education, safety

1. Introduction

Recently, Polish schools have been receiving a growing number of foreign students (Wójcik, 2018). This situation poses a challenge to both teachers and policymakers, which is related to the view that education should move to a model of partnership between people, cultures and religions (Zadorożna, 2018, p.109). On the one hand, schools need to provide optimal conditions for immigrant integration and their safety as well as shape the attitudes of openness and tolerance in society. On the other hand, education policy is an element of more comprehensive and multidimensional legislation on immigration, which includes immigration procedures, naturalization process, social policy and welfare programs, border and internal security policies (Soboń, and Piertuniak, 2019) as well as labor laws. Hence, the discussion on immigrant integration should consider a multidimensional perspective.

Polish schools welcome the increased inflow of immigrants with a number of educational solutions based on the premise that the academic success of every student is built in the classroom. Therefore, schools meet educational goals not only by providing space for the intellectual development of students, but also by allowing a safe and barrier-free environment for immigrant integration. Given the fact that Poland is just beginning to receive large inflows of immigrants, it is worth noting which long-term solutions regarding immigration policy and education are effective in schools worldwide. The objective of this study is threefold. Firstly, this paper aims to discuss the role of schools in counteracting threats to societal security resulting from increased migration. Secondly, the study investigates immigration policy and educational solutions in Poland. Finally, we evaluate educational solutions implemented in schools to facilitate the integration of immigrant children, their safety, as well as discuss the difficulties and advantages resulting from foreign students' presence in Polish schools. To meet the above-mentioned aims, the paper first provides literature review of Security Education, immigration policy as well as educational solutions and their implementation in Polish schools. Finally, the article presents the results of the author's own study exploring instructions provided to foreign students in Polish educational institutions.

2. The role of schools in counteracting threats to societal security

Education in the 21st century faces numerous challenges: educating competent and responsible graduates, keeping up with technological progress, and meeting the requirements of the modern labor market. On the other hand, rising aggression among students, social pathologies, and growing migration are some of the threats that contemporary societies and schools have to deal with.

B. Buzan (Buzan et al., 1998) classifies threats by referring them to different sectors of security defined by issues and referent objects in the military, political, economic, environmental, and societal sector. For the purposes of this paper, the discussion will focus on societal security, which Buzan (Buzan et al., 1998) defines as the security of society as a collective entity and its identity that is defended; thus, societal security refers to collective identity and forming social relations with other members of

the social group the individual identifies with. Threats to societal security of the state may be of different origin and character. They can also result from a situation when certain needs of citizens have not been met, thus resulting in imbalance, which may in turn lead to various difficult situations in the life of an individual or their family (Leszczyński, 2011). The following threats to societal security can be enumerated: violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural and religious prejudices, discrimination of minorities, chauvinism, fundamentalism, xenophobia, social pathologies, mass migrations, brutalization of interpersonal relations, demographic crises, and conflicts (Witaszek, 2013). Finally, Eriksson and Juhl (2012) as general goals for societal security list:

- lives and health of the population;
- societal functionality;
- the ability to maintain fundamental values such as the rule of law, democracy, freedom, and human rights.

The aforementioned societal functions form preconditions for a modern society to flourish; thus, they cannot be broken down. Furthermore, assuring the health and personal safety of society is listed as a fundamental goal of the state's crisis preparedness (alongside reducing the risk and consequences of critical disruptions, crises, and accidents as well as preventing and limiting damages to property or the environment). In this respect, a special role of schools has been shaped, because at school young people can be educated about societal values, personal safety and threats to society as well as how to ensure personal safety and societal security.

3. Security education

The threats to societal security listed above present a complex picture of modern society. As a result, it is important to create such possibilities and legal regulations that make it possible to counteract threats and reduce their effect in the case of their occurrence, especially taking into consideration the fact that the abovementioned threats do exist in modern societies. Therefore, action needs to be taken to limit their negative impact. A special role has been given to educational institutions (Gawlik-Kobylińska, and Maciejewski 2019; Świerszcz, 2016), because kindergartens and schools are significant agents of socialization that should teach how to define a threat and what action needs to be taken to counteract the threat.

