

Primary Education of Migrant Background Children in the Lingua Franca a Random Survey

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Abstract

Education is an essential aspect of enculturation of all children. Giving the children of migrants opportunities to fully develop their potential is important for their well-being in society and for social cohesion in the receiving countries. But migrant students for the most part have lower educational outcomes than native students at the same level. Extensive research has determined the factors that affect the performance of migrant students in the school setting. These barriers to equal educational achievement for migrant children are present to varying degrees in countries all over the world. This paper examines instruction in the national language of primary level migrant children in various nations with an eye to see which educational measures are producing results and which countries have models that are worth imitating.

Keywords: migrant education, additional language, primary education, language education,, bilingual education, reception education, second language, assimilative learning

Education is an essential aspect of socialization of all children. Giving the children of migrants opportunities to fully develop their potential is important for their well-being and social cohesion in the receiving countries. But migrant students for the most part have lower educational outcomes than native students at the same level, and a higher rate of dropping out of school. Extensive research has determined the factors that affect the performance of migrant students in the school setting.¹ We discuss migrant background children, defined here as either children born in another country than the one in which they now live, or children whose parents were born in another country. This paper examines the programmes of primary education for migrant children to learn the language of education in various nations with an eye to which countries have models which are worth imitating.

1. General

There were 232 million international migrants in the world as of 2013. About sixty percent of international migrants live in the developed nations. From 2000-2010, the number of migrants worldwide grew twice as fast as during the previous decade.²

¹ <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/workingpaper/227131784531?crawler=true&mimetype=application/pdf> accessed 29 July 2015.

² <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures.pdf> accessed 29 July 2015.

Approximately one half of all international migrants reside in ten nations. [2013].

United States of America	45.8 million (20% of the global total)
Russian Federation	11 million
Germany	9.8 million
Saudi Arabia	9.1 million
United Arab Emirates	7.8 million
United Kingdom	7.8 million
France	7.5 million
Canada	7.3 million
Australia	6.5 million
Spain	6.5 million

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has called the twenty-first century the “new migration age”, a new stage in globalisation, the first stage being the movement of goods and capital. Slightly more than a third of international migrants have moved from a developing to a developed country. Migration has an unseen beneficial impact. In just one year, 185.1 billion Euros, three times the level of international aid, was sent by migrants residing in the developed world back to their home countries in developing regions. Ban Ki-moon states, “Migration can be an enormous force for good.”³

1.1 Out-of- School Children

While not all out-of-school youth are migrant background children, many of them are. Children who have been made to repeat a grade, as many migrant children must, are more likely to drop out of school. Nations with a small portion of children of primary school age in the total population tend to have a small percentage of children out of school. On the other hand, countries with a relatively large population of primary school age children also have a higher percentage of children out of school.⁴ A study by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Education for All Global Education Monitoring Report, shows that one in eleven children is out of school. Girls are the first to be kept from attending school. One half of all out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa will never enroll in school. In South and West Asia 80% of out-of-school girls are unlikely to start school, compared to just 16% for boys.⁵

2. A Look at Language Education for Migrant Children

One of the principle problems⁶ facing migrant background children worldwide is language acquisition. Most migrant background children do not speak the *lingua franca* of their receiving country, neither is it spoken in the home. Language issues are central to education and to the integration process. Even though studies have demonstrated what approaches are effective in migrant education, these effective approaches have been adopted mostly in the world’s developed regions.

Primary Education Statistics -- UNICEF All Countries

Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	51
Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	42.1
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	39.6
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	34.2
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	69.3
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	64.3
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, admin. data	69
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, survey data	–

2.1.1 South Africa

South Africa's migrant population is composed mainly of refugee groups from other African countries. The South African Constitution guarantees refugees and asylum seekers the right to education. However, many migrants are turned away from public schooling because of a lack of documentation (such as report cards, transfer forms, birth certificates).

³ <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/understanding-the-new-migration-age> accessed 26 July 2015.

