



Families and schools

The involvement of foreign families in schools

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(Eds.)

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Introduction

One of the core challenges faced by education systems across Europe is the share of early leavers. Although the rates have steadily decreased over the years, there is much room for improvement to achieve the Europe 2020 target of less than 10% of early school leavers by 2020 (European Commission, 2017). According to the European Commission (2011), “Europe’s future depends largely on its young people. Through its Europe 2020 strategy, the European Union aims to support young people better and to enable them to fully develop their talents to their own as well as to their economy’s and society’s benefit” (p.2). In this way, school dropout strategies have to take as a starting point an analysis of the national, regional and local specificities of the phenomenon and include policies such as social protection, youth, health, employment and family. In this context of seeking strategies to reduce the rates of school leavers, many European institutions have advocated the need to engage families in their students’ learning processes (European Commission, 2017; European Parliament, 2011).

Thus, parental involvement in their children’s education emerges as a key European action for continuing on the road to the democratisation of education but also for improving the students’ academic processes, their attitudes towards schools and their educational success. A proposal which surely emerges from the amount of literature that demonstrates the substantial influence of parental involvement on students’ academic and behavioural success (Epstein, 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2015; Park & Holloway, 2017; Wilder, 2014), including children of immigrants from different ethnic groups (Kao, 2004; Kim, 2002). In other words, being aware that children with a foreign background are one of the groups with the highest drop-out rates, it is important to highlight that research has also shown that children of immigrants also benefit from parental involvement and from an effective family-school partnership, having been demonstrated that the advantages of involving parents in their child’s education are consistent across different race groups. Consequently, parental involvement could be considered an important preventive strategy to cope with early school leaving and, in general, to improve the quality of children’s education around the globe.

Nevertheless, it is important to clearly state what is understood by parental involvement. Parental involvement is defined as parents’ engagement in their children’s education to influence and benefit the children’s academic and social outcomes, including a wide variety of actions (Fishel & Ramírez, 2005; Kim, 2009; LaRocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011). More specifically, researchers have identified many different components of parental involvement, with the most widely cited over time being Epstein’s framework (1995), which includes six types of activities: parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision-

making and community connections. Based on recent research (Camacho-Thompson, Gillen-O’Neel, Gonzales & Fuligni, 2016; Wang, Deng & Yang, 2016), parental involvement could be operationalised into two wider entities that include all the aforementioned components. These entities are home-based involvement and school-based involvement. Home-based involvement represents parents’ efforts to support children’s learning and education at home whilst school-based involvement consists of actions that parents perform at school, such as attending conferences or participating in formal bodies of participation.

It is important, therefore, to take the concept of parental involvement as a multidimensional concept instead of seeing parental involvement as primarily undertaken in schools and with parents supporting the educational institution, as sometimes happens (Harris & Goodall, 2008). This is important because this misconception of how parents have to be involved, commonly considered as good parenting, imposes normative values of the middle-class (Crozier, 2001) overlooking other factors such as different socioeconomic conditions, working commitments or migrant background (Ule, Zivoder & Bois-Reymond, 2015). Consequently, this hierarchical view of parental involvement presents a dangerous mindset: the misunderstanding that immigrant parents or those facing economic challenges, while not commonly engaged in school-related activities (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Levine-Rasky, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009), are not committed to the education of their children. The truth is, however, that minority and low-income parents also want the best for their children and have high aspirations for them (García Coll et al., 2002; LaRocque et al., 2011), principally seeing their parenting role as providing a supportive home environment and as giving encouragement (Crozier & Davies, 2007). In other words, there is evidence that some parents, particularly those from ethnic minorities or those facing economic challenge, may either choose not to be involved with schools or may face significant barriers in doing so, but still have a strong desire to be involved in their children’s learning and education. Thus, as stated before, engagement with children’s learning may not equate to —and should not be judged on the basis of— engagement with the school, so it is essential to take the concept of parental involvement as a multidimensional construct that encompasses different dimensions and entities of involvement, all of them equally valuable and valid.

Thus, this book is located within this context of considering parental involvement as essential to improve children’s education, and of being aware of the barriers and difficulties surrounding the participation of migrant families. More specifically, this book is a result of an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project (Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices) entitled “Families and schools. The involvement of foreign families in schools”¹. This project is aimed at analysing the implication of foreign families in schools in Spain, Italy and Luxembourg (including the analysis of factors that foster or inhibit their involvement, such as the schools’ welcoming plan, the parents’ knowledge regarding the host education system and the family-

1. Specifically, the number of the Project is 2018-1-ES01-KA201-050269. For more information, visit <http://familyandschool.eu/>

school communication), so that proposals for transformation can be detected and carried out in different collaborating schools to avoid the disadvantage that often affects families with this profile (social inclusion of the families). Professionals from three universities, three educational administrations and three schools work on this project (specifically, in each aforementioned country there is a university, an educational administration and a school involved in the project as partners). The project is structured into two specific phases:

The first phase (from December 2018 to August 2019) consisted of defining the social, political and educational discourses about migration and parental involvement (especially of those of foreign origin) in the three countries participating in the study. This knowledge would be the basis for designing effective strategies (according to each context) that could help to improve the family-school relationship and the involvement of parents in the education of their children. The specific objectives of this phase are the following:

- To know the migratory characteristics of each country, as well as its trajectory and evolution.
- To analyse the national policies on the management and integration of cultural diversity in schools and in other public spheres, as well as the policies on parental involvement.
- To analyse the ways in which migrant families are involved in their child's education (and the barriers thereof) based on existing national literature (meta-analysis).
- To analyse how schools conceptualise and develop approaches to the integration and involvement of foreign families, and detect which are their main weaknesses and needs.
- To carry out comparative trans-national analysis and propose different "innovation actions for improvement" based on the research knowledge.

To achieve these goals, the research team approached the issue of migration and parental involvement using two different analyses. First, the national research carried out on these themes was collated, along with the official documentation (policies, regulations and programmes) on the evolution of the political discourse. Then, focus groups with migrant families and with professional staff were conducted in each country so as to approach the practices and discourses of parents and professionals from the schools involved in the project. In other words, a meta-analysis on the topic was carried out, which has been complemented with two discussion groups in each country (one with professionals and the other with migrant families).

The second phase (from September 2019 to August 2020) seeks to implement, redesign and evaluate the "innovation actions for improvement" (suggested in the first phase) in 8 schools in each country (24 schools in total). Specifically, the objectives of this phase are the following:

- To design concrete actions to improve:
 - a. The welcoming of newly-arrived and migrant families (in general).
 - b. The information that families have about the education system and the functioning of the schools.
 - c. Family-school communication.
 - d. The involvement of families in their children's education at home.
 - e. The involvement of families in the school setting.
- To implement these actions in eight schools in each country.
- To evaluate the success of these actions and develop strategies that, with some revisions, could be used in other countries to encourage the involvement of foreign families in their children's education.

In this case, the methodology is an action-research; where the 24 schools involved will test and carry out a continuous evaluation of the strategies implemented, whilst also conducting a continuous re-design of the strategies to improve their effectiveness.

This book reports on the results of the first phase of the project. It is structured in four chapters that clearly respond to the objectives set in this first phase. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are the result of the document analysis on policies, regulations and programmes regarding migration and schooling, as well as the meta-analysis on parental involvement (and, specifically, on the involvement of foreign families) conducted in each country. More specifically, Chapter 1 portrays the situation in Spain; Chapter 2 is dedicated to the meta-analysis and the review of the official documents in Italy; and Chapter 3 includes the information referring to Luxembourg. Thus, the internal structure of the three chapters is the same, with all of them including the following five specific sections:

1. Migrant characteristics in the country and its evolution.
2. Description of the education system in the country.
3. National policy regarding the management of cultural diversity and immigrants' integration into the country.
4. National policies and legislation on parental involvement.
5. National meta-analysis: parental involvement in schools.

Chapter 4, for its part, presents the results of the six focus groups with migrant families and educational professionals conducted in the three countries. This chapter includes an introduction explaining how the focus groups were conducted in each country (profile and number of participants involved) and the five key-dimensions considered (as well as the reasons for having focused the research on those dimensions). Then, the analysis of the focus groups is presented country by country, reporting on parents' as well as on professionals' discourses. Finally, the conclusion section includes a comparative trans-national analysis, as well as a proposal of ten 'innovation actions for improvement' that will be implemented, tested and evaluated in the second phase of the project.

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1

Migration and parental involvement Catalonia (Spain)

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1. Migrant characteristics in Spain and its evolution

1.1. Immigration in Spain and Catalonia: origin and evolution

In Spain, the increase in foreign immigration has been continuous since the 1960s, although at that time it was a timid population movement and the research focused on internal migration (especially from rural areas to urban ones and from the south and the south-west towards Catalonia, the Basque Country and Madrid). It was after the 1990s (in 1992, there were 393,100 foreign residents in Spain), but particularly in the following decades (going from 719,647 in 1998 to 4,473,499 in 2008 and 5,424,781 on 31 December 2018)¹ that the presence of foreigners grew significantly, in addition to the considerable diversification of their origins. It was a phenomenon that affected the whole of Spain (from the large cities to the rural areas), but it did not affect all territories in a balanced way (Garreta, 2014). It should also be pointed out that the effect of the economic crisis, in particular from 2007, led to a change in the migratory flow, reducing the percentage of immigration and increasing otherwise the emigration of Spanish people to other countries (in particular young people in search of work). However, the phenomenon of immigration in Spain continues to be significant and visible, although it varies in different territories. In fact, Catalonia is one of the autonomous communities with the highest percentages of migration (Table 1). In January 2018, the population of foreign origin was 14.2%, thus surpassing the Spanish average, which was 10.1%, and concentrating 22.9% of the immigrant population of the Spanish State (Domingo & Bernad, 2019).

