**The situation of migrant children in the
Hungarian and the Austrian education
system: Multilingualism, interculturalism,
and integration**

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Abstract

The migration crisis of the past few years has influenced Hungary and Austria; therefore, migration, as well as its linguistic effect on society and education, and the cultural and social variation came to the front in both countries' educational policies. Nonetheless, while Austria is a well-developed welfare country, and according to Esping-Andersen's analysis, a conservative/corporatist welfare regime, Hungary is a post-communist developing welfare state, which is currently conservative. In terms of their divergent historical and political trajectories, immigration policy, the number of immigrants, their native language, and country of origin, the two countries present significant differences. It is controversial whether education has a crucial role in economic and social integration of migrants. Despite contextual differences, Austrian and Hungarian educational systems are confronted with challenges emerging from the presence of migrant children in education. The aim of this article is to present the Austrian and Hungarian models with regard to migrant children in formal education: at macro level to identify the educational policies applying to migrant children, analyzing the syllabuses that provide control in the consistency of education, and at micro level analyzing the implementation of these guidelines and the syllabuses in the pedagogical practice and the challenges for educational integration.

Keywords: migration, multilingualism, interculturalism, integration

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Introduction

Migration in Hungary and Austria

There is a significant difference between Hungary and Austria in terms of migration. Regarding global migration patterns, Hungary cannot be considered as an immigration country, even though since 2015, the Hungarian government has been giving the impression that the country itself had become one, and it must cope with the influx of migrants. In reality, however, migration follows traditions and patterns that historically existed; thus, Hungary – mostly because of its geographical and economic situation – has not become an immigration country (Juhász, Molnár, & Zgut, 2017), and, therefore, the number of immigrants in the country is still low. On the contrary, starting from the 1960s, among the Western European countries, Austria has been one of the preferred destination countries of immigrants arriving from outside Europe; therefore, the number of immigrants in the country is high, too. Both the determination of the number of migrant background population and the number of migrant background children learning in schools depend on how that country defines migrants and migrant background people. Due to the growing number of immigrants, in countries where the number of migrant background residents is high, the definition of migration and migrant background people has been separated from that of foreign nationals. In Germany, migrant background was defined in 2006 (Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung, 2006), according to which, irrespective of their nationalities, children of immigrants or descendants of children of immigrants, i.e., the grandchildren of immigrants are considered migrant background people. In Austria, the definition of migrant background is narrower in official statistics: people who were born abroad or who are foreign nationals, or both, are considered foreign nationals (Specht, 2009). In Hungary, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office maintains record of the population and migration by nationality.

Based on the data of EUROSTAT 2017,² the ratio of foreign population in Hungary is 1.5%, whereas it is significantly higher by 15.2% in Austria. As for the foreign population's breakdown by nationality (Figure 1), the proportion of European Union (EU) member state citizens and non-EU member state citizens is 50%–50% in both countries. The number of stateless persons in Hungary is very small, i.e., around 100, whereas in Austria this number is 45,000.

According to the distribution of the population who were born abroad by the country of their origins (Figure 2), in Hungary, the majority (63%) of these people was born in an EU member state. Two third of them come from four neighboring countries (Romania,

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics/hu#Migr.C3.A1ci.C3.B3s_C3.A1raml.C3.A1sok_2_milli.C3.B3_bev.C3.A1ndorl.C3.B3_az_Uni.C3.B3n_k.C3.ADv.C3.BCcli_orsz.C3.A1gokb.C3.B3l

Figure 1. Non-national population by groups of citizenship 2017 (% of the population)

Figure 2. Foreign-born population by country of birth 2017 (% of the population)

Ukraine, Slovakia, and Serbia), and the majority of those who were not born in the EU (9% of the total number of people born abroad) is mainly from Asian countries (Papp, 2017). In Austria, on the other hand, the majority of these people (56%) was born in a non-EU country.

As for the territorial positioning of immigrants in Hungary, they typically live in and around Budapest (Feischmidt & Nyíri, 2006). Furthermore, they organize themselves in terms of geography and connections according to their countries of origin, and live in the districts appropriate for their levels of income (Gödrö & Tóth, 2004). In Austria, the concentration of migrants can also be observed: in certain areas, mainly in urban agglomeration, the ratio of immigrants exceeds 20% of local population. Based on data of 2017, the proportion of people with foreign background is the highest in Vienna, the capital (39.9%), which is twice the country average (21.1%). Within Vienna, networking according to the people's origin can also be observed, and the immigrants are typically concentrated in certain districts of Vienna. As for the distribution by provinces, the proportion of the foreign-born population in Vorarlberg is the second highest after Vienna (23.3%) and it is the lowest in Burgenland (12.1%; Bundesanstalt Statistik Österreich, 2018).

In Hungary, the society's attitude toward immigrants defers from the usual European and American discourse, which differentiates between legal and illegal immigration, since the

Hungarian people do not accept any form of migration, and basically think it is a deviant conduct (Tóth, 1996). International surveys also prove that, concerning European countries, the most xenophobic attitude can be experienced in Hungary (Csepeli & Örkény, 1998). Migration-related public discourse in Hungary has been primarily shaped by the policy of the Orbán government through its intense and persistent anti-immigration campaigns conducted for electoral gains. This was made possible by the fact that, in the absence of a significant number of immigrants, the Hungarian society does not have realistic picture or information about immigrants; therefore, it does not question the truth or the validity of the campaigns either. The attitude of society is well illustrated by the fact that, despite the low number of immigrants in Eastern Europe, the public seems to believe that the number of migrants in Hungary is too high, and the population considers immigration to be one of the main problems affecting the country. The Eurobarometer survey found that 3% of Hungarians considered migration an important challenge in 2013 – and this ratio increased to 65% by the summer of 2015. This drastic increase within a very short time period, in fact between the spring and autumn of 2015, was due to the appearance and visibility of immigrants and the ongoing anti-immigration campaign. In 2017, in Hungary, still 27% of the respondents consider immigration as one of the most pressing problems, which is only preceded by issues of healthcare and social security (Juhász et al., 2017). According to the survey of TÁRKI (a social research institute) conducted in 2016, anti-refugee rhetoric reached an unrecorded scale in Hungary. Fifty-three percent of the respondents reject the reception of asylum seekers, 46% of them would consider reception, and only 1% would accept asylum seekers (Simonovits et al., 2016).