⁴ http://huebler.blogspot.com/2009_02_01_archive.html accessed 27 July 2015.

⁵ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/oosc-data-release-2015.aspx> accessed 27 July 2015.

⁶ <http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports/activities/reports/education-and-migration-pdf> accessed 26 July 2015.

Language difference is a significant barrier for students from Portuguese or French-speaking countries who must continue their education in the predominantly English-speaking South Africa.⁷ For those migrant children who do not speak English, language is a problem in South Africa. South Africa has a policy to promote multilingualism and to support the teaching of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa.⁸ This includes support for teaching tribal languages and bodes well for the students who will be able to attain an adult level of their first language while learning another language of education. The language policy uses an additive approach to bi- or multilingualism, whereby the first language is maintained and used as a basis for the learning of another language. South Africa offers English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) classes in primary grades because most students come to school speaking a different language. However, ESOL teachers often refer students for speech therapy because of language differences. This could be a reaction to being overwhelmed by large numbers of ESOL learners in the classroom, the teacher's own level of English ability⁹ and the difficulties in implementing the language policy when there are eleven official languages.¹⁰ While using English as the language of instruction, South Africa is working toward fostering the student's first language and promoting multilingualism in its primary schools. The 90.3 percent net enrolment is more than double the 36.9 percent world participation figure, however we lack data on survival rate to last primary grade.

Primary Education Statistics for South Africa¹¹

Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	103.9
Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	99.5
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	89.7
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	90.9
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, admin. data	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, survey data	–

2.2 Europe

The EUMC study of 2004 found that second language programmes are available in all fifteen Member States which were included in the study. The programmes vary from country to country. Second language programmes are for pupils whose first language is not the primary language of the country of residence. These second language programmes are offered in primary schools. Another programme, reception education, is language instruction for non-native speaking newcomers. Reception classes are mostly separate classes but temporary. The duration of these classes is from six months to two years, as in Finland. The countries of the European Union are making concerted efforts to accommodate the language needs of migrant background children.

2.2.1 France

Bilingual education programmes in traditional European languages are increasingly popular in France, but the bilingualism of migrant children is overlooked and believed by some to delay the acquisition of French. A study showed that migrant primary school pupils felt excluded by the French schools' approach to linguistic or cultural differences. While primary schools try to promote foreign language learning from the earliest age, they seldom deal with minority languages which are often the first language of migrant background students. An unstated sense of superiority of the French language pervades the school system. A language awareness program in a small primary school in Alsace is an example of how languages of unequal status can be put on equal footing, how children can be taught to appreciate linguistic and cultural variety and teachers can be made aware of the linguistic and cultural wealth in their classes and their community. Language awareness programmes do not compete with early foreign language teaching, but can be complementary. They also extend teachers' knowledge and understanding of multilingual and multicultural issues.¹² Hopefully France will implement more such programs. We have only gross enrolment figures for France, so cannot compare their success rate.

⁷ Hlatshwayo, Mondli. "Violence, Resilience and Solidarity: The Right to Education for Child Migrants in South Africa". *School Psychology International* 35 (3): 266–279, 2014.

⁸ <http://www.salanguages.com/education.htm>

⁹ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=S0256-01002010000400009&script=sci_arttext

¹⁰ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0256-01002009000200007

¹¹ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/southafrica_statistics.html#117 accessed 5 August 2015.

¹² <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13670050208667749#.VbjmfVlVikp> accessed 29 July 2015.

Primary Education Statistics for France¹³

Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	109.7
Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	109.1
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, admin. data	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, survey data	–

2.2.2 Germany

A large number of immigrants live in the state of Hessen. During the school year 2011-2012 in Hessen, 27.9% of the students at primary schools had a migration background.¹⁴ People with a migration background across all age groups have lower graduation rates than people without a migration background.¹⁵ Foreign languages are taught in primary schools in all Länder, however the minority languages are neglected. Languages are offered chiefly in grades three and four, and in some Länder also in grades one and two. Germany has a system of regular schools, base schools and travelling schools which are aimed at the offspring of circus performers.¹⁶ There are also three European Schools in Germany, which offer bilingual lessons in various languages. So Germany promotes popular European languages but not minority languages.