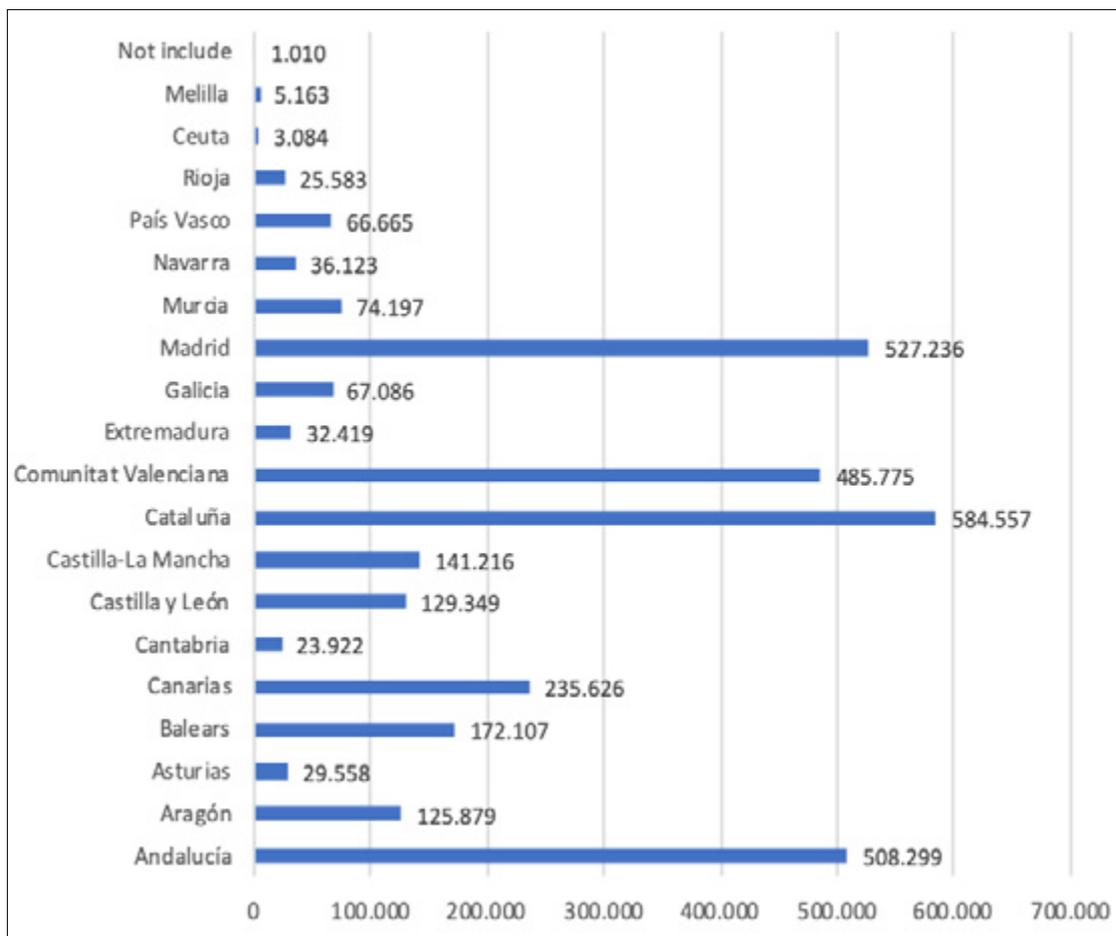
Thus, in the last 20 years, Catalonia has undergone a great demographic transformation. The years between 1997 and 2010 saw was the most intense transformation, and nowadays a

1. See: <http://extranjeros.mitramiss.gob.es/es/Estadisticas/index.html>.

little more than a third of the citizens of Catalonia were not born in this community. In fact, their population has increased by almost one and a half million people, who speak more than 300 different languages and whose nationalities are from more than 180 different states. By origin, the Moroccan nationality stands out, representing almost 20% of foreigners and 2.8% of the total Catalan population. After this, albeit at some distance, we have people of Romanian origin (1.3%), people of Chinese origin (0.7%) and Italians (0.7%) and Pakistanis (0.6%). These are the five most outstanding nationalities. However, the set of different Latin American nationalities exceeds 250,000 people, representing 3.3% of the total Catalan population (Secretaria d'Igualtat, Migracions i Ciutadania, 2017).