Near refugee camps, school enrollment of migrant children is also problematic, because of the protests of local parents. Xenophobia, intolerance, and the criminalization of migration are the characteristics of both the political discussion and the public discourse; migration is not observed as the natural process of globalization and modern societies, and from the perspective of the hosting societies, the presence of migrants is considered as a burden and a source of danger (Feischmidt & Nyíri, 2006).

Migrant students in the education system – Education statistics

In Hungary, the methodology of statistical data documentation concerning migrant students is insufficiently developed; there is not even a consensus regarding the definition of the group since they are called, among others, migrant students, foreign students, non-Hungarian-speaking students, and students of non-Hungarian nationality. Even though being born abroad and not having Hungarian citizenship do not consider this linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, statistical data regarding the number of migrant students can be grasped primarily along these categories of census data (Jakab, 2011). According to these data, in the target group of public education attendees

(5–19 year olds) in 2016, there were altogether 16,989 children who were born abroad and who do not have Hungarian citizenship. Statistics on public education use the category of foreign citizenship based on which in 2017, there were 15,671 foreign nationals (0.98% of the students) who attended schools in Hungary. A part of foreign nationals have dual citizenship (7,744), with Hungarian being one of those citizenships, and the proportion of people of Hungarian nationality-speaking Hungarian is high (10,874), which is two third of the foreign nationals ([Papp, 2017](#)), thus making the majority of the registered immigrants, from the linguistic and cultural point of view, not-so-visible immigrants, since in case of Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary, there are no linguistic and cultural differences ([Jakab, 2011](#)). Data collection regarding the number of school-aged children living in refugee camps would require a special survey, but due to the rapid changes of data, this is difficult, so there are no accurate data available.

In Austria, the official statistics do not keep records of the foreign/migrant students' parents' birthplace. In these data sets, the category of non-German native language/first language is used, according to which, based on the data of the 2016/2017 school year, in Austria, 276,150 students have a non-German native language, which represents 25.4% of the student population. More than half of them (57.3%) arrive from non-European third countries. As for the countries of origin, the majority of these people (12%) has been born in Germany, followed by people with Afghan origin (8.3%), people from Syria and the Arab Republic (8.1%), from Romania (7.2%), and then followed by the Serbs (5.4%), the Turks (4.8%), and the Hungarians (4.7%), and with lower proportion than 4% by people from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Russian Federation, Poland, Slovakia, Italy, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Iraq ([Fact-Sheet 30, 2018](#)).

As for 15-year-old students, similarly to the aggregated data, the ratio of migrant students (see Figure 3) differs considerably in the two countries. Based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the data can be collected regarding the birth country of the students' parents; thus, the proportion of first- and second-generation migrant students in public education can be determined as well. In Hungary, among the 15-year-old students who took part in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development PISA assessment in 2012, the ratio of children who were born abroad was 0.8%, and in Hungary was 1% coming from foreign parents. A further detail of the situation is that 81% of immigrant background students were born from parents whose native language is Hungarian ([MIPEx Hungary, 2015](#)). On the contrary, in Austria, 5.5% of the 15-year-old age group were born abroad, and another 10.8% of them are second-generation immigrants. Their ratio is the highest in Vienna, where half of the pupils in lower elementary grades have a migrant background ([MIPEx Austria, 2015](#)).

Figure 3. Share of first- and second-generation pupils, 2012

Barriers of Migrant Background Students' Experience in Public Education

Migration contributes to the increase of linguistic, cultural, and religious heterogeneity in schools, a condition often associated with lower socioeconomic status, ultimately leading to the segregation of students with migrant background (Braunsteiner, Fischer, Kernbichler, Prengel, & Wohlhart, 2018).

The disadvantages migrant background students can suffer in school arise from individual, family, group of origin, and society levels. On the level of the individual, the main disadvantage is the lack, or low level, of knowledge of the official school language; therefore, the earlier the child arrives in the host country and the earlier he or she enters the education system, the more advantageous the educational opportunities; thus, the earlier he or she starts acquiring the language of the host country (Esser, 1990). On the one hand, preschool education plays a positive role in second-language acquisition. On the other hand, it contributes to the development of individual competencies from an early age. This is because it was found that kindergarten attendance of a minimum of 1 year or of a longer period had considerable compensatory effects and a positive influence on the children's skills used in school. From the perspective of educational progress, the importance of the language used is beyond dispute; however, it is not the only factor influencing it, since the motivation to learn and the faith in their own skills also have a huge impact on their educational performance. Moreover, it has been argued that the interruption of school education in the host country by traveling several times back to the student's country of origin, and then returning to the host country, is also problematic in terms of educational effectiveness, having a negative effect on it (Herzog-Punzenberger & Unterwurzacher, 2009).

In addition to the individual factors, the contexts of the family background, the group of origin, the school, and the residential environment also influence the educational performances of migrant background students. According to some researchers, family

background manifests itself in the problem of compatibility of the student's culture of origin with curricular requirements, while others suggest ethnic origin is not a problem; however, they outline the socialization conditions of the children as a factor affecting educational progress. These, nonetheless, are concomitant phenomena, since migrant background families usually belong to socially disadvantaged social groups. From a socioeconomic point of view, the reason for belonging to the disadvantaged section of the population does not arise from layer-specific culture, but the lack of cultural resources, such as inadequate learning opportunities, housing situation, etc., and this has a bigger impact on educational performance than ethnic and cultural milieu (Diefenbach, 2007; Herzog-Punzenberger & Unterwurzacher, 2009; Unterwurzacher, 2007; Weiss, 2007). Alongside the educational qualification and professional positions of the parents, the family's cultural capital is also part of their socioeconomic status, which, based on the data collected during the PISA assessment, includes the cultural resources available at home and the cultural habits brought from home (Baumert, Trautwein, & Artelt, 2003). In Austria, based on data of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) evaluation, the cultural capital constitutes, on the one hand, from the books and children books accessible to the family, and the number of accessible learning aids (computer, desk, own book, newspapers, etc.; Unterwurzacher, 2009).