Security Education plays a special role in shaping appropriate attitudes and values, gaining knowledge and developing skills indispensable in counteracting various threats. Security Education constitutes a significant part of the educational process and forms a basis for preventive activities aimed at civic, communication, health-oriented and ecological education. It is also considered an indispensable element of education and preparation for work and life in the modern world (Pieczywok, 2018). Security Education, as a subject in primary and secondary schools, provides students with knowledge and skills on how to ensure safety, how to recognize threats and take action to prevent them from happening (Urych, 2018). The curriculum of Security Education includes topics related to state security, organization of rescue operations, health and first aid (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, 2018). However, as it has been discussed in the previous section, security is a broad concept and threats occurring during peacetime

range from economic, political, environmental to societal (Buzan et al., 1998); hence Security Education should shape proper attitudes and values and to protect from threats (Pieczywok, 2018) in all aspects of security during peacetime. Migration, alongside prejudice, ethnocentrism, chauvinism, xenophobia, extremism, alienation, and devaluation of values is one of the threats to societal security (Gierszewski, 2013). Thus, a critical problem of counteracting the aforementioned threats needs to be addressed.

Migration not only refers to the spatial shift related to moving in geographical terms, but it also affects mental and cultural processes of societies (Fehler et al., 2017). This might result in ethnic or racial conflicts as well as increased reluctance. Majority populations may express fear about increased migration related to the change in the ethnic structure of society, costs of immigrants' integration, ethnic conflicts, and loss of cultural identity. Intolerance towards immigrants is not only related to prejudice against distinct cultures but it also results from concern about the social and economic costs of integration, increased competitiveness in the labor market (Polakowska-Kujawa, 2006) and perceptions of threat. Negative attitudes towards immigration are connected with intergroup anxiety, distrust and emphasizing otherness. Intergroup contacts frequently result in reactions such as frustrations, tensions, and conflicts, which are natural among the host society when they perceive minority groups as threatening others (Verkuyten, 2014). These reactions may be more subtle or they might become more violent and lead to verbal abuse, accusations, exclusion, and hostility.

As discussed in the previous section, increased migration affects the demographic composition of communities, especially in urban centers, and greater diversity brings both positive and negative impact. The role of schools in counteracting threats related to societal security can be discussed from two perspectives. Firstly, from the point of view of majority populations, as education can contribute to developing positive attitudes between majority and minority groups thus minimizing intergroup tensions. Secondly, from the point of view of immigrants, schools not only introduce them to the dominant values and traditions, but also facilitate integration into the host society.

Schools should aim at developing students' intercultural competence, tolerance and openness. Education in general plays a decisive role in promoting tolerance as it allows learners to get to know and understand various norms and values that are different than the ones existent in their culture. Culture and education merge; they infiltrate the same areas of human life, help to get to know not only artistic work, but also the world, other people, relations with them as well as oneself. Students should be taught both a cognitive, i.e. information, knowledge, as well as affective factors, i.e. cultural beliefs, values and positive and open attitude towards other ethnic and cultural groups (Byram, 1992). It can be taught either explicitly, by introducing certain information, evaluating cultural heritage of the target country, or implicitly, when cultural component constitutes the context for instruction. Students need to be shown that their viewpoint is not only dependent but also subject to reflexive development (Psaltis *et al.* 2017). Furthermore, they need to be aware that they are not members of only one isolated social group; they are reminded that in forming their social and cultural identity, contact and communication with members of other groups are essential (Nikitorowicz, 2000). Teachers

need to emphasize the equality of cultures, while at the same time pointing out the opposition "we" – "they", in- and out-group. It is important to prepare students not only to interact with members of other cultures but also to accept them as individuals having a different point of view and set of values. Educators should help learners evade stereotyping that usually accompanies contact with people of a different social and cultural background (Byram et al. 2002), because "hidden prejudices and stereotypes (...) are barriers to tolerance, understanding, and good communication" (Matikainen, and Duffy, 2000, p. 40). Since changing stereotypes may be a goal difficult to attain for teachers, learners' awareness of the nature of stereotypes needs to be raised so that their attitude towards their stereotypes and stereotyped groups be modified, thus promoting greater tolerance and openness to others.

