

# School inclusion and support of migrant students: lessons learned and future challenges in uncertain times

Application to the Social Policy Association Opportunity Grants - 6th September 2019

Lead applicant - [REDACTED]

**Context** - Migration remains a central and increasingly contested feature of contemporary societies. Within this background, the inclusion and engagement of migrant students continues to be a key challenge for education systems across Europe, including in countries with a longer experience of (more or less successful) policy and community initiatives, such as the UK. The uncertainty over Brexit and over the future of migration policy is having an emotional as well as practical impact on EU and other migrant families<sup>1</sup>. Although the Migration Advisory Committee (2018) reported “no evidence that migration has reduced parental choice in schools or the educational attainment of UK-born children”, the presence of migrants is often seen as a potential burden rather than an opportunity. Targeted resources and interventions are often scarce and a constantly changing education funding framework makes it difficult to sustain best practice. With regard to refugee children in particular, there is evidence that they face high levels of bullying and mental health issues and long delays accessing education, often because schools are reluctant to offer them a place over fears they will affect school league tables<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, whilst compulsory education is nominally available to all, “many migrants face restrictions based on residency and immigration status, which affect fee rates and entitlement to financial support for further and higher education”<sup>3</sup>.

All this raises issues for educators and policy makers not only in terms of supporting migrant students’ attainment, but also in terms of emotional support<sup>4</sup> and ensuring that young people are not victims of discrimination and racism in education settings and in the wider community<sup>5</sup>. Thus, developing opportunities for knowledge exchange and joined-up thinking among scholars, practitioners and policy makers becomes a key priority. Whilst some of the challenges are country-specific, much can be learned from international exchange of research and practice (something which becomes even more crucial at a time when the participation of the UK in European education and policy frameworks is in doubt).

**Aims** - This project aims to develop a platform to exchange, review and discuss best practice of inclusion, engagement, practical and emotional support for migrant and refugee students from different backgrounds, education levels and local contexts. Particularly, the project will entail:

- Running a workshop with local and national practitioners and policy makers, with academics from across Europe and the UK, and inviting SPA representatives. The discussion will focus on new and future challenges and issues of policy/practice learning and transferability. The event will take place at the University of Nottingham, in Spring/Summer 2019, with date t.b.c. once funding is secured.
- Developing and disseminating a White Paper, informed by the workshop and by additional background research. The document will summarise key examples of recent research focusing on best practice, highlight major challenges for policy and research, and identify potential ways forward.
- Establishing the basis for a working network on policy and education research and practice on school inclusion and engagement of migrant children.

**Partners and developing network** - The project builds on existing and developing partnerships between academics who are highly engaged with schools, local and national policy makers, practitioners, migrant community organisations and other stakeholders across the UK as well as internationally. These include:

- *ICPSP (International Centre for Public and Social Policy), University of Nottingham*. The ICPSP initiates and supports high-quality research on a range of areas including migration policy, equality, comparative social policy, the impact of Brexit on public policy. The research lead, *Dr. Alessio D’Angelo* has been involved in national and international research on migrant children in schools and the role of community

organisations. He has been an advisor to the EU DG Education and recently coordinated a 7-country international survey on Early School Leaving and school engagement.

- *CERM-Migracions (Spain)*. Part of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the centre includes the oldest research group in Spain on migration and education research. The key contact is *Professor Silvia Carrasco*, who is a founder of CERM and a member of the ACT.NOW platform of academics, NGOs and professionals working on education and social rights of refugee and migrant children.
- *Department of Culture, Politics and Society University (CPS) of Turin (Italy)*. The department hosts several scholars working on youth, migration and school experiences and has recently received Ministry of Education funding to develop a network of stakeholders (teachers, NGOs, migrant organisations) working on migrant pupils inclusion. The project lead, *Dr Roberta Ricucci*, is the key contact.

In addition, the initiative seeks to develop a wider network building on ongoing collaborations with colleagues at the University of Sheffield, Middlesex University, Institute of Education and others; and with a range of organisations (starting but going beyond those involved in the above-mentioned projects). A call for contributions will be widely publicised at the outset, targeting (but not limited to) SPA members. **Resources and activities**

If the application is successful, we would be claiming from the SPA the following costs:

- Day-long workshop (with plenary session and parallel working groups)
  - Catering costs - 35 delegates @ £20 per head = £ 700
  - Badges, printing and sundry = £300
  - Contribution to travel expenses for UK participants = £ 650
- Printing of White Paper = £350
- Total = £ 2,000

All additional costs will be covered by the organisers and partner organisations. In particular:

- The project will be run and managed by members of the ICPSP and its support staff (we are not claiming any staff costs); this will include:

- Call for contributions, invitations and advertising of the event;
- Background research and preparation of preliminary notes ahead of the workshop;
- Organisation and management of the workshop;
- Recording and uploading a podcast of the event;
- Writing up of White Paper (in collaboration with participating organisations);
- Online dissemination of the paper and targeted distribution of hard copies;
- Follow-on electronic communication and networking after the event.

- The event will be hosted by the University of Nottingham (no cost for venue hire).

- The universities of Turin and Barcelona will cover for their travel and accommodation costs (using their own dissemination budgets).

- The event and outputs will be disseminated via the participating organisations and through their academic and professional networks (in addition to the normal publicity by the SPA).

#### **Planned follow-on**

- Joint conference papers (with at least one contribution to the next SPA conference).
- At least one co-authored journal article (potentially a special issue/section), stemming from the event.
- Joint funding applications for research and Knowledge Exchange opportunities (including CPD).
- Development of an academic and professional network.