Family background also defines ethnic group or community memberships. Due to the residential habits of migrant population, migrant students are inclined to live and attend school in a social environment where the number of people belonging to the same ethnic group is high. The ethnic segregation within the residential environment and in the school can lead to reduced opportunities of interaction with those who speak the majority language, which, in turn, reduces language-learning opportunities (Esser, 2001; Stanat, 2006; Wroblewski, 2006), and can have a negative effect on their educational performance and integration (Langerné-Buchwald, 2017). Moreover, there are several dominant stereotypes related to ethnic groups, which influence teacher-students and teacher-parent interactions and facilitate or complicate the unfolding of the capabilities of the individuals during school education (Langerné-Buchwald, 2017; Schofield, 2006).

On the social level, the situation of migrant background students is defined by the education system as a social subsystem. Among the structural features of the education system, early selection, i.e., the training path, chosen based on supposed learning capacities, affects the career paths of migrant background children (Bacher & Stelzer-Orthofer, 2008). Apart from early selection, the age of the child when he or she entered the education system, the time/hours spent daily in the school (full-day/half-day education), the support of migrant children inside and outside the school, and programs promoting language learning can also have a huge impact on the educational progress and

performance. Namely, the compensation of disadvantages linked to socioeconomic statuses is more successful in education systems where children enter the school system at a young age, the selection age is relatively high, the number of “contact hours” spent with the teachers are high, the language development schemes are functioning well, and the minimum school-leaving age is also set high (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003).

Furthermore, the type of welfare state also influences the school integration of migrant background children. According to certain studies, conservative welfare states such as Austria perform significantly worse than liberal states (Ireland and Great Britain) or social-democratic states (Sweden and Denmark; Bacher & Stelzer-Orthofer, 2008). In addition, school performance and integration of migrant children depend from the political framework conditions determining migration, since, as it was mentioned before, this does not necessarily relate to their migrant background, but to their socioeconomic status. Therefore, in countries where the settlement of highly qualified migrants was supported (i.e., Canada), there was no significant difference between the educational performance of migrant and non-migrant students, whereas in counties where the immigration of cheap labor was supported (such as Austria), a significant difference can be found (Herzog-Punzenberger, 2008).

The perception of migration, interculturalism, and multilingualism on the level of the society can also have an influence on the students, including their self-esteem, teacher-student, and teacher-parent interactions (Auernheimer, 2001; Hamburger, Badawia, & Hummrich, 2005; Schiffauer, Baumann, Kastoryano, & Vertovec, 2004). Since the school is one of the subsystems of the society, the society's attitude toward linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity also influences the education of migrant background students. If the public condemns pluralism and considers the presence of migrants a threat, the integration of migrant background students will be more difficult, and their self-esteem will be lower, since, in such social context, schools can hardly show a positive attitude toward migrant students (Herzog-Punzenberger & Unterwurzacher, 2009).

The Situation of Migrant Students in Public Education

As for tackling the disadvantages of migrant students, and for the promotion of the integration of migrant students, the host country's migration and education policies provide for statutory requirements and education policy guidelines and offer integration programs for public education. Hereinafter, we examine the integration policies of Hungary and Austria based on statutory rules, policy measures, and the provision of welfare benefits linked to schooling and discuss the assessment of the implementation of policy measures, i.e., the pedagogical practice supporting the integration of migrant students.

Provisions for the education of migrant students in Hungary

In Hungary, Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education (hereinafter: Act on Public Education; [2011. évi CXC. törvény a köznevelésről](#)) regulates the right of access to public education of children who are staying temporarily or for a longer term or settled in the country. In accordance with the general provisions of the act, in Hungary, every child must participate in institutional education during compulsory school age (between the ages of 6–16 years). The requirement of compulsory education can be met either by attending school, or, at the parents' request, by home-schooling. The educational tasks regarding the school-aged child must be provided by an institution of the place of residence or stay of the child; therefore, schools are obliged to enroll the child staying within their districts of enrollment and to provide the appropriate education for him or her.

In Hungary, a child with non-Hungarian citizenship attains compulsory school age if, in accordance with the refugee law, he or she has acquired the refugee status, exercises his or her right of freedom of movement and residence in Hungary, and in case of a third-country citizen, he or she has an immigrant or settled status, or has a residence permit. In this case, the child residing in the country with non-Hungarian nationality can attend school under the same conditions as a Hungarian citizen child. This right may be exercised by the asylum seekers after they submitted their application for the recognition of their immigration status, or if they have a residence permit for staying in the country for a period longer than 3 months. Non-Hungarian citizens not mentioned in the categories above can also attend Hungarian schools; however, in their cases, it is not free of charge. The fee payable by them cannot exceed the professional expenses allocated to one student, but the leader of the institution is in a position to mitigate these costs or even remit them.

School attendance of children with temporary protection status or children staying in a transit zone in Hungary is subjected to special arrangements, since they do not attend schools with territorial responsibility; therefore, the state provides for education in place for them ([Tájékoztató a magyar menekültügyi eljárásról, 2019](#)); however, by issuing an operating license, the minister of education may authorize the operation of an educational institution in the transit zone. However, on the one hand, these schools do not fit into the education system of the asylum seeker's country of origin, and, on the other hand, school certificates issued by these schools are not recognized in Hungary, which in practice means that school education is not accessible for these children. Teachers arrive from nearby cities and teach Hungarian and English language and practical classes. Every child less than 16 years of age must attend school; however, they are not obliged to do so ([Történetek a határról. Tranzitzóna, 2017](#)).