4. Educational solutions to the integration of immigrant students in Poland

Immigration policy in Poland is quite restrictive for most countries, but citizens of some countries do not need a work permit (EU member states, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, and Liechtenstein) whereas citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Georgia can work in Poland on the basis of a declaration of intention to employ a foreigner for a period not exceeding 6 months (Szylko-Skoczny, Duszczyk, 2010). Poland has not yet implemented a large-scale training scheme for newcomers nor has it developed long-term integration support. The naturalization process is also complex as applicants need to prove both Polish language

competency and meet strict income requirements.

As far as the education of immigrant students is concerned, Poland has adopted the position of the European Union, which emphasizes equal educational opportunities to citizens coming from non-Member States regardless of their country of origin, status or other circumstances (Act of 7 September 1991 on the Education system). Polish schools can implement the following educational solutions in order to integrate foreign students:

- optional kindergarten;
- free primary and secondary education (for students aged 7-16 years old);
- Polish lessons;
- remedial lessons;
- lessons in students' mother tongue, native history and culture.

All foreign students (including children of immigrant workers, immigrants of Polish origin, permanent immigrants of Polish origin, permanent immigrants having the right to settle down in Poland, immigrants with refugee status) are enrolled in special programs that are run by their school and aim at providing them with support (Torowska, 2016). The fundamental aim of these programs is teaching the Polish language since proficiency in the target language determines not only academic success, but also economic assimilation. The inability to communicate in the target language limits the possibility of employment and the earnings (DebBurman, 2005). For this reason, schools can organize preparatory classes in which foreign students learn the Polish language and receive remedial instruction to help them catch up with schoolwork. These classes should

last at least 26 hours a week in secondary schools (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 August 2017).

Polish schools have adopted the multicultural approach, which emphasizes cultural diversity as well as the European and International dimension of education (Torowska, 2016). As Grzybowski (2012) notes, the underlying principle of multicultural or intercultural education is building intercultural awareness, i.e. providing knowledge and shaping skills that will equip students in solving problems arising in a multicultural society. Intercultural education entails sensitizing, stimulating, encouraging, teaching, and shaping adequate attitudes, skills, needs and awareness necessary to deal with intercultural differences and social consequences resulting from these differences. Intercultural education can lead to democratic education that enhances sustainable development to every group (Lewowicki, 2000), not limited to ethnic groups, but including different discriminated groups such as the disabled or sexual minorities (Grzybowski, 2012). Therefore, intercultural education promotes dialogue and tolerance by providing students with tools for averting conflict and repression. Polish schools focus on transferring universal values, such as integrity, brotherhood and respect for otherness (Urych 2013). Furthermore, the multicultural approach respects foreign students' country of origin; that is why, at the request of immigrant students' parents, the principal can organize a course teaching the students' mother tongue as well as the culture and history of their homeland (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 30 August 2017).

Even though Polish schools follow the premises of multicultural education, a large body of research points at the difficulties of its implementation at schools. Błeszyńska (2011) and Gmaj and Iglicka (2010) maintain that Polish teachers are not adequately prepared for teaching foreign students and their knowledge of interculturalism is fragmented, superficial, and based on stereotypes. Butarewicz-Głowacka (2015) carried out in-depth interviews with primary school teachers who assessed the support offered to foreign students in Polish schools as insufficient to holistically integrate foreign students into the receiving society as Polish schools have not been ready to handle foreigners. Butarewicz-Glowacka (2015) recommends the following solutions to back up the integration of immigrant children: teacher training, intercultural education, social campaigns promoting tolerance, hiring intercultural assistants in schools, hiring teaching assistants in classes with foreigners, courses in Polish for both foreign students and their parents, cooperation with local NGOs, cooperation with foreign students' parents. Januszewska and Markowska-Manista (2017), who interviewed teachers working with foreign students, point at the following difficulties: language barriers, teachers' insufficient intercultural competence, foreign students' indifferent or negative attitudes towards learning, intolerance and aggression at school. As Urych (2012) argues, only well-prepared and competent teachers can provide the best instruction for students. Another problem typical for the Polish context results from the fact that a great number of immigrants do not want to settle

down in Poland, but would like to transfer to Western Europe.[1] Therefore, they are not motivated to learn the Polish language or to integrate with the society.

5. Methodology

The study investigated how teachers perceive the integration of immigrant children in Polish schools. In particular, the aim of the study was to address three research questions:

1) What educational solutions have been implemented in Polish schools to facilitate the integration of foreign students?