It must be said, nevertheless, that nowadays Catalonia has entered a new phase of its immigration process, that of full citizenship and that of the sons and daughters of immigration, so that, little by little, a shared belonging among citizens of many countries is being built. Further, the number of people of immigrant origin has been stabilised as incoming flows have been moderated in recent years, although there is still a significant migratory movement.

TABLE 1. FOREIGNERS WITH A VALID RESIDENCE PERMIT (31-12-2018)



Source: Own elaboration by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (www.ine.es).

1.2. Schooling of students of foreign origin

Regarding the schooling of foreign students, there are not many longitudinal studies that look in depth at the evolution of students of foreign origin throughout Spain; rather, in many cases, they were local or autonomous region approaches (see, for example, Garreta, 2006; Goenechea, 2001). However, the CIDE and later the CNIIE (government research bodies into education) have tried to fill this gap with studies that show the incorporation of these students into the Spanish education system.

Two examples of these pieces of research are the one published in 2006 on the evolution and situation of foreign students in the Spanish education system from 1995 to 2006 (CIDE, 2006) and the one published in 2012, which gives an analysis of the evolution between 2001 and 2012 (CNIIE, 2012). Data from these documents show the notable growth of foreign students: from 141,919 in the 2000-2001 academic year to 770,384 in 2010-2011, the latter representing 9.5% of all students². Moreover, the origins of foreign students had not undergone important changes during these years. Those coming from the European Union represented 23.62% in the 2000-2001 academic year and 25.8% in 2010-2011. From other European countries, it was 6.83% in the 2000-2001 academic year and went on to 3.86% in 2010-2011, a reduction produced given the incorporation of some countries into the European Union. The rest of origins in the 2010-2011 academic year were the following: 23.47% from Africa, 42.21% from America, 6.24% from Asia and 0.05% from Oceania. The analysis of its territorial distribution shows an important increase of foreign students in all Autonomous Communities, although some regions were gaining more foreign students than others over the years. In this regard, in the 2010-2011 academic year, La Rioja had 16.53% of foreign students, Balearic Islands 15.6%, Madrid 13.41%, Catalonia 12.99% and Aragon 12.43%. At the other extreme, we find Ceuta (3.33%), Extremadura (3.39%) and Galicia (3.59%). Thus, this data indicates an unequal distribution in the Spanish territory of students of foreign nationality, a tendency that still remains important.

Looking directly at data of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the statistical data for the 2017-2018 academic year (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2019) shows that in 2017-18 there were 748,429 students of foreign origin distributed unequally throughout the territory: from Galicia with 2.6%, Extremadura with 2.8% and Asturias with 3.8%, to Catalonia (13.2%), Balearic Islands (13.2%), Aragon (12.7%), Murcia (12.7%) and La Rioja (12.9%). Therefore, we clearly see that Catalonia is one of the Spanish regions with a greater presence of foreign students and consequently, a region in which cultural diversity in schools has undergone new educational challenges.

More specifically, regarding primary education (6 to 12 years) in Catalonia, which is what most interests us, the number of students in the 2017-18 academic year was 489,804 (representing

2. Preschool, primary, special and compulsory secondary school education, vocational training courses and other training programmes.

15.5% of the total student population). Their origins were diverse: 19.3% were students born in the European Union (mainly from Germany and Romania, although there are multiple origins), 4.95% in other European countries not belonging to the European Union (mainly from Russia and Ukraine), 36.9% in Africa (the most numerous being from Morocco, although there is a diversity of origins), 1% in North America (United States, Mexico, Canada), 6.3% in Central America (Honduras, Nicaragua), 16% in South America (Bolivia, Ecuador and a long list of origins), 15.5% in Asia (mainly China and, among other origins, Pakistan is notable) and 0.05% in Oceania (Instituto Nacional de Estadística: see www.ine.es).

It should be stated, however, that one of the most highlighted questions in the schooling of foreign students in recent decades has been their unequal distribution in schools, which provokes inequality and segregation. With respect to segregation, there is a double network (state and privately-owned schools) which is imbalanced with respect to the presence of students of families of foreign origin, specifically stating that state schools are those that generally have a greater presence of these students (García & Olmos, 2012). In this regard, the aforementioned foreign students (in the 2017-2018 academic year) are enrolled mainly in publicly-owned centres (82.95%), compared to privately-owned centres (1.35%) and state-assisted private centres (15.7%). Thus, the irregular distribution of students of foreign origin in schools is an important challenge that still has to be addressed. However, at the same time, this difference not only occurs in private and state schools but also intra-groups, as the distribution in each of the networks is not homogenous (Síndic de Greuges, 2008; 2016). Some research (Síndic de Greuges, 2008; 2016) denies the clichés that school segregation is mainly caused by residence. It also explains that this segregation is not reduced to the dualisation of the double school network (private/state) although it is true that the state sector takes three times more students of foreign origin than the private one.