In Hungary, the social support of school attendance is implemented by providing textbooks free of charge. According to the provisions of the Act on Public Education, a

non-Hungarian citizen is also entitled to receive textbooks free of charge under the same conditions.

From the point of view of educational progress, it is important that unfinished studies that were taken abroad can be recognized in the Hungarian public education system; the leader of the school decides on this and on the enrollment of the student. To promote education of students with non-Hungarian citizenship, the ministry of education issues an educational program, which can be applied in these institutions.

Provisions for migrant students' education in Austria

In Austria, in terms of school attendance, the situation of migrant students is much more favorable. Based on the provisions of the act on public education, every school-aged child who continuously resides in Austria is obliged to attend school. Children in transit in Austria are not obliged to attend school, but regardless of the right of residence, they are entitled to attend school under the same conditions as the children who are subject to compulsory full-time schooling, even if their right of residence is not clarified (e.g., they are asylum seekers). In their case, it is to be assumed that by submitting their asylum application, they have expressed their wish to permanently settle in Austria. A child's application for admission to school cannot be refused during compulsory schooling, due to the lack of clarity of the right of residence.

An important touchstone for school attendance is the excellent knowledge of the official school language of tuition, i.e., German; in this case, they do not need special language support. Whenever ambiguities arise, a standardized language test is used to determine the level of the student's language knowledge, and the student is placed in the appropriate grade based on the results he or she achieved. If the student speaks German at an adequate level, then he or she will be enrolled to the school as a so-called ordinary student (ordentlicher Schüler), while those who do not will be admitted as special students (außerordentlicher Schüler) into a German support course, which can last for a maximum of 12 months ([Austrian Education Act, 1985](#)). Children beyond the age of compulsory school attendance cannot be enrolled as special students. Still, young refugees and asylum seekers have the opportunity to complete their elementary education and to fill the gaps in their language competence in the framework of extracurricular adult education.

In language support classes and courses, German is taught as a second language, either from beginner level (Sprachstartkursen), and those who have some knowledge of German are provided opportunities to fill in the gaps and develop their language skills (Sprachförderkursen), so that students can reach the language level necessary to be able to follow education in the school grade appropriate for their ages. Beginner-level language support

classes are held instead of compulsory subjects, and the language support of those children who have certain knowledge of German takes place in an integrated way, besides the compulsory subjects. A student can attend these language support classes for 1, or a maximum of 2 years but can also complete this class earlier if his or her knowledge of the language reaches the desired level of German ([Austrian Education Act, 2016](#)). German language support classes can be attended by ordinary and special students alike; the organization of these classes for more than eight students is mandatory for the school and takes place irrespective of the type or level or schooling, or grade, taking into account the level of the students' language acquisition. If there are less than eight students, language support takes place in an integrated way, parallel with regular classes, in six lessons a week. In both forms, the education of students with non-German native language takes place in accordance with the curricula for German as the second language ([Austrian Education Act, 2019](#)).

In Austrian schools, the language of tuition is basically German, but between classes, the students are free to choose the language they want to speak. The law does not require the use of the German language, nor does it allow for the prohibition of the use of other languages.

Another important provision is that in the course of the assessment of the educational achievements of special students, their language difficulties should be taken into account, in accordance with the rules concerning the schooling of students with non-German native language, and, as the case may be, the assessment can even be forgone. Mainly from the point of view of subjects linguistically more demanding, this principle can also be followed when the student in his or her language acquisition already reaches a level that he or she is able to complete school as an ordinary student.

The naturalization of certificates obtained abroad falls within the discretion of the Ministry of Education, but the recognition is not necessary if the student's enrolment is based on the result of a placement test, or he or she completed eight grades (years) in an education system abroad in a verifiable way. The teachers teaching the child may forgo the placement exam, if the student can be placed in classes based on other documents.

Immigrant students are also entitled to social measures, which alleviate the burden on the family regarding schooling, however, depending on their rights of asylum and of residence and on the status of the student. Regardless of their statuses, each and every immigrant student (ordinary or special) is entitled to receive textbooks free of charge. However, to support the costs of attending school, regular students receiving family support are all entitled to it without exception and special students only if their statuses are due to their lacking language skills. Non-Austrian citizens can receive this social support only upon verifying the existence of family support. Asylum seekers and other strangers in need of help can claim the reimbursement of their travel costs in total.

However, the number of claimants of school funding that can be granted based on reliance on social care is more limited, and can be claimed only by the citizens of Austria or any other EU member state, by refugees defined under the Geneva Convention, or by children whose parent has been living in Austria for at least 5 years and paying taxes. Asylum seekers, children who are entitled to subsidiary protection, and children whose right of residence is provided for being unable to claim regular school aid; they are only entitled to receive a one-off aid.

Since 2011, in Austria, an integration agreement has been in force, which applies to students as well. It provides that every new immigrant must attend a German language course, and their language knowledge must be objectively justified when granting or extending their rights of residence. In the first module of the integration agreement, the immigrant must pass an A2-level language exam within 2 years from the date of immigration. Failing to do so, he or she must pay a fine or he or she would be removed from the country. In the second phase, B1-level language proficiency must be demonstrated, the obtainment of which does not have a time limit; however, failing to do that the person cannot be granted a right of residence for an indefinite period nor can he or she be an Austrian national. The first module applies to new immigrant students older than 12 years of age and can be completed by attending a German language course or by taking part in Austrian school education. The second module can also be completed by attending an Austrian school, where the student must receive a positive assessment from German language, or must certify that he or she studied German in a foreign school at a level equivalent to the knowledge of German required at the 9th grade of the Austrian education system. In the case of children, if they fail to meet the requirement in the framework of formal education provided for in the integration agreement, they have the opportunity to attend language courses outside the school. EU and European Economic Community member state citizens, asylum seekers, people who are entitled to subsidiary protection or to asylum, and the children whose health statuses do not allow them to learn the language constitute an exception from the provisions of the integration agreement. Turkish citizens are subjected to a special arrangement ([Austrian Education Act, 2016](#)).