2) What difficulties do teachers and foreign students face in Polish schools?

3) What are the benefits of foreign students' presence in Polish schools?

Based on the research questions, three hypotheses have been articulated. Firstly, it is assumed that schools in Poland have implemented various educational solutions to assist foreign students in Polish language acquisition, academic performance and social integration. Secondly, language barriers and communication problems are the greatest difficulty in educating foreign students in Polish schools. Finally, the benefits of having foreign students in Polish schools include increased tolerance, openness, curiosity, cooperation, and cultural sensitivity.

To examine educational solutions of teaching immigrant students implemented by Polish schools, a cross-sectional quantitative research method using a web-based survey was selected. The survey was administered between August 20, 2018 and September 20, 2018. The 15-minute long survey instrument, which used google forms software, was posted on multiple Facebook group for teachers. The target population includes teachers working in educational institutions in Poland (N=540).

The questionnaire gathered information on socio-demographic data, education of immigrant students in Polish schools, difficulties connected with teaching foreign students and problems foreign students face in school as well as the benefits of having immigrant students in class. The questionnaire was anonymous, the information form clearly explained that the completion of the survey is voluntary. Most questions were pre-coded. If applicable, it was indicated that multiple answers could be given.

All data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. Correlation between dependent (experience of teaching foreign students) and independent variables (age, location of school and the number of foreign students in class) was tested with Pearson correlation coefficient.

6. Data analysis and discussion

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[1] Many immigrants do not think of Poland as their target country. Polish welfare and the labour market do not lure immigrants. In 2016 4.502 foreigners applied for international protection in Poland (Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców 2017), but the majority of the application (almost 82%) were withdrawn mainly due to the lack of the interest of the applicant to continue the procedures caused by their leaving Poland for Western Europe.

Most of the respondents in the total sample were primary school teachers (77.7%; N=420 of 540); they were mostly female (95.5%; N=516), aged 31-40 years old (38.6%; N=208) and they lived in a medium-sized town (50%; N=270). Foreign students attend 70% of schools in the sample, so the problem of teaching immigrant children is becoming more common in Poland. More demographic features of the respondents are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2.
Demographic features of the respondents

Demographic	Responses	
	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Type of school		
kindergarten	23	4.3
primary	420	77.7
secondary	74	13.8
higher education	14	2.6
language school	6	1.1
boarding school	3	0.5
Sex		
female	516	95.5
male	22	4.5
Age		
20-30	78	14.4
31-40	208	38.6
41-50	171	31.6
Over 51	83	15.4
Location of school		
city over 400 thousand inhabitants	73	13.5
town 100-400 thousand inhabitants	70	13
town 20-100 thousand inhabitants	270	50
countryside, town less than 20 thousand inhabitants	127	23.5
Number of foreign students at school		
none	80	14.8
from 1 to 5	163	30.2
from 6 to 10	130	24.1
from 11 to 20	57	10.5
over 20	50	9.3
I don't know	60	11.1

As displayed in Table 2., the study sample, which was collected by convenience sampling methods, is a broad cross-section of teachers of all ages, both men and women, working with students of different ages in various types of schools at various locations: villages, towns and cities. Hence, the study sample is representative of the population and the findings may be generalizable.
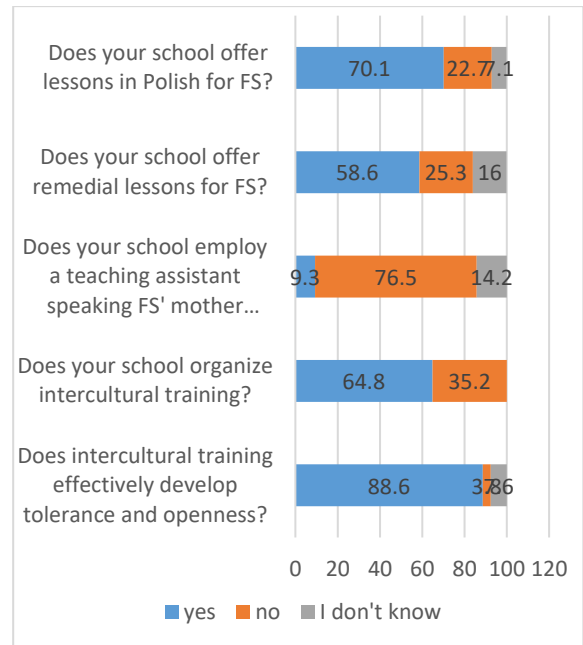

Figure 1. Educational solutions offered by schools to foreign students (FS) (data given in percentage).