1.3. New educational challenges: immigration and schools

The “recent” and uneven territorial presence of people from many different origins has had a different impact on society in many areas: at a demographic, economic, social, cultural level (Garreta, 2016a; Solé, 2001; Solé & Izquierdo, 2005) and, of course, also on the education system. In Catalonia, the progressive arrival of immigrants meant that intercultural political discourses have been developed on the recognition of cultural diversity, going from assimilationist programmes and policies (monocultural perspective) to more multicultural and intercultural approaches (Fernández Enguita, 1996; García & Goenechea, 2009). In fact, nowadays interculturalism is considered the path towards greater social cohesion, although this approach still has many challenges in practice (Garreta, 2009). On the negative side, we find that discourses of rejection towards diversity are growing through fear of the loss of one’s own culture and identity, because of the competition that immigrants represent on labour and on social services or because of the relationship that is often established between immigration and insecurity. In this sense, a recent national study (CIS, 2012) showed that when asking people about migrants, 33.4% consider that the number of immigrants currently in Spain is ‘too high’ (close to 46% who consider it ‘excessive’). Similarly, 42.1% consider that the laws

regulating migrations are 'too tolerant', and another 38% recognise that they view migration 'suspiciously'. Other negative aspects commented by national people regarding migration are the following: 'they cause more problems of crime and insecurity' (26.5%), 'they provoke more competitiveness in the labour market' (15.1%) and 'they entail the existence of more problems of integration and culture shock' (11.9%). These discourses of rejection seem to occur mainly because of the notable increase in immigration from certain origins in a short period of time, and because of the belief that there is resistance by certain immigrants to integration. However, what is important is that this social imaginary regarding immigration can easily impact the beliefs and attitudes of teachers, who may explicitly or implicitly reproduce and reinforce it (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2013).

Another educational challenge is the implementation of extensive intercultural education. The Catalan education system has taken big steps in the recognition and assessment of cultural diversity, in which the cultural pluralism of the state has been accentuated and the intercultural model has been incorporated into a more general approach of social cohesion and inclusion (Essomba, 2014) for all schools, not only those which have it in their midst. Nevertheless, there is still a misapprehension by some professionals that work in cultural diversity in schools and in the classroom is only necessary at schools with high percentages of immigrants, based on the mistaken assumption that interculturalism is a subject related to foreign students and ethnic minorities (Díez, 2014; Leiva, 2017)

2. Description of the education system in Catalonia (Spain)

2.1. General structure of the Catalan education system

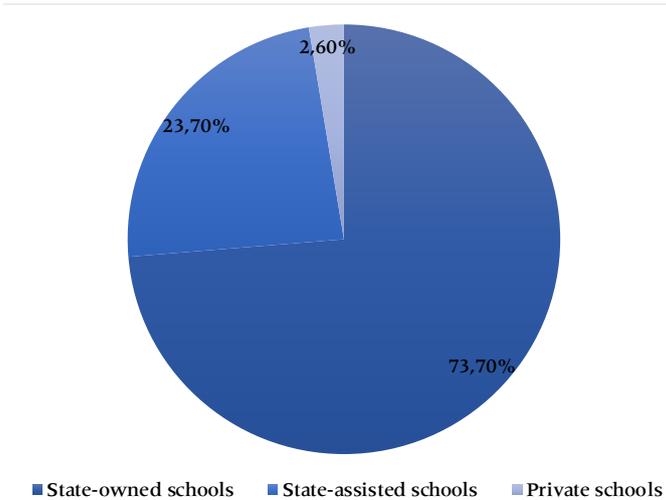
Education in Spain is regulated by the Ministry of Education, although the governments of the different Autonomous Communities are in charge of managing and financing the schools in their territory. Both administrations (the Spanish and the Catalan administration) are guided by the principles of quality, cooperation, equity, freedom of education, merit, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, efficiency in the allocation of public resources, transparency and accountability.

Regarding the structure of the education system, there is a compulsory and free educational stage (although parents must assume the expenses of materials and books used in classes), from 3 to 16 years old (the age when young people can enter the labour market). This stage of compulsory education is divided into three stages: early childhood education (from 3 to 6 years old); primary education (from 6 to 12 years old), and secondary education (from 12 to 16 years old). Early childhood education entails three courses, and almost 100% of Catalan children attend this education from 3 to 6 years old (Sanuy, Bernad & Llevot, 2017). Primary education is comprised of six courses grouped into three cycles of two years each (initial, middle and high cycle). Secondary education, for its part, includes four courses structured in two two-year cycles (first cycle and second cycle). Before compulsory early childhood education, there is another educational institution, kindergarten, from 4 months to 3 years old, in other words, the period that goes from maternity and paternity leave to the incorporation of children into the compulsory education system. In this regard, there are three types of

educational institution: schools, which teach the second cycle of early childhood education (from 3 to 6 years old) and primary education; the institute-school, which teaches the second cycle of early childhood education, primary education and secondary education (that is, from 3 to 16 years old); and the institutes, in which secondary education and post-compulsory studies (bachelor’s degrees and vocational training) are taught.