The impact of policy measures and their implementation on the integration of immigrant students in Hungary

In Hungary, the last comprehensive policy measure for the inclusion of migrant children into public schooling system was taken in 2005. At that time, the Ministry of Education set out the directives for educating foreign children nationals and students in kindergarten and school, in accordance with the principles of intercultural education ([OM közlemény, 2004; Útmutató az interkulturális pedagógiai program... 2005](#)).

The decree prescribes the use of the intercultural educational system for teaching migrant children. A fundamental principle of the program is the transmission of multicultural understanding by establishing linguistic and cultural diversity between students as a value and promote inclusion by providing opportunities to learn the Hungarian language and to become acquainted with the Hungarian culture. Another fundamental principle is that of compensation, that is, the school should take into consideration the disadvantages experienced by migrant students and should strive to seek compensation for it. The objective of the educational program is, on one hand, to educate receptive, open-minded individuals capable to communicate and cooperate between languages and cultures, and, on the other hand, to promote the integration of people with non-Hungarian citizenship and whose native language is not Hungarian by facilitating the necessary acquisition of the Hungarian language and creating a positive bond to the values of Hungary.

In accordance with the program, foreign students are enrolled into respective classes upon the principal's decision, which considers the students' age, their previous documented educational background, as well as the students' acquisition of Hungarian, based on the professional opinion of the teacher of Hungarian as a foreign language. The students may be excused from the processes of written assessment of their educational achievement, if the teacher of Hungarian as a foreign language considers it justified, and their educational progress shall be arranged along a developmental and progress plan, and criteria regarding the individual. The minimum duration of application of the intercultural educational program is 2 years, regardless of the type or level of schooling.

On one hand, the institutional condition for organizing the intercultural educational program is the employment of a teacher of Hungarian as a foreign language teacher, and, on the other hand, a teacher qualified for teaching the native language and culture of the migrant student. In many cases, due to the shortage of professionals, the implementation of the latter is impossible, nor are provided the financial conditions of their employment. Another problem is that in Hungary school education and teacher training relies on the language and cultural homogeneity of the Hungarian society (Jakab, 2011), and experience shows that the majority of schools and teachers is not prepared for educating migrant students, and the implementation is quite accidental and differs largely from school to school in terms of both enrollment practices and integration in which the migrant student's knowledge of Hungarian language plays a primary role. In case schools do not have a territorial duty, some of them will not enroll children who cannot express themselves in Hungarian, by simply rejecting their application. On the other hand, those schools who would enroll migrant students will not strive to fulfill their special needs. It is a common case that in settlements near refugee camps, the school accepting migrant and refugee children are among the low-prestige schools and is already the school of underprivileged children, often qualified as a "Roma school" and therefore

the presence of migrant children is associated with “Roma problems” by teachers and parents alike.

There is no uniform methodology for assessing the level of language knowledge of migrant children and putting them into grades; therefore, the practice of schools enrolling migrant students presents variations. Most of the time the students are placed in age-appropriate classes, but it is not uncommon to place some migrant students in first grade due to their lacking knowledge of Hungarian. There is no uniform regulation or practice of language teaching or language convergence, so the implementation thereof also depends on the schools. Hungarian language convergence usually consists of tutoring and classroom assistance, in rare cases of providing Hungarian language classes, which can be arranged according to curriculum or as an extracurricular lesson, in the latter case often by charging fees. Practice depends most strongly on the number of migrant students who do not speak Hungarian, and the more of such students attend the school, extracurricular lesson activity takes place in more formal settings (Bíró, 2017; Németh, 2009).

Due to a lack of uniform methodology and practice, the teacher is the one who plays the most important role in the integration of migrant students. The successfulness of integration above all depends on the teacher’s personality, professional determination, and educational experience (Illés & Medgyesi, 2003), because in Hungary, during teacher training, teacher candidates are not prepared for educating students of heterogeneous language and cultural background, and in case of migrant students mainly experience of the alignment of children lagging behind is built upon. However, the implementation and success of this depends primarily on the motivation, professionalism, and personality of the teacher (Feischmidt & Nyíri, 2006).

The most relevant issue of the education of migrant students is the acquisition of the Hungarian language, which defines educational progress, career paths, and social integration. It is the characteristic of primary education that migrant students who do not speak Hungarian well perform better in subjects, which, from the linguistic point of view, do not need a rich vocabulary, or high level of language proficiency. The same applies to further education and career choices as well, since migrant students choose, on the one hand, vocational schools providing professional training instead of high schools possibly followed by institutions of higher education, and, on the other hand, within the trades, linguistically less “demanding” professions with low social prestige that can be learnt quickly.

The difficulties of teachers and parents keeping in touch are closely connected with the knowledge of Hungarian. The only and kind of automatic solution is engaging the student as an interpreter, but this questions the possibility of the student’s objective evaluation by the teacher, because the student would have to interpret the negative things, too, about him- or herself to their parents (Németh & Papp, 2007).

Studies regarding the teaching of migrant students show that in Hungary the topic of preservation of the language and culture of origin throughout schooling of migrant children remains virtually untouched and ignored in connection with the integration of migrants into school and society. Upon checking the content of the intercultural educational program against the practice of the school education of migrant students, it can be seen that the program has not been widely used, its application is accidental, and schools address the demands and needs of migrant students only to the extent that is strictly necessary, mainly focusing on their language progress and alignment regarding the different school subjects (Németh, 2009). The “Step Together” Program pursues this objective, too, in the framework of which several textbooks and teaching materials are available for teaching Hungarian as a foreign language and for overcoming difficulties in teaching different subjects (Együtthaladó Program, 2010).