As seen in Figure 1., most schools offer foreign students a number of educational opportunities, as recommended in Polish legislation. They can be grouped into 3 areas: language acquisition, academic performance and social integration. In order to thrive in the classroom environment, foreign students need to develop competences and skills in all three areas. However, language acquisition is fundamental as

the student are not able to make academic progress nor integrate socially with the host society unless they are can speak the language at the communicative level. Seven out of ten schools offer a Polish as a second language course for students; and three quarters organize remedial lessons. Some schools come up with original solutions hoping not only to improve educational standards, but also shaping positive attitudes of students. Some schools (10%) employ a teaching assistant to help overcome the language barrier and 6 out of 10 schools organize intercultural workshops that aim at developing tolerance and openness. The findings clearly show that if such training is introduced, teachers evaluate it positively.

Not all schools offer educational solutions as suggested in legislation (i.e. Polish lessons and remedial lessons) due to an insufficient number of students enrolled in these courses or lack of interest in such lessons. The respondents were asked about the number of students enrolled in these courses; the findings are presented in Figure 2.
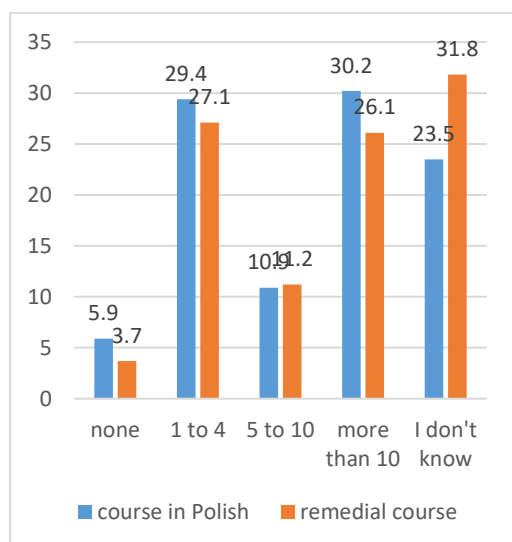

Figure 2. The number of students enrolled in a Polish as a second language course and remedial course (data given in percentage).

Although many teachers are not aware if additional classes are offered to foreign students at their schools, most immigrant children have an opportunity to attend additional courses in order to learn Polish and catch up with their homework. These solutions are indispensable as teaching heterogeneous classes creates a number of difficulties for teachers, such as problems with discipline, slower pace of the lesson, and academic performance of most students in class. Furthermore, such courses can help solve the majority of difficulties experienced by foreign students because most problems, according to the respondents, are related to communication barriers (as indicated by 76.7% of the respondents). Other most common difficulties marked by the respondents include difficulties in communicating with immigrant students' parents, slower lesson pace, the need to adjust requirements to the foreign students, difficulties for foreign students to catch up with schoolwork, difficulties for foreign students to adapt to the classroom rigor, negative attitudes of other students, the teachers inability to understand foreign students' habits and behavior, verbal aggression of other students, discipline problems (see Table 2).

Most difficulties experienced by teachers relate to the inability to communicate with foreign students and their parents. Linguistic problems are the underlying cause leading to foreign students' falling behind with schoolwork, slower lesson pace, discipline problems and other problems. Teachers not only fail to pass on knowledge to foreign students, but are also unable to reach out to these students, assist in the integration process and involve them in activities. Similarly, linguistic problems are a barrier between the immigrant students and their classmates. These problems affect the whole class and may

result in dissatisfaction experienced by both students and parents. With the Polish competitive system of education based on exams that ensure enrollment in a good secondary school and university, which in turn determines better employment opportunities, educating immigrant students needs to be improved. However, it needs to be stressed that the language barrier is the greatest barrier. As Domalewska (2017) shows, students of different cultural backgrounds adopt similar approaches and strategies while studying; therefore, they can achieve the goal of high academic performance and integrate successfully into classrooms.

