SIRIUS WATCH 2018

Role of non-formal education in migrant children inclusion: links with schools

Executive summary

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About SIRIUS

SIRIUS is the international Policy Network on Migrant Education, active since 2012 and co-funded by the European Commission. Its overall objective is to feed the best evidence and practice into the major education policy debates by analyzing and co-creating knowledge on the main challenges and policy approaches for inclusive education in Europe, mobilising mainstream migration and education stakeholders and building the capacity of migrant and grassroots education initiatives.

SIRIUS Watch serves as one of the Network's tools to achieve this objective and aims to monitor and support policy development and implementation at different governance levels in the field of inclusive education, with a particular focus on migrant and refugee learners.

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[1] The policy workshop took place on the 20th of September in Brussels, Belgium. The workshop report is available at http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The relevance and aims of the report

Classrooms in Europe are becoming increasingly diverse, with more students having roots from different parts of the world and speaking a multitude of languages. According to PISA 2015, more than one in ten 15-year-olds in European schools are first and second-generation migrants. In the last three years, the regular migration to European Union has been overshadowed by massive inflow of asylum seekers. Over the course of 2015 and 2017, around 2 million people applied for asylum in an EU country. In 2017, more than 30% of all asylum requests concerned children.

Literature shows that success of refugee and migrant children integration is heavily dependent on how educational policy frameworks are designed and their capacity to bring all environments children participate in together to enhance their learning experiences. Researchers and practitioners agree that cooperation between schools and non-formal education (NFE) actors bring wider expertise to schools, innovative teaching and learning methods, and flexible approaches that can address specific needs of vulnerable children as well as enrich learning for all students.

However, there is little knowledge on what system provisions are in place to encourage collaboration between formal education (primary and secondary schools) and non-formal education sector (e.g., NGOs, businesses, community organisations). SIRIUS Watch 2018 aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring the examples of collaboration between schools and outside actors practiced across Europe and identifying conditions that public authorities can ensure to facilitate such collaboration and make it more systematic.

Methodology

This report is based on the analysis of research evidence available in literature and 17 SIRIUS Watch country briefings prepared by SIRIUS national partners. In each of the 17 European countries covered by this report, experts from SIRIUS partner countries carried out desk research and interviews to respond to the questionnaires on the links between formal and non-formal education sectors to better address migrant children educational needs. The study team synthesised key issues and themes arising from these country briefings; as well as other evidence and reports from national, regional and international organisations. The synthesis was complemented with the relevant results of SIRIUS National Round Tables and Peer Learning Activities, review of recent literature and policy developments at the EU and national level, and research work on the topic by SIRIUS partners. Finally, the draft findings were discussed during the policy workshop (Brussels, September 20, 2018) and complemented with the inputs from the workshop participants.

Key focus and scope: summary

Focus: links and partnerships between formal and non-formal education actors

Target group of the educational interventions: all children and young people, and those with migrant or minority background (6 – 18 years old)

Education level: primary and secondary education

Level of analysis: national or regional (for federal and highly decentralised states) with specific local (city or school) level examples to illustrate the implementation of existing policies

Time period: contemporary programmes and interventions that are operating at the moment. The review was particularly focusing on the initiatives introduced starting from 2015 to respond to the increased influx of migrants and refugees.

Given the timeframe and scope of this analysis, the report aims to provide just an initial overview and exploration into how partnerships between formal and non-formal education actors can be facilitated to enhance learning experiences of migrant and refugee children. It, therefore, does not pretend to be an exhaustive review and examples indicated in this report are just illustrations of possible directions on how such collaboration can be organised, selectively referring either to the national, regional or local level. Given the exploratory nature of this report, there are also certain limitations to comparative analysis of policies between countries and regions covered by this report; however, the research team attempted to provide generalisations whenever it was possible.

Findings and recommendations

Despite the fact that understanding of importance of links between formal and non-formal learning to holistic children's development, and positive migrant children's learning experiences in particular, is growing in research and policy discourse, such collaboration is still limited and unsystematic in practice across many EU Member States. SIRIUS Watch national reports demonstrate, however, that there are a number of initiatives and promising examples both at local and national level that could serve as an inspiration for education stakeholders to mainstream such practices and create favourable environment for multi-stakeholder partnerships for inclusion to thrive.

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Analysing different examples of how schools and non-formal education actors can work together to ensure inclusive and equitable learning experiences, the following tendencies can be observed: 1) in many countries collaboration is partly facilitated through national or regional governmental policies and programmes; 2) most of the projects and initiatives, and in particularly those targeting migrant and refugee children, documented in national reviews were established by NGOs and community organisations; 3) individual schools are well placed to collaborate with non-formal education actors, provided they have necessary resources and capacity.

The findings of this review are twofold: first, we conclude on the availability of projects and initiatives that feature partnerships (key finding 1-4), and second, we identify system conditions encouraging collaboration as well as relevant policy changes to be made (key finding 5-10).

Key finding 1. Partnerships between schools and non-formal education providers are not yet widespread and systematic.

