PUBLIC OR INTERNATIONAL? MIGRATING STUDENTS IN TWO TYPES OF SCHOOLS OF POZNAŃ.

INTRODUCTION

Migrations have changed since last century. While at the beginning of the twentieth century people mostly emigrated permanently to the USA, Canada or Western European countries, in the twenty-first century, permanent migrations are not as common anymore. The mass influence of globalization on our everyday life and the development of tools have enabled us to communicate and send information, photos, money and other valuable things quickly, cheaply and without borders. Consequently, migration has become achievable for anyone, preparations to move have become possible even in short time periods, and migration projects are no longer perceived as final and complete. Moreover, those who have tried to live as a “modern vagabond” can always come back to the country of origin, settle down for some time, and move again. In such a framework, it is extremely interesting to study the population of children who were born while migrating, for whom migration is an inherent part of their lives, influencing their perceptions of reality.

I assumed the modern liquidity and unpredictability of migration should be taken into consideration when choosing respondents for my study. Thus, the sample involved three categories of students from public and private schools. The first category covered foreign-born children with no connection to Poland who came to the country with their parents and began attending educational institutions in Poznań. The second group included Polish citizen children with at least one Polish parent. The third category included children of migrant parents who did not migrate themselves, but experienced longer or shorter periods of separation from their parents who migrated outside of Poland for work. This
taxonomy has been constructed solely for the purpose of organizing my research material; the reality is much more complex and complicated. Indeed, there were instances of children whose parents had left Poland permanently, returning home only for holidays, or those whose parents worked abroad seasonally. Some could be called “patchwork migrant families”. For example, two Polish children were adopted by a Polish-Spanish couple; they went to Spain and received Spanish citizenships, but after three years came back to Poland. The children had problems with the Polish language at school and were living with their non-Polish-speaking mother; ultimately, they had to return (or migrate) to Spain again due to reasons unrelated to their education. These children were perceived neither as foreigners nor as citizens, but encountered similar problems as all children with migrant histories.

In my research, I tried to explore the trajectories of migrating children in the context of their education process, which not only is the most time-consuming part of their lives but also appears to be a crucial determinant in their futures. The main research question concerned the role of schools in re/integrating students into the Polish educational system. I proposed the hypothesis that the outcome of integration varies depending on choice of school – public or private. However, during my fieldwork, it became evident that even if both types of schools had different languages and curricula, the ways of working with migrating pupils were similar to some extent. Regardless of the individual life trajectories of the students, the schools expected obvious and predictable patterns of migration – either the children would stay in a country permanently and attend the school or the children would immigrate somewhere else and leave the school. This factor – educator expectations – can have more consequences on migrant children’s experiences than the differences between type of school – public or private.

This article is based on an exploratory ethnographic study run in 2010 and in 2013. I interviewed teachers and headmasters twice and observed children in the school environment – in both public and private schools in Poznań, Poland. I was able to talk to some parents, and I made some observations of their homes. During the three-year period between my interviews, the situations of my cases changed significantly – the children grew up, some children moved to other schools, some parents moved to other countries or decided to settle down in Poland, some school principals changed. Because of the dynamism of these situations, I experienced difficulties maintaining contact with some cases. A couple of “good respondents” who gave me detailed information in 2010 disappeared (probably migrating again) before I could interview them in 2013, and I could not continue the research with them. After three years, I returned to four schools (three public and one private) and three families to deepen my data and compare conclusions. It was extremely interesting to meet them again, see their problems with a time-
perspective and observe the solutions they undertook. The schools also changed – some students left, but new migrants also appeared. Even if the conducted study did not provide me with a full picture of changes in the children’s lives, it helped me better understand their motivations and needs. I noticed that some problems which stayed with them over the course of observation may have changed in definition but unfortunately were not solved.