In Spain, and therefore in Catalonia, schools can be state-owned or private. State schools are supported by public funds, the schools belong to the educational or local administration and teachers are civil servants. In the private network, the schools belong to a foundation, religious order or cooperative and the teaching staff is hired by the schools’ owner. Within this group of schools, there are also two types of school. On the one hand, there are state-assisted private schools, which provide studies that are also financed by public funds, although parents have to pay a monthly fee. Then, there are strictly private schools, which do not have any economic agreement with the state. These schools can also teach all non-university educational stages. If we look at recent data (Departament d’Ensenyament, 2019), in the 2019-2020 academic year, the total number of educational institutions in Catalonia, including the three educational levels mentioned previously (early childhood education, primary education and secondary education, that is, from 3 to 16 years old), is 5,397, with 1,103,123 pupils. If we focus our attention on primary education, in the 2019-2020 academic year, there are 2,438 schools, most of which are state-owned. More specifically, there are 1,796 state-owned schools, 578 state-assisted private schools (also financed by public funds) and only 64 strictly private schools. Graph 1 shows the distribution of the three types of school in Catalonia with regard to primary education:

GRAPH 1. PERCENTAGE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE 2019-2020 ACADEMIC YEAR ACCORDING TO THEIR TYPE (STATE-OWNED, STATE-ASSISTED OR PRIVATE).



Source: own elaboration using data from the Catalan Department of Education (2019).

2.2. Specific characteristics of its functioning

Looking at the regulatory level, the Education Law of Catalonia (LEC) was approved by the Parliament of Catalonia in 2009 and is still in force. This law develops and specifies the educational competences that Catalonia has under the Statute of Autonomy, but it is also based on the National Education Agreement (Górtazar & Moreno, 2017). This alliance between the Catalan and the Spanish government sought five basic agreements: first, an agreement with the municipalities to cooperate in the education of citizens; secondly, an agreement of educational co-responsibility with families; thirdly, an agreement with the teaching staff to develop a stimulating teaching career; fourthly, an agreement aimed to manage the educational institutions in an autonomous and efficient way; and finally, an agreement concerning schools funded by the state (state and state-assisted private schools) to share responsibilities.

Regarding the latter agreement, it should be highlighted that an important concern among politicians was the growing dualisation of the school network. In other words, there was a tendency, especially clear in urban areas, towards the consolidation of a state-assisted private school in which the children of the middle classes preferentially enrolled, while the schooling of children of families with fewer resources occurred mostly in schools of public ownership. Thus, to avoid this problem, the agreement sought to equalise both types of schools, at least in two aspects: first, all schools must respect the principle of free education; and secondly, the conditions for children's schooling should not be different depending on the type of school. In this way, many regulations were established to correct certain student selection practices that were common in the state-assisted private schools (creation of Municipal School Offices, educational planning and a commitment to review educational agreements).

It is also worth mentioning that Catalan is the official language in schools. However, the school curriculum guarantees the children's competence in the two official languages in Catalonia (Catalan and Spanish) by the end of compulsory education. In addition, teaching of a third language is also guaranteed, which is generally English, but which in some schools may be French or German. There are also schools that offer more than one foreign language and, in some cases, after school hours, there are schools that teach some of the languages of the countries of origin of the students as extracurricular activities³.

Another important characteristic of the Catalan education system is that there is a long tradition of pedagogical and educational innovation, dating back to the beginning of the 20th century (Carbonell, 2014). However, without going back too far, we find that many initiatives have emerged in the last decade, which shows that the education system in Catalonia is characterised by change and innovation. In this regard, there is *The Edupost2015* campaign, promoted by the "Post-2015 Education, Equity and Quality for All" project (led by UNESCO in Catalonia and the Jaume Bofill Foundation), which has the aim of deepening the quality

3. Some of these experiences could be seen in the videos edited by the GRASE group, from the University of Lleida, which can be found on the following webpage: www.escueladiversa.com.

and equity of education by calling on educational actors to reflect and make proposals for the next 15 years through different media and formats (Sanuy, Bernad & Llevot, 2017). On similar dates (January 2016), the *Escola Nova 21* promoted an alliance between educational institutions and other bodies for an advanced education system⁴; and later, in 2019, the *Educació 360* was developed, an educational, social and political initiative that proposes to connect the lifelong learning that takes place throughout life in all spaces and times, linking school, families and all the community to ensure fairness and equal opportunities⁵. To summarise, all these experiences highlight the existence of foundations and school networks which, along with the effort and aim of the Education Administration, are promoting reflection and innovation in the education system in a very intense way (Garreta, 2019). In this regard, the Catalan Ministry of Education is developing a map of innovation in Catalonia to make visible the various current networks and to identify success stories and the territorial implementation of these new experiences.