Both intolerance and aggression are mentioned by the respondents, but it does not seem to be an urgent problem in Polish schools. The respondents were also asked about the difficulties foreign students have in the classroom. Most respondents (54.8%) believe that immigrant students integrate with other students: they hang out during recess breaks and help one another. However, a fourth of the respondents (24.7%) think the contrary happens, i.e. foreign students separate from other students, limit contact with Polish students and hang out with the members of their ethnic or cultural group. Discrimination and aggression take place sporadically (15.1%). Direct verbal aggression (e.g. name-calling) occurs more frequently (10.2%) than indirect verbal aggression (e.g. rude comments on desks or in toilets) (6.6%). The problem of physical aggression was marked by 2% of the respondents.

Finally, the respondents were asked to mark benefits of having foreign students in the classroom (see Table 3.). Only 3.8% of teachers have not noticed any advantages of having foreign students in class as problems they create outnumber any potential benefits. However, the vast majority of teachers find the presence of foreign students beneficial. They mention such benefits as contact with foreign cultures, developing tolerance, openness, cultural sensitivity, and cooperation.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the dependence between the experience of teaching foreign students and independent variables: age, location of school and the number of foreign students in class (see Table 3.). However, apart from some statistically significant findings, none of the independent variables selected for the study correlate with the experience of teaching multicultural classes. The data prove that teachers in their 30s find a slower pace of the lesson resulting from the presence of foreign students as an impediment whereas teachers in their 50s noted that foreign students outperform academically other students. Teachers working in small towns (20-100 thousand inhabitants) notice that foreign students struggle with schoolwork. Teachers from large towns (100-400 thousand inhabitants) admit they do not understand foreign students' habits and behavior. Teachers whose groups include 1 or 2 foreign students, most frequently mark that these students struggle academically and display aggressive behavior. Finally, teachers who do not teach foreign students notice the problem of aggression in schools and maintain that multicultural classes raise cultural sensitivity among students.

Table 3.
The correlation between the experience of teaching foreign students (FS) (difficulties and benefits) and independent variables (age, location of school, and the number of foreign students in class) considering the Pearson correlation coefficient (strong correlations have been marked in red)

Experience of teaching FS	Responses (%)	Variables		
		Age	Location of school	No of FS in class
need to adjust requirements to FS	32.22	0.0221	0.1395	0.0386
		0.769	0.062	0.607
slower lesson pace	41.11	0.1916	0.0575	0.0954
		0.010	0.443	0.203
FS outperform academically other students	1.67	0.1679	0.0232	0.0289
		0.024	0.757	0.701
difficulties for FS to catch up with schoolwork	21.67	0.0346	0.2192	0.1949
		0.644	0.003	0.009
physical aggression of FS	3.89	0.0731	0.0854	0.1767
		0.329	0.255	0.018
physical aggression of other students	2.78	0.1325	0.0068	0.0848
		0.076	0.928	0.258
discipline problems	7.78	0.0070	0.0803	0.1462
		0.926	0.284	0.050
difficulties for FS to adapt to the classroom rigor	21.11	0.1454	0.0124	0.0092
		0.051	0.869	0.902
verbal aggression of other students	8.33	0.0182	0.0918	0.1512
		0.809	0.220	0.043
negative attitude of other students	12.22	0.1014	0.0255	0.1124
		0.176	0.734	0.133
Inability of teachers to understand FS' habits and behaviors	12.22	0.0646	0.1834	0.0233
		0.389	0.014	0.756
difficulties in communicating with FS' parents	55.00	0.0158	0.1276	0.0950
		0.834	0.088	0.205
difficulties in communicating with FS	70.00	0.0631	0.0840	0.1451
		0.400	0.262	0.052
no benefits of having FS in class	3.89	0.0731	0.0038	0.1163
		0.329	0.960	0.120
fighting prejudice and stereotypes	61.11	0.0302	0.0792	0.0173
		0.687	0.290	0.818
developing cooperation	37.78	0.0185	0.0587	0.0759
		0.805	0.434	0.311
arousing curiosity	44.44	0.1307	0.0013	0.0678
		0.080	0.986	0.366
developing tolerance and openness	70.00	0.0237	0.0589	0.0840
		0.752	0.432	0.262
cultural sensitivity	55.56	0.0027	0.0360	0.1617
		0.971	0.632	0.030
contact with foreign cultures	79.44	0.0048	0.0716	0.0797
		0.949	0.339	0.288

7. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to discuss the role of school in counteracting threats to societal security resulting from increased migration and to inves-

tigate immigration policy and educational solutions in Poland. The study also reported on the results of a quantitative study into teachers' perception of the pedagogical solutions that assist the integration of foreign students. The study is important for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the problem of integration of immigrant students at schools, which needs to be analyzed from the broader perspective of immigration policy.