Primary Education Statistics for Germany¹⁷

Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	102.5
Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	102.1
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, admin. data	96.2
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, survey data	–

Dr. Rainer K. Silbereisen, Prof. Dr. Yossi Shavit, Dr. Peter F. Titzmann analyzed the ability of fourth graders in Germany and Israel, comparing those with a migration background and native children. They found that in Israel the natives performed better than those with a migration background in all subjects except mathematics. In Germany however the children with a migration background performed equally with native children except in reading comprehension.¹⁸ Their findings indicate that native students outperform migrants from the Former Soviet Union in German (in Germany) or Hebrew (in Israel), but this is not true for mathematics and English. In those two subjects, migrant students from the Former Soviet Union perform as well or even better than their native counterparts in both countries.¹⁹ Germany reports a 96.2 rate of survival to the last grade of primary school. However we have only gross enrolment figures to compare.

2.2.3 United Kingdom

Educational policies in Britain pertaining to the languages of migrant minorities have been primarily assimilative. However, a minimal form of bilingual education has been developed and is known as ‘bilingual support.’

¹³ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/france_statistics.html#117 accessed 5 August 2015.

¹⁴ http://www.integrationskompass.de/global/show_document.asp?id=aaaaaaaaaadniw accessed 26 July 2015.

¹⁵ http://www.integrationskompass.de/global/show_document.asp?id=aaaaaaaaaadniw accessed 26 July 2015.

¹⁶ http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/doc/Dokumentation/Bildungswesen_en_pdfs/primary.pdf

¹⁷ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/germany_statistics.html#117 accessed 4 August 2015.

¹⁸ https://books.google.co.cr/books?id=E8OSAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA197&lpg=PA197&dq=migrant+primary+education+israel&source=bl&ots=sUD21fVcJS&sig=0ANUMtR6LVx_bdxutSOUOZDKrGc&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=migrant%20primary%20education%20israel&f=false accessed 27 July 2015. *The Challenges of Diaspora Migration: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Israel and Germany*, Prof Dr Rainer K Silbereisen, Prof Dr Yossi Shavit, Dr Peter F Titzmann, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., May 28, 2014.

¹⁹ <http://www.migrati> However we have only gross enrolment to compare.on.uni-jena.de/project2/summary/index.php accessed 27 July 2015.

This targets bilingual learners in urban schools in the first few years of primary education. It serves as a means of easing minority-language students' social transition to school and eventual participation in English-language education. In many areas of Britain, this educational support is provided by 'bilingual teaching assistants' who speak both English and the language of the migrant background students but the job is considered low status. For the most part, bilingual teaching assistants are viewed as marginal to the main action of the classroom.²⁰ Britain is making some accommodation for migrant students' language needs. Non-native speakers in primary schools now compose nearly twenty percent²¹, and more than 1.1 million students do not speak English at home. Recent research on the experience of migrant children found that they experience school as monocultural and monolingual spaces, in which they often feel excluded from peer-group relations, despite the school's support for linguistic diversity.²² With 99.7 percent net enrolment, the UK is doing well. But again, we have no rate of survival to the last primary grade to compare.

Primary Education Statistics for UK²³

Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	107.2
Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	106.5
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	99.8
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	99.6
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, admin. data	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, survey data	–