Due to the lack of policy and budget support, the sustainability and implementation of long-term programs promoting the school integration and education of migrant children, funded through project-based financing, is not guaranteed, and the access to the knowledge and experience accumulated during the implementation of the project is accidental due to the shortcomings of the portals managed by the ministry and to the migrant portal not being properly maintained any longer (cf. Lakatos & Pataki, 2017).

The impact of policy measures and their implementation on the integration of immigrant students in Austria

According to the Austrian government’s educational policy, every child has the right to begin their studies under equivalent conditions. The satisfactory knowledge of the German language and the child’s native language has paramount importance in this; therefore, it is indispensable to support the children’s German and native language skills in a targeted way. Therefore, since the 1990s onward, in response to the increase of the number of students with non-German native language, four core measures are in force: the support of German as a second language, the support of the first language (native language), the special student status, and the principle of intercultural education. The weakness of the strategy, however, is that, on the one hand, it is not compulsory for schools to apply it, and, on the other hand, the program also lacks quality assurance.

In 2008, a new integrated plan was developed, which affected five fields. The first part is the development of multilingual children, starting from kindergarten through the support of German as a second language all the way to optional teaching of the student’s native language at school. In favor of early language support, from 2009 onward, kindergarten attendance for a year before schooling was rendered mandatory and free of charge for each and every child, for at least 16 hr a week (Herzog-Punzenberger & Unterwurzacher, 2009). Information and training materials are compiled, mentor programs are arranged

within and outside schools, and professional consultancy for schools is provided with regard to handling language and cultural diversity. The second field is the professionalization of those – early childhood educators, teachers, and school principals – involved in the education of students with non-German native language, and the directing of school graduates with non-German native language toward the teaching profession. Moreover, there are also organization-level developments such as the establishment of the Austrian Language Competence Centre to facilitate the deployment of methodological and didactic innovations. Other fields affect the training of migrant parents and the strengthening of contacts with migrant communities, and the sensitization of the public to multilingualism, interculturalism, and integration ([Herzog-Punzenberger & Schnell, 2012](#)).

However, the results of the surveys call into question the implementation and effectiveness of language promotion courses, which support students with non-German native language to promote their integration. Regarding the effectiveness of preschool language support, it turned out that although starting school was easier for children whose native language was not German and who benefited from early language support, however, even in case of 1–3 years of kindergarten attendance, children could not be expected to have the same level of language proficiency whose native language was German, and to be able to start their studies at school without problems. The reason for this is that the composition of kindergarten groups that migrant background children attend is such that the mere chance of meeting native German speakers is not enough in itself, and that efficiency is affected by personal factors like the child's reclusive nature, memory, and his or her stage of first-language acquisition ([Stanzel-Tischler, 2011](#)).

Regarding language promotion at school, no effectiveness check has been conducted; only the implementation has been assessed so far, and doubts have been expressed whether, on the one hand, language support classes reach every special student, and, on the other hand, children benefit from support according to their level of language acquisition ([Bauer & Kainz, 2007](#)). Furthermore, the implementation of these language development courses also shows wide variations, and often the courses are not even organized on the grounds that the number of children with special needs who, based on their stages of language acquisition, would need development schemes does not reach the minimum number specified by the act ([Amtmann & Stanzel-Tischler, 2010](#)).

The real weakness of programs that helps migrant children in their acquisition of the German language and integration is implementation. Since the application of these programs is not mandatory in schools, teachers and school leaders are less motivated in participating in further trainings in this context; therefore, the application thereof is accidental in institutes where the number of migrant students does not make it

mandatory, and fully depend on the teachers working there ([Herzog-Punzenberger & Schnell, 2012](#); [Herzog-Punzenberger & Unterwurzacher, 2009](#)).

Interculturalism vs. National Identity Education in School – Curricular Regulation

Concerning the development of national identity, there is a consensus that socialization is a determining factor on one hand, and conveying and transmitting national culture on the other hand. Formal education plays a particularly significant role in this process because it conveys uniform knowledge, introduces children into a uniform culture, thereby strengthening the awareness and feeling that they are a part of a larger social community ([Andorka, 2003](#)). One of the main tasks of school education is, through teaching children the national literature and history, to introduce them to the world of national narrative, thus building a sense of national identity ([Pataki, 1997](#)). Society takes care of conveying knowledge and of national socialization through such specific socialization intermediaries like school and mass communication, which is further strengthened by family socialization. Furthermore, a society that is organized within the frameworks of a nation-state emphasizes nationhood using ritual practices and symbolic environment, which also contributes to building the sense of national identity ([Csepeli, 1992](#)). On this basis, in modern nation-states, public education can be considered the most important tool of “the creation of citizens” and of promoting national consciousness, the objective of which is “creating a sense of (national) community” ([Nyíri, 2004](#)). Therefore, the tasks of schools are to convey knowledge, which strengthens the children’s sense of national identity, and, in addition, to bring them closer to European culture. Therefore, schools should have a common narrative about culture, which has traditional elements, such as playwrights, poets, and their texts; moreover, it emphasizes that every school should convey this common knowledge because this helps to identify which nation or group the individual belongs to and raises the awareness thereof ([Csányi, 1999](#)). Therefore, concerning migrant students, it is essential what opportunities they have in the education system of the host country to preserve and strengthen their sense of national identity of their origin, or how focused the national curricula are on strengthening the sense of national identity of the host country.