Furthermore, the article evaluated educational solutions of teaching foreign students implemented in Polish classrooms. Poland has adopted the position of the European Union, which emphasizes equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their country of origin, status or other circumstances. The research proves that most schools in Poland offer foreign students a number of educational opportunities, which can be grouped into 3 areas: language acquisition, academic performance and social integration. Some schools have failed to offer Polish or remedial lessons to foreign students due to insufficient number of students enrolled in these courses or lack of interest in such lessons. This study also indicated that the presence of foreign students in class brings about other benefits, such as openness, curiosity, cooperation, and cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, the research shows that teaching heterogeneous classes creates a number of difficulties for teachers, such as problems with discipline, slower lesson pace, and the poor academic performance of foreign students. However, most difficulties experienced by teachers relate to the inability to communicate with foreign students and their parents; and linguistic problems are the underlying cause of foreign students' falling behind with schoolwork, slower pace of the lesson, and discipline problems. Most respondents believe that immigrant students integrate with other students: they hang out during recess breaks and help one another. Discrimination and aggression take place sporadically. None of the independent variables selected for the study (age, location of school, and the number of foreign students in class) correlate with the experience of teaching multicultural classes.

All in all, the respondents have positively evaluated multicultural training in promoting positive attitudes and tolerance; unfortunately, not all schools implement intercultural workshops on a regular basis. Even though tolerance training and the fight against existing stereotypes is not easy, when students are faced with diversified data that contradict existing stereotype, they become more aware of cultural diversity and tend to believe that a given stereotype is applicable only to a part of the stereotyped group (Itakura, 2004). A large body of research (Byram, 1997; Itakura, 2004) indicates that intercultural training brings about stereotype change and makes students more aware of the diversity of the other culture.

Immigrant students face a double disadvantage as they have to adapt to a different culture and often have a low socio-economic status in the host country. These challenges make the integration process more difficult. Multicultural education is an attempt to ease the challenge of living in a foreign country for immigrant students because students who have become a part of the school community tend to perform better academically.

As Poland is gradually becoming a more attractive destination for immigrants, Polish schools need to develop relevant solutions that can assist the integration of immigrant children to Polish society. However, educational solutions aiming at immigrant integra-

tion need to be investigated in the context of multidimensional legislation on immigration. However, we cannot overestimate the value of various educational solutions to facilitate the integration of foreign students and to shape the attitudes of openness and tolerance.

Despite the significance of the study findings, several limitations need to be mentioned. Firstly, the study focuses on teacher's perceptions neglecting the point of view of students. Foreign students may be reluctant to share their difficulties with teachers; therefore, to get a comprehensive view of multicultural education in Poland, students' perceptions need to analyzed. Another possible limitation is the overrepresentation of primary school teachers (77.7% of the sample).

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study has several important implications. First, the study reveals that language problems result in poorer academic performance and discipline problems. Therefore, providing effective language support to the foreign students is of utmost priority. Moreover, educational institutions need to promote the formation of communities of learners. Immigrant students need to become their integral part so that they can feel safe and thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

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on the conditions how kindergartens, schools and public institutions should maintain national, ethnic and language identity of students from national and ethnic minorities as well as groups speaking regional languages, art 2 [Art. 2 rozporządzenia Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dn. 30 sierpnia 2017r. w sprawie warunków i sposobu wykonywania przez przedszkola, szkoły i placówki publiczne zadań umożliwiających podtrzymywanie poczucia tożsamości narodowej, etnicznej i językowej uczniów należących do mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych oraz społeczności posługującej się językiem regionalnym (Dz. U. 2017 poz. 1627)].

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