2.2.4 Finland

Finland's foreign-born residents make up only 5% of its population. But, during the last fifteen years, Finland has diversified faster than any other European country. By 2020, one fifth of Helsinki's pupils are expected to have been born elsewhere, mainly in Russia, Estonia, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. Finland uses a reception programme for migrant background students. At Laakavuori primary, in the less prosperous, eastern part of Helsinki, 45 percent of pupils have a language other than Finnish as their mother tongue. Yet they achieve on a par with others in wealthier areas of the nation, where there are fewer immigrants. By focusing on language, belonging and achievement Finland has outstanding success in educating migrant students. Students whose native language is not Finnish are given all of their classes except sports and art in a special small group that emphasizes teaching the Finnish language along with the course material. They stay in this special class for between six months to a year, when they are judged to speak Finnish and are placed in their appropriate year group in the school. Moreover, since the 1980s, the state has funded Somali teachers to help young Somalis living in Finland expand their vocabulary in their native language. Finland gives schools extra funds of €1,000 a year for each child on the school's roll who has lived in Finland for less than four years. They leave it to the teachers as to how the money is spent. Laakavuori primary has used this money to employ social workers and psychologists for a few days each week. This helps to detect problems early and to deal with them quickly.²⁴

Primary Education Statistics for Finland²⁵

Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	99.5
Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	98.8
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	97.9
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	98
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, admin. data	99.6
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, survey data	–

²⁰ <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S089858989690008X> accessed 29 July 2015.

²¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/11195219/Britains-schools-need-support-for-influx-of-immigrant-children-chief-schools-inspector-warns.html> accessed 26 July 2015.

²² <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/migrant-children-the-litmus-test-of-our-education-system#sthash.LkC2eDCO.dpuf> accessed 26 July 2015.

²³ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uk_statistics.html#117 accessed 9 August 2015.

²⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/nov/21/finland-education-immigrant-children> accessed 26 July 2015.

²⁵ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/finland_statistics.html accessed 4 August 2015.

The 97.95 percent net enrolment is excellent, and compares favorably with the 99.6 percent survival rate to last primary grade. It is a bit mystifying how the Finnish schools had more students complete the last primary grade than than the number enrolled but the 1.6 percent difference is small. Finland is the only nation to report on survival rate in this study.

2.3 United States

Migrant students in the US are behind in performance on reading and math tests in spite of the fact that a 2010 federal law set a goal for all pupils to pass these tests by 2014.²⁶ Migrant background children are provided with educational and supportive services that take into account their special needs. In addition, the Binational Migrant Education Initiative (BMEI) was started by individual states that have a population that migrates between Mexico and the United States.²⁷ The intent is to coordinate activities among US States and Mexican States and to improve the continuity of educational and social services for students who migrate between the two nations.

Primary Education Statistics for the United States²⁸

Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	102
Primary school participation, Gross enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	101.1
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	95.4
Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	96.1
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, male	–
Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio (%) 2008-2012*, female	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, admin. data	–
Primary school participation, Survival rate to last primary grade (%) , 2008-2012*, survey data	–

In favor of migrant background children, the US Supreme Court decided in *Plyler vs. Doe* (457 U.S. 202 (1982)) that children, with or without documents, have the right to attend public primary and secondary schools.²⁹ Children, with or without documents, are required by law to attend school up to the mandated age. School personnel may not inquire about legal status. Twenty-five percent of all migrant minors are of limited English proficiency.³⁰ The Anchor School Project uses a technology-based solution to provide some continuity for migrant students and their families. The project gives laptop computers to participating families. Parents must learn to use the computer and agree to help all of the children in the family use the computer for academic work.

As the families move from Illinois to Florida via North and South Carolina, Anchor School staff go into every local school the migrant children attend and set up a portable network which allows the pupils to connect to the Internet. This allows students to get language help when they need it. In addition to setting up the network the Anchor instructional support staff provide professional development to local teachers so that they can work effectively with migrant students.³¹ The Anchor School helps students create an electronic portfolio on a CD with their achievements per state standards, and examples of their work. Gargiulo, Inc., a produce grower located in Immokalee and Jupiter, Florida, and in Watsonville, California, which employs many families participating in Anchor School, has partnered with the Anchor School, as has AmeriCorps. Another approach, the Kentucky Migrant Technology Project (KMTP) has three main components. Student-family educators work directly with students, tutoring and helping students stay focused in school. A virtual school with more than 50 online courses showcasing educational resources that can be accessed which overcomes mobility problems and where students can make up courses or get extra help. KMTP also uses PDAs (personal digital assistants), portable technology that students can use even if they don't have an Internet connection. The PDAs store resources like a Spanish-English dictionary. They have a collapsible keyboard that unfolds so that students can write essays and homework assignments. Infrared technology transfers the work to the teacher's PDA. The PDA is an affordable solution which is not dependent on having an Internet connection.