POZNAŃ AS A FIELD

Although Poznań – one of the biggest cities in Poland – is not a multiethnic place (Buchowski, Schmidt 2012: 11), foreigners have become more visible there thanks to institutions such as the Poznan International Fairs, the leader of Polish exhibition industry, and other internationalized companies as well as cheap flights opportunities. Every year local citizens are getting more used to tourists and visitors from all over the world. The city is known in Poland for its strong economy, and natives believe that this stereotype attracts investors from abroad.

Statistical data show that around 4,500 foreigners live in 2012 in Poznań; most of whom are Ukrainians, Germans, Russians and Belorussians. Smaller groups include Chinese and Turkish foreigners (Bloch, Czerniejewska, Main 2012: 53). In the city, the majority of foreigners belong to privileged groups – they are either medical students receiving education in English (coming from Taiwan, USA, Canada or Norway) or business people from Western European countries (Germany, the Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Belgium and Denmark).

Although the numbers of foreigners in total are not growing, each year there are more foreign children in schools (see: Table 1). In 2009, there were 114 pupils, in 2010, 132 students, and in 2011 and 2012, over 160 students.1 About 60 per cent of all students attend international schools, and the other 40 per cent is spread in about 40 public schools. It is notable that given the small number of foreign children, quite a large number of public schools interact with them.

Moreover, even if the number of foreigners is not growing, there is an increasing amount of people who have migrant experience themselves or in their households. This may include families coming back to Poland after living abroad, children “left behind” by their parents, or other more complex stories of living in different places.

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1 Data from Education Information System (EIS) 2009–2012.
Table 1. Numbers of foreign students at public and international schools in Poznań

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Numbers of foreign students at schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In international schools</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In public schools</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of public schools</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed by the author, based on Education Information System (EIS) in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. Data from 2009 was verified and corrected by the author because the statistical numbers were equivocal.

While migrant students in Poznań may not be of sufficient size to be noticed by the local policymakers or media, the relatively intimate Poznań migrant milieu has advantages for a researcher. It makes a “cozy place” for research – a laboratory to measure changes in schools and how they influence migrant pupils over the years.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

My theoretical approach of this research was to look at the migration of pupils as a part of a greater phenomenon called “new” migration; a term frequently conceptualized in literature as: incomplete (Okólski 2001), transnational (Vertovec 1999), liquid (Bauman 2007), or superdiverse (Vertovec 2007). All of these characteristics fit the young group of migrants I interviewed. Their migration frequently was not finished, but had significant impacts on their present and future lives. They were still immature – being in the age of identity transformation – but their traveling provided an enriching life experience.

Another approach drove me to think about the human capital young migrants built while migrating. King and Findlay noticed that for university students, migration can be seen as a “brain exchange” among the highly developed countries (2012: 263). If so, why should we omit pupils with their capital? Therefore, I look on young migrants as a highly skilled group with undiscovered potential. Those who attend the international school in Poznań, so called “third culture kids (TCK)” (Baker Cottrell 2001; 2012), are educated to become “valuable world citizens” (International School of Poznań, website). They improve their English and are prepared to continue their education at prestigious universities around the world. The group of migrants taking part in public education is also well-trained – aside from their regular education, they receive language proficiency
and fluency in Polish, without any additional courses. This approach of treating students as added value brought me to think about migrant students and their undiscovered potential. Most pupils are at least bilingual, and many of them experience culture shock (as they live in foreign contexts); consequently, their intercultural competencies are much more developed than their non-migrating Polish schoolmates.

The third approach looks at a child as a free, independent and strong person, not as a helpless and defenseless infant. This approach posits that children are not vulnerable but rather resilient, commenting: “Child migrants often play an active role in assessing their own situation, making decisions about their life trajectories, and negotiating the challenges and opportunities posed by displacement” (Ensor and Goździak 2010: 3). They have parents, but migration experiences imprint on them – and consequently their future lives, their decisions on where to live, their thoughts on if it is better to settle down or not, and their ideas on what to do in life – individually. The research of Ann Baker Cottrell (2001) confirms that experience of migration play significant roles in their future lives.