Moreover, in recent years, learning contexts have changed dramatically with the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as well as Learning and Knowledge Technologies (LKT). New teaching and learning processes have emerged, such as learning by projects (and not with books) and gamification, which have changed classroom organisation and have given more prominence to the students, conceived as agents of their own learning process. In this sense, students are now encouraged to investigate the surrounding reality, to ask questions, to solve problems and to communicate, and all this learning is done in community, with other classmates with different interests and abilities, and where the teacher only guides the project, proposing different materials and research routes to build the scaffolding on which to base the learning (Fernández Enguita, 2018).

2.3. Specific human resources to attend migrant pupils

In Catalan schools, there are professionals who specifically attend the needs and requirements of migrant pupils. These figures are: the tutor of the welcome classrooms, the Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams (LIC Teams) and the schools' coordinator on language, interculturality and social cohesion. In addition, there are also professionals who attend pupils with specific educational needs, where we can find also migrant pupils. These professionals are the Psycho-pedagogical counselling teams (EAP) and the teachers who are part of the Commission for Attention to Diversity (CAD). In this section we are going to expand on these professionals.

2.3.1. Welcome classrooms and the figure of the tutor of such classrooms

The welcome classrooms are classrooms in which students who have arrived in Catalonia in the last two years are attended. The aim of these classrooms is to provide them with an

4. For more information: <https://www.escolanova21.cat/>

5. For more information: <https://www.fbofill.cat/videos/educacio-360-educacio-temps-complet>

education adapted to their specific emotional and linguistic needs, albeit without losing their contact with the ordinary classroom. Specifically, when a migrant pupil arrives at a school, he/she is allocated to an ordinary class according to his/her age and educational level. However, very often, the recently-arrived migrants do not know the Catalan language, so they are unable to follow ordinary teaching. Thus, given this situation, they are also allocated to the welcome classrooms for some hours a day, which are a space for hosting and mentoring students who have recently arrived; a space for enhancing their relationship, exchange and communication with other students who have lived a similar experience; and a space where they are taught the Catalan language by using an adapted curriculum in order to make them linguistically competent and, therefore, able to join the ordinary classroom definitively.

These welcome classrooms —and the human and material resources that they entail— are funded by the Department of Education, and their implementation depends on the number of new foreign students that each school receives, combined with the budget that the Government has for this service, which has been changing over the years. The tutor of the welcome classroom is appointed by the head teacher from among the professionals that teach pupils in this classroom. This tutor is the reference point for migrant pupils during their adaptation process, so he/she is in charge of teaching within this classroom during most of the school day. Specifically, the key functions assigned to the tutor of the welcome classroom are the following (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2007):

- Coordinate the initial evaluation of pupils when they arrive at school, and collaborate in the design of their individualised plans and, if necessary, in their curricular adaptations.
- Manage the welcome classroom by planning suitable resources and actions, programming the learning sequences, applying the most appropriate methodologies and evaluating the results of the teaching and learning processes.
- Facilitate students' access to the ordinary curriculum.
- Apply appropriate and efficient methodologies for the linguistic immersion of students in order to promote their linguistic competence.
- Foster the students' integration into their ordinary classroom.
- Collaborate with the other teachers in the implementation of an intercultural education within the whole school.

However, there are many detractors of this measure because of its segregating nature (Bonal, 2004; Carbonell, Simó & Tort, 2002; Palaudàrias, 2002). According to these authors, this measure carries the risk of marginalising and isolating these students, an isolation that can negatively influence relations between natives and immigrants. In other words, the measure could be an obstacle to the proper socialisation of immigrant students with their classmates.