In 2015, one out of every four children in the US is an immigrant or the US-born child of immigrants yet many schools are not equipped to meet their needs.

²⁶ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/06/AR2010110601777.html> accessed 29 July 2015.

²⁷ <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/tchrqual/learn/binational.html> accessed 29 July 2015.

²⁸ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/usa_statistics.html#117 accessed 9 August 2015.

²⁹ <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/ImmigrantRights.aspx> accessed 26 July 2015.

³⁰ <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED394305.pdf> accessed 29 July 2015.

³¹ http://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/tech085.shtml accessed 29 July 2015.

Migrant background children are often learning two languages, which is an asset, but many schools have yet to support this. Bilingual education programs are available in certain areas of the US, but they create a lot of discussion, falling into and out of favor. Special after school tutoring is available to migrant background students. Immigrant children bring diverse cultural backgrounds to the school and expose their peers and teachers to different ways of looking at the world. Cultural competency is important in the educational setting and causes teachers see themselves as lifelong learners who will encounter new cultures in the classroom.³² The United States has programs to help Spanish-speaking migrant children and some minority languages where they are concentrated in a particular area. However it does not foster the continued learning of the student's first language. The 95.75 percent net enrolment rate is good but we lack figures on the survival rate to the last primary grade.

3. Conclusions

Competence in the national language is clearly necessary for educational achievement and for students to have a sense of belonging. Structured teaching of the *lingua franca* is more effective than leaving children to “absorb” the language on their own. The EUMC study of 2004, commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture, found that second language programmes are available in all fifteen Member States which were included in the study, but these may ignore minority languages. Meanwhile many nations not included in this survey simply expect migrant background students to “absorb” the national language without any assistance. Putting in effort and time on the *lingua franca* is key to a sense of belonging and academic achievement. Progress in the first language can be reached after a command of the national language by teaching it in the general curriculum for learning other languages but this is not offered in many places. Assessment for special education should ascertain true need for this, as migrant background children are over-represented in special needs classes. Experts advise that migrant students should be given third and fourth chances on tests.

Bilingual programmes, assimilative learning, reception programmes and second language programmes are offered in different countries. Some of these include technology to assist learning with computers or PDAs. Germany, Eritrea and the United States have programs that follow migrant students and some experts believe these to be the most effective. Certainly a mobile school would prolong the duration of attendance and prevent some drop outs. Finland's reception programme seems to offer a lot of success but they are dealing with a relatively small number of migrants. Because of variations in reporting, we are unable to ascertain which of the surveyed countries offers the most effective program. So, for now, the effectiveness of of these programs relies only on anecdotal evidence, not on statistics. We do know that formal teaching of the national language is more effective than leaving children to “absorb” the language on their own. Few countries provide support for minority languages to be learned beyond the level at which the student enrolls in school.

Table 1: Population of Primary School age and Children out of School by MDG region, 2007

MDG region	Population of primary school age as percent of total population	Children of primary school age out of school (%)
Developed countries	6.4	4.6
Commonwealth of Independent States	4.6	6.8
Eastern Asia	7.1	0.8
South-Eastern Asia	10.8	6.5
Oceania	14.5	17.1
Southern Asia	10.8	20.0
Western Asia	12.5	12.5
Northern Africa	11.9	5.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	16.5	36.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	10.3	7.2
World	9.8	15.5

Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UNICEF, UN Population Division.

³² <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/14/12/education-immigrant-children> accessed 26 Jul 2015.

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