If schools took into consideration these theories and put them into practice in the educational process, migrant students would take advantage of more opportunities to utilize the potential derived from migration. They would be perceived as valuable students with the unusual potential to bridge cultures and understand different perspectives as well as present strong and influential personalities. If teachers bore in mind that their students were in the migration process, without expectations of the final decision parents would make regarding their country of work, it would provide students a feeling of acceptance, of both their individual situation and their individual skills, both types of schools – public and private – would work better, and educational experiences would support the personality of children. However my study argues that the intercultural capital of migrating children is still invisible to schoolteachers and principals. The problem is the ignorance of the liquidity concept, which prevents teachers from freeing their minds and perceiving children as being here and there or elsewhere.

PUBLIC OR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS?

Migrating children while in Poznań can choose between a public or international school to continue their education. The two types of school (public or non-public\(^2\)), even if both follow the governmental core curriculum, differ

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\(^2\) Non-public school with a competence of a public school. In the researched international school the curriculum is authorized by the IBO (International Baccalaureate Organization) to teach
a lot: they have distinct languages of teaching (English or Polish), methodologies, mission statements, and even relationships between school, pupils and parents. These various approaches influence the adaptation of children to the school system and also to their social network. On the other hand, teachers and principals in both types of schools do not differ in perceptions of migrating children. They both assume the process of migration has finished and either that the children are going to assimilate with society (in public schools) or that the children are the children of businessmen who come to Poland for a few years’ contracts and will not stay in society (in the international school).

According to the numbers, in the international school, the number of foreigners is apparent, and as the headmaster said: “They have always a priority to attend the school.” In 2009, foreign students comprised 10 per cent of the total school population (30 pupils). In 2012, there were over 60 foreign persons and at least 20 students with Polish as their secondary citizenship. There were also some pupils whose parents lived abroad. It is extremely important that most of the foreign pupils in the school are typical TCK; they study at the school for a short period of time – a year, a year and a half, or as long as their parent’s work contract. Most of them are expats, but some families stay longer, even declaring to stay permanently. The influence of the stereotypes of TCK pupils, who will not stay permanently, on the equal treatment of all foreign pupils in the international school should be studied in-depth. From some cases I encountered, these perceptions also have negative consequences for the adaptation of children.

In the public schools I visited, the foreign children were a new phenomenon, and usually there were just one or two foreign persons in the school, comprising much less than 1 per cent of all pupils. Those children who adapted well usually stayed until they finished school. Most of the children who attend the public schools are pupils who decide to live permanently in Poland, pupils who were born in Poland or pupils from mixed marriages. There are also children of parents who migrated and left children behind, but there are no statistics on the numbers of these students attending public or private schools in Poznań.

As we know, schools influence the future lives of children (Szymański 2013); thus, the choice of school is important for the parents, especially while migrating. The decision is usually taken according to some reason, such as: migration plans of parents (if they plan to go to another country, return to their country of origin, or remain in Poland), language proficiency in English and Polish (if Polish is the mother tongue for parents or a second language), family situation (if

one of parents is a Pole, if the child is bilingual), official school rankings (high or low), economic issues, as well as other reasons (Czerniejewska 2010: 61). Moreover, there are other some obvious and unobvious practices that encourage pupils and/or parents to choose a public or private school. I will go through some of these practices to illustrate the situations of migrant children in the school environment.

**LANGUAGES TO LEARN**

All lessons in public school are taught in the Polish language, except for foreign language classes. There are some bilingual schools in Poznań in which curriculum is run in two languages (e.g., Polish and French), but they were not taken into consideration in this research. The Polish language is commonly described by foreigners as difficult, and indeed, many foreign students have problems with it. Nevertheless, teachers should be aware of other difficulties a migrating child may have, aside from the obvious language barrier, such as: cultural misunderstandings, problems in adapting to a new school, lack of information in his/her native language, problems being accepted by peers or feeling of being a stranger, etc. Moreover, a child can have other family, health, social, economic problems or some unrelated difficulties in classes (e.g., math) (OECD 2006).