Even though understanding about the importance of school and non-formal education cooperation is growing in research discourse, such collaboration is still limited in practice across many European countries. Non-governmental sector and individual schools initiate this kind of collaboration much more often than municipalities or national education authorities. There seems to be no complete agreement among educators and policy makers on the importance of non-formal education programmes per se. The challenges illustrating the insufficient recognition of importance of NFE and partnerships involve lack of validation and assessment of competences acquired through out-of-school activities and their inclusion into children's learning portfolio; absence of definition of roles that education authorities, formal and non-formal educators should play in the provision and integration of non-formal education; inconsistent quality of non-formal education activities, etc.

Way forward

✓ Education stakeholders need to embrace the potential of collaboration between formal and non-formal education sector and systematically recognize the benefits it brings to all children.

✓ Education systems should adopt clear strategies featuring specific goals, in-built monitoring mechanisms and clear division of roles of different stakeholders when it comes to exploring synergies between formal and non-formal education sector.

✓ EU level policy makers could put effort to conceptualise NFE as an important element for achieving broader curricula goals across Europe.

Key finding 2. Governmental initiatives usually target all children universally without an explicit aim at migrant integration; however, often they can benefit migrant children as well, provided activities are accessible, affordable and of good quality.

When implementing NFE programmes, governments usually target all children without an explicit aim at migrant integration. The extent to which migrant children can benefit from these programmes depends largely on their affordability, availability across the regions and targeted information dissemination about available education opportunities.

Way forward

✓ There is a need to develop a shared vision for multi-stakeholder collaboration, building on the strengths of all. Availability of clear regulatory frameworks for collaboration, as well as responsible contact points linking different stakeholders together can ensure better synergies between various educational offers.

✓ Public authorities should ensure that available NFE programmes are accessible to different groups of children. It is important to provide newly-arriving families with necessary information about educational options in languages they understand and at places that are relevant to them.

✓ Education authorities should also invest in developing a wide network of diverse and high quality non-formal education opportunities (especially in smaller towns and rural areas), which could be sensitive to the diversity of target population.

Key finding 3. Even though civil society actors implement various programmes that target migrant children specifically; the examples suggest that their collaboration with schools is not consistent.

Community actors implement a variety of projects aimed at improving the wellbeing of migrant children in particular. These initiatives may benefit migrant children in different ways: children themselves can take part in intercultural learning, psychological counselling, art and sport, and many more workshops; schools that educate these children can get methodological assistance and tools; as well as children of a host society might participate in awareness raising activities or intercultural learning. However, the analysis shows that collaboration with schools occurs on ad hoc basis. The possible reasons for inconsistent partnerships may be: lack of clear conceptualisation of such partnerships at the project planning stage; fragmentation of education actors, reluctance to collaborate due to the need for additional planning and monitoring of the quality; lack of time and resources; insufficient NGO capacity to ensure complementary activities with schools, etc.

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Way forward

- ✓ Public authorities should ensure sustainable funding for NGO initiatives; and civil society actors should advocate for allocation of funding too;

- ✓ While planning projects, NGOs should consider the competences that a project will provide to students and how they feed into learning plans, and overall child development;

- ✓ Public authorities should create networking platforms for the non-governmental sector and schools pertaining to various educational matters, which could enable them to collaborate on occasion.

Key finding 4. There are a number of individual schools that innovate and open up to wider communities with the aim to enrich learning experiences of their students and facilitate integration of students who need additional support; however, such initiatives are not yet mainstreamed across the system.

EU level comparative studies indicate that there are a number of innovative and proactive schools across Europe, aiming to improve their pupils' learning experiences, and opening up to partnerships with wider stakeholders; however, this tendency is still not systematic and mainstreamed. Usually such initiatives depend on the motivation and commitment of school leadership and teaching staff. The barriers that hinder collaboration between schools and community actors involve lack of school knowledge about available NFE opportunities; lack of school vision when it comes to the community actors' involvement; uneven capacity and competence of school staff to integrate non-formal learning effectively to design holistic learning approach for their students; lack of training opportunities and support for school staff in this regard; etc.

Way forward

- ✓ Schools should develop a strategy and vision, and together with the school community, agree on what value synergies with outside actors could bring to their missions;

- ✓ School leadership should allocate sufficient time for their staff to plan projects with external actors;

- ✓ Education systems should shift the mind-set of teachers and school leaders who believe that education happens only in the classroom through adequate training opportunities;

- ✓ Education authorities should develop tools and mechanisms for recognising learning opportunities outside the classroom;

- ✓ Educational systems should embed mechanisms to reward teachers that engage in additional activities outside the usual curricula, e.g. projects, student ex-changes, coordination of volunteering, etc;

Key finding 5. National and regional strategies lack strategic objectives encouraging partnerships for social inclusion.

The general trend is that national/regional policies do not have specific aims to bring formal and non-formal education together. Even when goals are articulated in policy documents, they are rarely operationalised and subsequently implemented in a consistent manner, as strategies often lack well defined lower level goals with monitoring instruments; and schools lack follow-up guidelines and a clear understanding of how different forms of learning can be integrated together.