In Hungary, the curricular control of education is regulated by the Act on Public Education and the National Core Curriculum. The analysis of the above acts reveals that education in Hungarian schools focuses on strengthening the sense of national identity. Policies such as the introduction of the National Day of Belonging in elementary and secondary schools in accordance with the provisions of the Act on Public Education, state funded excursions aiming to strengthen the relationship between young Hungarians living in Hungary and ethnic Hungarians living outside the border, are intended for that purpose. The values, the general basic education and the knowledge to be conveyed during school education, the theoretical and substantive basis, and the basic approach of the educational tasks of

school education are all defined in the National Core Curriculum. According to the latter, the task of public education is, among others, strengthening the sense of national unity and patriotism, and the objective of public education is that the rising generation becomes responsible citizens of their homeland, and that the emotions of patriotism develop in them. Moreover, national tradition and the development of national consciousness have a significant role, and knowledge of the life of Hungarians living in Hungary and its broader surroundings, particularly of the ethnic Hungarians living in neighboring countries, is given priority, but the national curriculum also considers contents, which strengthen the feeling of belonging to Europe as important. The objective of patriotic education and raising of national consciousness is to enable the student to get to know the values and traditions of Hungarian national and folk culture, and the achievements of eminent historical figures, scholars, inventors, artists, playwrights, poets, and athletes. Europe is the broader homeland of Hungarians; therefore, besides the preservation of Hungarian national consciousness, the knowledge of European history and culture also plays a role in the curriculum, and the exceptional achievements of the universal human civilization, its difficulties, and the international cooperation arrangements for tackling these are also mentioned. In the framework of education for citizenship and democracy, strengthening national consciousness and belonging as well as national defense education are the goals.

On the contrary, in Austria, on one hand, school education focuses on citizenship education in the course of which the sense of belonging to their own country is shared by every inhabitant of the country, regardless of their origin or social situation. On the other hand, from the 1990s onward, intercultural education has been given a priority among overall objectives, which contribute to mutual understanding between people of different origin, nationality, native language, and gender, aiming at the recognition of differences and similarities and reducing prejudices. For students with non-German native language, a part of intercultural learning is the acquisition of the German language, which can be interpreted as students who come from different culture are studying together and from each other and may be relevant to every aspect of culture. During school education, the essential conditions of students with non-German native language and the problems arising from migration are taken into consideration. In reliance upon it, the ability is developed to present the aspects of their own culture, to recognize, to accept and to be critical to diversity, to eliminate prejudices against other cultures, to reference their own cultures to other cultures, and to be able to act accordingly. In addition to interculturalism, cultural self-value, the ability to find peace, and the preservation and development of cultural identity characterized by tolerance are considered as equally important.

Comparing the general purpose and the goals of different school subjects declared in national curriculum, it can be stated that in Hungarian schools the strengthening of the

sense of national identity is given considerably greater emphasis than in Austria. In Hungary, besides national identity education, the objective of developing the European identity manifests itself, although its significance is lower. By contrast, the Austrian schools focus on the support for the emergence of a student's identity. Emphasizing national identity was not detectable in the curriculum. Intercultural learning relying on national identity based on origin and on the diverse language and cultural backgrounds could be identified as a more important training and educational objective, thus, aiming at integration into the Austrian society and at the same time preserving the national identity based on origin ([Langerné-Buchwald, 2017](#)).

The Integration of Migrants in the Area of Education in Hungary and Austria

The immigration policy of Hungary and Austria, and, therefore, the number of their migrant population, their origin, ethnic group, language, and cultural composition vary considerably. While, from the beginning of the 1960s, due to the decrease of local workforce, Austria systematically strived for settling cheap, mainly Turkish and Yugoslav workforce to tackle labor shortage, Hungary became open to the acceptance of migrants only after the political transformation. One of the fundamental differences between the two countries is that while Austria supports the settlement of immigrants from a third country due to economic reasons, Hungary primarily supports the immigration of Hungarians living across the borders, which is also encouraged by the facilitation of access to Hungarian citizenship and dual citizenship. It does not inhibit the settlement of immigrants arriving from the EU and EWG countries either. However, it takes decisive steps to prevent migration from third countries: it closed the country's largest open reception center, phased out expatriation allowance granted to refugees, which conveys the message that their integration is not possible ([Juhász et al., 2017](#)).

The policies of Hungary and Austria regarding social integration of migrants have been examined in eight fields – labor market movement, family reunification, training and schooling, political participation, long-term housing, access to health services, and discrimination – along 167 indicators ([MIPEX Hungary, 2015](#)). In the ranking based on the average of the results for each field, the two countries studied can be found at almost the same place somewhere in the middle (Austria with 50/100 points is in the 20th place, Hungary with 45/100 points is the 23th), according to which the ratings of the integration policies of the two countries are identical and halfway favorable. This result means that the policies of the two countries create the same number of obstacles in the way of immigrants as they provide opportunities for them to become an equal member of the society of that country.

However, the values obtained for certain areas of social integration of immigrants differ in many cases between the two countries (Table 1). The overall assessment of the individual

Table 1. Hungary's and Austria's policy indicators based on MIPEx 2015

Policy	Hungary		Austria	
	Score	Qualification	Score	Qualification
Mobility on the labor market	40	Slightly unfavorable	64	Slightly favorable
Family reunification	61	Slightly favorable	50	Halfway favorable
Training and education	15	Unfavorable	47	Halfway favorable
Access to health services	40	Slightly unfavorable	63	Slightly favorable
Political participation	23	Slightly unfavorable	38	Slightly unfavorable
Long-term residence	68	Slightly favorable	57	Halfway favorable
Access to citizenship	31	Slightly unfavorable	26	Slightly unfavorable
Discrimination	83	Favorable	57	Halfway favorable

areas clearly shows that, in the case of Hungary, five areas received a degree of unfavorable rating, vis-à-vis only two areas in case of Austria. Hungary's rating is almost identical or identical to that of Austria – favorable – in the fields of family reunification, long-term residence, and discrimination, and a degree of unfavorable in the field of granting access to political participation and citizenship. However, it is apparent that in one of the eight areas, which is training and education, Hungary has received very unfavorable ratings with a very low score and, among the countries surveyed, ending up at the third place from the bottom of the ranking.

One of the critical areas of the integration of immigrants is education, and based on the results of the MIPEx research process, it can be seen that it is the most critical in case of Hungary, compared to the other policies, which underpins the problems outlined above in connection to the integration of migrant students. Due to the low number of migrant children in Hungary, schools receive less funding to provide migrant students with decent education. Schools are not obliged to meet the special learning needs of migrant students, and school curriculum does not comply with linguistic and cultural diversity. In addition, children do not have equal rights in their access to education, since the access of undocumented children to education is limited.