In the literature, the language barrier is often mentioned as the first problem that must be solved in Polish schools (Smoter 2006: 17; Pogorzała 2012: 254). Teachers often blame language for all troubles they have with a child; therefore, they believe the best solution is to provide language support. Since 2009, any foreign child or Polish citizen child with language problems can attend additional lessons of Polish provided by the school for one year, two or more hours a week (Dz. U. z 2009 r. Nr 56, poz. 458).

During my fieldwork, I also noticed this language-orientated approach; moreover, for many teachers, it didn’t matter if the parent was Polish or not. A teacher working with a boy whose father is Italian and mother is Polish, but speaks to her children in Italian, was discussing the necessity of speaking in two different languages to the boy: “I have objections to that. The mother made it up.” She was negative toward the idea of bilingualism, especially because “sometimes he cannot find a proper word” [PL-IT/m/7/20133]. She repeated the words of a speech therapist who asked the mother to talk to her son in Polish because

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3 The codes indicate the cases of children. The first capital letters indicate country of origin (or citizenship of two parents), the lowercase letters indicate sex (m – male, f – female), the first num-
of his speech impediment. Similarly, in 2010, a teacher I met complained about a Kurdish mum who does not practice Polish with her son but continues speaking to him in her native language [IQ/m/8/2010]. Three years later, educators realized that language problems were not the child’s only challenges [IQ/m/11/2013]; however for several years, his teachers and mother focused their efforts on improving the language and vocal skills of the boy, ignoring other problems.

In the international school, all lessons are in English, and the program differs from public curriculum according to the program of international education (IBO). But even if the official language of the school is English and all lessons are in English, during breaks, pupils and staff speak their native languages. As the principal told me, and students confirmed, in their free time students meet in small ethnic groups. In some cases, due to the language barrier, students spend time alone and don’t integrate with other peers. Those who don’t speak Polish are unable to connect with locals; consequently, they prefer to spend time with family and self-study, rationalizing that “education is most important in their lives”. On the other hand, they don’t have much of a choice.

In the case of a Danish boy who attended the international school for eight years and whose parents said he spoke good Polish, the child admitted, “It is enough to order a hamburger, but not to speak with mates” [DK/m/18/2010]. Usually during school breaks, he listened to the conversation and if he understood, he continued in English, but he was not always able to carry on in English. As the only foreigner in his class, he didn’t have any Polish friends; afterschool, he didn’t spend time with Poles. The young boy admitted he spent his free time alone, reading, playing piano; the last time he went to the cinema was four years ago [DK/m/18/2010]. While this is just one example, it clearly shows how patterns of the school can leave an imprint on a child’s life.

The case of a Dutch family differs a lot: the children attended the English-speaking school, but knew Polish and spent much time with Polish colleagues [NL/m/10/2010; NL/f/8/2010 and NL/m/13/2013; NL/f/11/2013]. They did not alienate themselves from the society. As opposed to the Danish boy who planned to attend university in some other country, the family planned on staying in Poland. Consequently, they paid attention to local language and social network of children with natives. They had a Polish babysitter for the youngest baby who spoke Polish to her; the older children attended local kindergartens. The mother told me: “[My] daughter is choosing Polish friends, because they are not going to leave the country, they are staying” [NL/f/11/2013]. She also planned to send the youngest daughter [NL/f/4/2013] to another school, private but Polish. The

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[1] The number represents age and the second, the year of research. All data is available at the author’s database. Some interviews with the teachers and principals are also included.
strategy taken by the family was in response to the influence of the English-speaking school, suited perfectly to a typical TCK, but is not fully adjustable for those who plan to stay.

The international school offers Polish language classes and integration events in the school, designed to solve the aforementioned issues. In 2010, Polish classes were not obligatory in the school. Moreover, a proposal from the school principal to run some classes in Polish was unwelcome by parents: “Some mums were unsatisfied, that their children must learn such unimportant language, so they contested the sense of attending the lessons” [International School/2010]. In 2013, Polish classes were made obligatory twice a week, divided in age groups.