Way forward

- ✓ Education systems need major strategic focus at national or regional levels on promotion of non-formal education generally and specifically on targeting socio-economically disadvantaged groups to participate in non-formal education.

- ✓ Educational authorities should set clear guidelines for schools through standards, curricula, school evaluation mechanisms that can help guide schools in the implementation process.

- ✓ Agencies monitoring quality of education in schools need to include additional criteria encouraging schools to engage in mutli-stakeholder partnerships for learning.

Key finding 6. Partnerships between schools and non-formal education providers could be encouraged by school autonomy (in defining their teaching methods, learning goals, and managing their funds) accompanied by adequate accountability mechanisms.

Evidence from previous studies shows that school ability to adopt innovations depends on their autonomy over teaching methods, learning goals and funding distribution. It is important for schools to be able to adjust the curriculum and choose suitable teaching methods according

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to the children needs; though, at the same time preserve horizontal accountability mechanisms and involve school community in all relevant decisions.

Way forward

Policymakers should promote balanced school autonomy along with horizontal accountability mechanisms:

✓ Teacher work organisation and remuneration systems should have sufficient flexibility to reward a teacher's time spent on developing new teaching methods, materials, approaches; as well as participating in research projects, testing, and integrating modern learning and assessment tools into their teaching practice.

✓ Education systems should enhance the role of local stakeholders like teachers, students, parents and local community actors in school governance.

Key finding 7. Funding is reported as a barrier for consistent collaboration between schools and outside actors in general and addressing migrant integration particularly.

Schools and NGOs identify local demand for NFE activities for migrant children, and consequently put efforts into fundraising and implementing activities. However, funding opportunities are not sustainable to fulfil local needs and ensure continuous provision for migrant children.

Way forward

✓ Member States and national education stakeholders could further explore the possibilities of European funding programmes, such as Erasmus+ and the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund to support NFE and school-community partnerships.

✓ Teacher networks or educational authorities that coordinate NFE should systemise information on funding opportunities and disseminate it to schools and NFE providers.

✓ Education systems should ensure certain flexibility in managing funds that could allocate resources to support experimentation and implementation of innovation.

✓ Grant scheme managers could consider whether schools have strategies/guidelines directing partnerships with NFE providers when allocating funds.

Key finding 8. Professional development and methodological support (in relation to teaching diverse classes and links with NFE providers) to teachers and NFE professionals is not yet sufficient.

The importance of professional development for teachers on school-community collaboration is emphasised in literature and EU documents. This review demonstrates that the majority of countries have no systematic trainings for educational professionals on how to engage with non-formal education in EU countries. There are also limited training opportunities for non-formal education providers across Europe.

Way forward

✓ Public authorities should encourage higher education institutions to include related subjects into curriculum more consistently while training future teachers;

✓ Practical elements of initial teacher training should help teachers gain practical skills in inclusive school partnerships and projects, etc.

✓ Public authorities and educational stakeholders should regularly monitor and disseminate information on methodological tools and training opportunities that are available to in-service teachers;

✓ Public authorities should promote research and development on valid and easy-to-use tools allowing to assess previously gained competencies in a regular school context.

Key finding 9. School-to-school collaboration and networks might promote partnerships between schools and non-formal education providers by giving them access to information that is inaccessible at that moment, promoting positive attitudes towards certain teaching practices, and inspiring teachers to try new methods.

Multi-stakeholder networks can facilitate collaboration between schools and NFE actors. Networks can help fill gaps related to insufficient teacher preparedness to teach multicultural classes and encourage collaboration with non-formal education providers. When there is

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fragmented methodological support, professional networking might be an important factor for innovative school practices to develop, spread and embed.

Way forward

- ✓ School management should ensure a supportive environment for teachers to engage in and promote collaborative practices, such as peer-learning, mentoring, formative feedback, reflective and inquiry-based practices; and provide relevant opportunities for networking and professional development.

- ✓ Education authorities should invest in the development and sustaining of high-quality networks and platforms for teachers, schools and a variety of other stakeholders to exchange their knowledge and experiences, receive recognition, and collaborate on joint projects at different levels.

Key finding 10. Even though there are more and more various NFE opportunities available in many countries, there is very limited research and evaluation data on their quality, key success factors for migrant inclusion and impact.

There are very few studies available on the effects of non-formal education across European countries; also, it seems that children who attend different types of NFE are not systematically registered in national educational statistics. Official statistics and monitoring data on the quality, accessibility and affordability of NFE activities, for disadvantaged groups of children in particular, is rarely collected. Most of the existing data relies on the perceptions of stakeholders and programme organisers.

Way forward

- ✓ Authorities should review and update definitions currently used in national education databases in order to receive a clear overview of the number and characteristics of pupils engaged in NFE activities. Also, the indicators should disaggregate take-up data based on various profiles such as refugee children, EU citizens, third-country nationals, etc.

- ✓ Stakeholders at various levels could address the insufficiency of research in this field: European Commission, governments and universities should encourage and support research projects on the quality of available NFE programmes, mechanisms to explore links to integrate different learning spaces and types, explore effects of such partnerships for migrant children in particular; and promote participatory research projects involving teachers and NGOs.

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