In Austria, support is higher and their education policy is better, but it is still insufficient for their actions to increase the number of migrant students and the number of university graduates among them. In terms of access to education and schooling of migrant students, the proportion of opportunities and barriers is currently the same. Adequate integration programs are available, but since the introduction of integration programs is compulsory only above a certain number of students, schools do not always comply with this if the number of migrant students do not make it mandatory for them. Moreover, there are

variations in each province, since, in Austria, provinces and schools decide at their own discretion on whether intercultural education, linguistic, and cultural diversity should manifest in school education and teacher training.

Examining education along each dimension (Table 2), compared to Austria, Hungary has a significant backlog. In the case of intercultural education and access to education, it is regarded as particularly problematic that Hungary's rating is critically unfavorable, and it is also slightly unfavorable in the field of specific needs and new opportunities.

Access to education

In Hungary, migrant children face so many obstacles in accessing school education that the country's rating for this dimension is critically unfavorable. According to the provisions of the law, the children of legal immigrants are eligible to participate in compulsory education, but access to non-compulsory education is also restricted to certain immigrants belonging to non-Hungarian ethnic groups. However, undocumented migrant children are denied education, including access to compulsory education. In Austria, the situation of migrant students is considerably better. Regardless of their legal status, all migrant children have the right to participate in compulsory education, and from 2013 onward, asylum seekers less than the age of 25 years have the opportunity to be engaged in apprenticeships. However, undocumented migrant children cannot take part in training outside formal education. In addition, linguistic and support schemes are applied at federal and provincial levels to promote the participation of migrants in kindergarten education, general and vocational training, and university education as well.

Targeting needs

In Hungary, the intercultural educational strategy and the voluntary programs aimed at intercultural education are not successful in educating migrant children, since their application in schools is not mandatory, and their funding is limited. In Austria, targeted support is provided in the form of quality German language courses for migrant students

Table 2. Hungarian and Austrian indicators along the dimensions of education (MPIEX, 2015)

Dimension	Hungary	Austria
Access	0	58
Targeting needs	30	43
New opportunities	30	35
Intercultural education	0	50

with limited German language skills. However, their shortcomings are that the high-level curriculum standards and requirements applicable to teachers of German as the second language are not connected to them. Another problem is that, although financial support is given to schools for the application of the programs, there is a lack of professional help. In addition, teachers are not trained to work in linguistically and culturally diverse classes.

Opportunities

As already mentioned above, in Hungary, developing intercultural competence is not compulsory in schools, and linguistic and cultural diversity are not on the curriculum. The only exception to this is the Chinese–Hungarian bilingual school established under the Chinese–Hungarian bilateral agreement, where both Chinese and Hungarian language and culture are taught.

By contrast, in most countries, and in Austria, the language and culture of immigrants can be taught at school, usually within the framework of extracurricular courses, which are open to everyone who is interested, but often only migrant children take them. However, since both the province and the school exercise discretion in issues affecting education, they can decide in this matter at their own discretion; the application of language and cultural school schemes is not general. Another problem is that no solution has yet been found for the elimination of the segregation of migrant children at school and for the prevention of the phenomenon of White Flight. In addition, providing information to migrant parents is problematic and thus it is impossible to effectively encourage children to learn, or to acquire teaching qualification.

Intercultural education

In terms of intercultural education, Hungary's rating is also critically unfavorable since, in accordance with curriculum requirements, students do not have to learn about migration and cultural diversity within school education. There is only a general reference to this in the National Core Curriculum and Teacher Training Requirements. Although in Austria, intercultural education is not included in the curriculum as a special subject, cross curricula; however, explicitly emphasizes the importance of interculturalism, although, due to provincial and school autonomy, their implementation is different.

Conclusions

Due to the differences in the number of migrants, and the linguistic and cultural composition of the migrant population, there are significant discrepancies between the policies of the two countries aiming at the integration of migrant children into public education. Austria, as a main immigration country, has such migration networks and support systems,

where newly arriving migrants can join. The number of migrants and migrant background residents has been continuously rising in recent times and is still rising, and education policy has responded to the new challenges induced by the emergence of students with linguistically and culturally different backgrounds in public education, and the systemic changes in the area of education that are needed for migrant background students to be successfully integrated into the society. However, there are still shortcomings in the implementation of positive integration measures, which can be improved by introducing a binding character to it, by reinforcing quality assurance, by promoting its application, and by training teachers accordingly.

On the contrary, Hungary is not an immigration country, and the proportion of migrants in the society who do not belong to the Hungarians who used to live outside the border of the country is extremely low. Moreover, a massive anti-immigrant campaign is being conducted; therefore, for the government and education policy officials, the public educational integration of children with linguistically and culturally different background is not a relevant problem. The professional support and financial funding of the implementation of integration programs initiated in the early 2000s has ceased, so the schools have become fully responsible for the school education, language development, and integration of young people with migrant backgrounds. Considering the demographic trends, however, Hungary must face serious challenges: in the years to come, the age structure of the Hungarian population is going to move toward the negative direction, many people emigrate, and the birth rate is low. Therefore, the country must anticipate that, mainly on the labor market, immigrants will be needed to maintain the economic production, and not to undermine the process of social reproduction (cf. [Jakab, 2011](#); [Juhász et al., 2017](#)); thus, a positive change in the immigration and integration policy, and in particular in the attitude of education policy toward migrants and migrant students, will be essential, in which case Austria might represent a positive example.

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About the Author

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study of learning-oriented migration as a possible alternative form of education. The sole author and contributor for this study was JL-B.

Ethics

The study procedures were carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The Institutional Review Board of the Institute of Educational and Cultural Sciences (University of Debrecen) approved the study.

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