Now, finally, in both types of schools, Polish language classes exist, but the problem of integrating migrant children with peers in the school is not solved. In my opinion, language is not the only problem. The main issue here is a hidden assumption of the major aim of the school. Public schools put huge efforts on adaptation to the language and maintaining the average teaching of the school. The international school puts its efforts on adaptation to the school and improving the level of education. Pupils learn language and the school’s culture through school socialization, especially at the beginning. Some pupils enter “zero class”, where they are supposed to learn English but also are introduced to the values and practices of the school. None of the schools assume that it is their task to prepare migrant children to live in Polish society or to facilitate integration with local children and society.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Another important issue, after verbal communication and the transfer of knowledge in common language, is teachers’ knowledge of other cultures. As Halik, Nowicka and Poleć wrote (2006), generally speaking, teachers and principals in public schools have little knowledge about the cultures and countries of origin of their students. During my research, quite often I noticed they made mistakes about the nationalities and citizenships of children and the languages they spoke before coming to Poland. In several cases, teachers did not even have a basic cultural understanding, e.g., a child coming from Azerbaijan was called Armenian, a Hindi girl was thought to have come from Indonesia, and regarding one boy, a school pedagogue said: “He is from… he came from Mińsk… so he is… hmmm?” (Belarusian). Teachers have not recognized the link between the country of origin and the culture of a pupil; rather, they believe they don’t need to know this information (a school is not obliged to write the nationality of a child).
Teachers and school counselors are not expected to be experts on the cultural environments of their pupils, but they should be able to name a child’s country of origin at least. With an awareness of cultural characteristics and background information on the country of origin, teachers could expedite understanding and, ultimately, teaching. In one school, I interviewed a school psychologist about children whose parents migrated to another country; the psychologist did not know where the parent or parents had gone and did not even notice when the child had joined a parent abroad for a couple of months. She was, however, pretty sure about the behavioral problems caused by migration of parents [PL/m/18/2011]. Nevertheless, the psychologist was very helpful and interested in the research.4

In both types of schools, the pupils’ culture is not essential knowledge – at least teachers do not recognize it as important. In public schools, teachers do not know because they are not trained in multicultural education issues. They often do not see the connection between knowing the culture and teaching the child. In private school, knowledge of other cultures is considered important, especially when part of school curriculum, but it is seen as additional and not as valuable to be learned. One of the teachers of the school said about foreign pupils: “They don’t know their cultures, I know more about it, I teach them it.” He explained that they are globalized children who don’t experience cultural shock at all [International school, teacher, 2010].

INDIVIDUAL CASES, PARTICULAR ATTENTION

Foreign children in the international school are “visit cards” of the school; they legitimize the existence of the school. They are treated with special care, maybe with just a bit more attention, than other school students. Children have small classes, friendly teachers, and staff at their disposal. In this environment, the strengths of each pupil are fostered and weaknesses are seen as opportunities to overcome. Children are motivated to do a lot of individual work, some of which is voluntary work for the social community (Community in Service for younger pupils or Creativity Action Service for older students).

In public schools, foreign pupils in Poznań are still a unique phenomenon. Compared to pupils attending schools in the capital of Poland or located nearby

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4 I encountered a similar attitude several times in my fieldwork; therefore I find this as an important observation: teachers, school counselors and principals, even if they were helpful and ready to introduce the case of a pupil for the researcher, often did not have the full picture of the child’s situation. Therefore an interview with a pupil (and if possible with parent or parents) was necessary to understand the case.
the asylum-seekers centers (Kosowicz 2007; Iglicka, Gmaj 2012), those in Poznań schools have different circumstances and individual problems; therefore, they receive particular attention.

In my fieldwork, I noticed the engagement of teachers who felt they had a special mission when teaching an alien. Usually they were very empathetic, working cooperatively with other teachers, discussing the problems of a child, and offering help. Teachers often initiated help. For example, take the case of a Hindi girl born in Canada [CA/f/8/2013]. She started the school at the age of five and was doing quite well, but in the second grade she went with her mother to Canada for a couple of months. They planned to come back to Poland, so the girl did not partake in any education in Canada. But when she returned to Poland, she had forgotten a lot of what she had learned in Polish school, especially vocabulary. Therefore the teachers organized for special learning support during summer holidays and gave her Polish classes for some time. It was not their obligation; rather, they felt it was their “moral duty”. Now she is in third grade and still has extra lessons to improve her language skills [CA/f/8/2013]. I was surprised to learn that after three years of education, she still receives four additional lessons to learn Polish. Another case illustrates how teachers in public schools were more inclined towards meeting the needs of a child and his or her future plans. In this case, Polish parents of siblings born in the United States decided that the mother and children would live in Poland. The boy, however, missed his father and was convinced the family would return to join him. He didn’t have friends and didn’t want to study in Polish school. His teacher said, that if she knew: “they are coming back to the States, she would give him promotion to second class, but if they are staying here, it would be better not to give him” [PL-USA/m/8/2010]. Teachers facilitated the process of getting to know the school as soon as possible, even outside the timetable of the school year. In private school, children could attend the school for a week (for free) to check if they really liked it and if they would be able to learn. But also in a public school, I encountered the practice of preparing pupils to attend school; one principal said: “Children got to school in May [almost the end of school year]. But I offered them [the opportunity] to come in June. They could adapt to the school and learn some Polish, before the semester

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5 She started the school one year earlier with six-year-old Polish mates. Due to education reform, this was the first year in Poland in which children could start education at the age of six or – still according to old regulation – at the age of seven.

6 According to the Polish law, a student who has language problems can receive two or more hours of Polish classes a week for one year of education (Dz. U. z 2009 r. Nr 56, poz. 458 and Dz.U. z 2010 r. nr 57, poz. 361). In practice, schools don’t deliver more than the minimum requirement of two hours.
starts. They had quite a lot of mistakes” [PL-ES/m/8/2013; PL-ES/f/12/2013]. This individual approach is very important in teaching migrant students, and this practice was common in both types of schools in Poznań.

When a child has difficulty with classes (because of language barrier or other inability), the solution generally comes when the parents were willing to talk or were assertive enough to negotiate and establish a strategy and share tasks and responsibilities in implementing the solution. In the private school, parents initiating discussions on how to improve the learning process when there is a problem is the norm. A Dutch parent who recognized some learning difficulties of her daughter convinced the principal to find a way to diagnose dyslexia, dysorthographia, and dyscalculia [NL/f/11/2013]. It was ultimately also possible to organize speech therapy sessions during school hours.

Negotiations are possible in public schools as well. The father of Canadian children (he was Polish, but the children were born in Canada and spoke only English) voluntarily supported the teaching process of his children during lessons. He came to the school every day to attend lessons with his oldest son; the father spoke Polish and was able to translate for the son. Unfortunately, he was too loud and disturbed the other children; so after a short period of time, other parents complained that did not want his presence in the lessons. In the end, the headmaster found external volunteers to help the children [CA/ m/11/2010].

All of the given examples happened in both types – private and public – of schools; so I assume that they are not the result of special treatment due to the type of school. It is possible that children received particular attention because of they were foreigners or migrants, but this assumption should be verified by further research.

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Don’t look at cultural differences as an obstacle**

  The study indicates that – in both types of school – a pupil is an object to teach. The main obstacle in the process of teaching is lack of language proficiency, either Polish (in public schools) or English (in private schools). Teachers see cultural differences not as “added value”, but as an “added trouble” that makes the teaching process more difficult. Therefore teachers try to neutralize problems caused by cultural differences by including the “Polish factor”, e.g., proposing additional lessons of Polish, suggesting more contacts with Polish mates outside the school. Moreover, the perception of cultural differences as an obstacle always appears when a child with a distinct cultural background has any problems; parents are accused of not speaking Polish to children or chided for not teaching
Polish as the first language to children. This problem also appears when parents leave the country or even when a child migrated with the family.

- **Recognize positive aspects of the migration**

  Teachers are not inclined toward recognizing the positive consequences of migration. They do not see that migrant children are often more responsible, understand the value of money and construct their identities in the context of migration. A child’s migration gives a lot of opportunities – new languages, adaptation skills, the experience of cultural shock and the ability to negotiate different cultures. Experiencing migration empowers children to not be afraid of living outside their country and to understand the consequences of living abroad, a lesson which can contribute to children’s human capital in the future.

- **Use the potential of migrant child**

  In my research I noticed that teachers ignore the potentials of their pupils. I intrusively asked how they involved foreign children in the lessons; teachers usually answer that if there is an opportunity, they ask foreign pupils to “tell something about their country”. However, in many circumstances, they are blind to the cultural potential of those pupils. Having a Belarusian boy in a class, a teacher confirmed: “The school is having good contacts with Belarus, they had school exchanges, thus they know a lot, but better ask another teacher about it.” Responding to my direct question if the boy spoke his native language, the teacher tried to omit the answer rather than confess her ignorance [BY/m/10/2013]. Paradoxically, teachers ignore the opportunity to learn from the Belarusian boy’s personal knowledge and experiences but are willing to learn from organized school exchanges, neglecting the opportunity to use a child’s human capital.

**EPILOGUE. THREE YEARS LATER…**

It is rather impossible to measure the end of integration process. Sometimes due to the introduction of new data, old incomprehensive issues can easily be recognized and understood after time had passed. Consequently, approaching the same respondent some time later or following respondents for a couple of months or even years can provide in-depth empirical insight.

The following case explains the opportunities that can be garnered by long-term or repeatable research. I first met this Armenian boy when he was seven years old and attending the first grade; he was labeled by parents as “a naughty boy” [AM/m/7/2010]. The boy started his education in the Polish kindergarten, and the principal of his school noted: “[The boy] does not have language
problems.” When interviewing the family again three years later, the family had
moved to a new flat, and the boy had changed schools. He had to adapt again to
the new class and school, but there was no need for additional Polish classes. He
was satisfied with the change of schools: “I like the school more, than a previous
one, I have good colleagues here” [AM/m/10/2013]. However, in the new school,
the principal and teachers noticed behavioral problems:

He came in third class. In the class some children started to call him ‘Rumun’
(which is offensive word, similar to Gipsy). He has different appearance. It is
important to kill it [reluctance] in the moment it emerges (zdusić w zarodku). The
boy was aggressive, and children were competing and fighting quite often. The
situation got better now, but the father also works on that.

The teacher of the boy concluded:

He was frightened. He had an assumption, that he will be not accepted, because
he is a foreigner. When something went wrong, he was becoming aggressive. He
misunderstood emotions of others. First two months were tough. Now… step by
step… of course there are punches, but as usually in sport.

The parents had a different perspective. The father explained that the boy had
problems adapting in the new school, but not because of the fact he is a foreigner.
The parents thought that the child was “naughty”, but they tried to bring him up
the best they could: “It is difficult nowadays, formerly children were different, we
also went crazy, but another way. There is no respect toward older people these
days.” The father felt responsible for bringing up his son and he worked with him,
but still the father was not satisfied. This echoed the same narratives I heard three
years ago, but this time I was more perceptive. I recognized something that was
slightly visible in my first interviews, but now came to the surface: everybody
in the family missed the country they left – the father, mother, grandmother
(also living with them), and younger sister. All of them told me stories from
Armenia, showing me pictures and movies. I could hear, see, and feel how much
they missed their family, and it was noticeable that “the feeling of missing” was
a crucial characteristic of this family.

I do not guarantee answers, but I can formulate a couple of questions about
the impacts of family atmosphere, values, and cultural approach on children’s
integration in schools and behavior with their peer groups. In conclusion, I can
say that I lack complex studies of migrants’ children situation, but returning to the
same respondents after time gave me a much deeper picture and even helped me
recognize other influences on integration.
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