2.3.2. The Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams (LIC Teams) and the school's coordinator on language, interculturality and social cohesion

The Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams, known as LIC Teams, are counselling teams in language, interculturality and social cohesion that support teachers in attending the diversity related to students, especially from immigration, and/or with students at risk of social exclusion. More specifically, these teams are aimed at guiding and collaborating with schools in relation to disadvantaged and newly-arrived students, providing help and advice to schools in developing an inclusive and integrative education. The LIC Teams are part of the area educational services, in conjunction with the pedagogical resources services (CRP) and the Psycho-pedagogical counselling teams (EAP). According to Decree 180/2005, of 30 August 2005, the most important functions they carry out are the following:

- Advise teachers on the educational response to students of foreign origin and students at risk of social exclusion.
- Advise teachers on how to organise the welcome classrooms.
- Collaborate with teachers in the promotion and consolidation of the Catalan language as the backbone of a multilingual project.
- Collaborate with teachers in the introduction of an intercultural education for all.
- Advise teachers on how to tutorise recently-arrived migrant students, as well as students at risk of social exclusion.
- Provide help and advice to schools in developing the 'environmental education plans', an instrument that gives an integrated and community response to the educational needs of all students through the coordination and dynamisation of educational actions in different areas of the students' life, based on local initiatives.
- Collaborate with other social and educational agents in the municipal or territorial environment in order to offer an integrated and community-based attention.

In relation to these teams, which are an external service to the school community, schools can appoint a schools' coordinator on language, interculturality and social cohesion. This person is named by the school headmaster from the teaching team, and is responsible, in coordination with the assessor of the LIC team, for promoting the schools' action to enhance and consolidate an intercultural education within each school⁶.

6. These coordinators are also regulated in Decree 180/2005, of 30 August 2005.

2.3.3. The Psycho-pedagogical counselling teams (EAP)

The psycho-pedagogical counselling teams (EAP) are multidisciplinary educational services that assess and support schools in psychological and pedagogical matters within a defined territorial area. These teams are comprised of secondary school teachers who are specially trained in psychology and pedagogy. In these teams there are also social workers and physiotherapists. The specific functions they carry out are the following⁷:

- Identify and evaluate the specific educational needs of pupils, in collaboration with teachers.
- Participate in the development and monitoring of curricular adaptations that pupils may need, in collaboration with teachers.
- Assess teachers in psycho-pedagogical aspects, as well as on how to attend diversity.
- Assess pupils and families on aspects of personal, educational and professional guidance.
- Collaborate with the social and health services of the territorial scope of action, to offer coordinated attention to the students and families that need it.

2.3.4. Teachers who comprise the Commission for Attention to Diversity (CAD)

In Catalan schools there is the Commission for Attention to Diversity, which has the aim of planning, promoting and monitoring the actions that take place within the school to meet the educational needs of students. This commission is chaired by the school's head teacher (or sometimes by another member of the management team) and is comprised, among other professionals, by the psycho-pedagogical specialist of the EAP who is assigned to this school, the schools' coordinator on language, interculturality and social cohesion and a teacher specialised in special education.

3. National policy regarding the management of cultural diversity and immigrants' integration into the country

3.1. National policies on cultural diversity: the evolution of discourses during the 1990s

As explained in the previous section, in Spain there is a decentralised system in which the governments of the various autonomous regions take on a very important role in education, which has led to different forms of understanding and working on cultural diversity within the country. In other words, different policies on the management of migration and cultural diversity have been developed in each autonomous community, with the subsequent diversification of the legislative panorama within the country. Therefore, and considering that Spain encompasses nineteen autonomous communities, this section will be focused on

7. These functions are explained in Decree 155/1994, of 28 June 1994.

the national policies developed and implemented in Catalonia, a pioneer in the reception of foreign immigration within the whole country and, thus, also a pioneer in the adoption of policies and programmes to attend cultural diversity. Nevertheless, Catalonia, like Spain, is considered a young country in the reception and treatment of cultural diversity when looking at the international level, since it has been traditionally a region which exported migratory flows.

Bound up in this historical fact, it is not until the 1990s that Catalonia begins to implement a global policy of immigration and consequently, also a specific policy to attend cultural diversity within schools. In this regard, since its beginnings, there have been two governing bodies in charge of immigration policies. On the one hand, there is the *Secretariat for Immigration*, created in 2000, and now called the *Secretariat of Equality, Migrations and Citizenship*. This body of the Government of Catalonia —specifically, the Department of Social Welfare and Family— boosts and coordinates the actions on migration in all areas and departments of intervention, structuring the institutional organisation of the regional policies concerning the management of immigration and cultural diversity. On the other hand, there is the Department of Education —and more specifically the *Secretariat of Educational Policies*— which has its own functions within the most limited field of migration and education, often following the general guidelines established by the *Secretariat for Immigration*. Thus, this text is going to go back and forth between the two contexts (general policies on immigration and more specific policies on the management of immigration and the cultural diversity thereof within the education system) to better understand the regulations and discourses at the educational level.

Looking first at the broader context, the first step towards the development of national policies on immigration was in 1992, with the creation of the *Interministerial Committee for Monitoring and Coordinating Actions on Migration* and the *Immigrant Advisory Council*, as a consultation and participation body. At this juncture, the *First Interministerial Immigration Plan* was approved (1993) in order to enhance the integration of migrants from a dynamic and pluralistic viewpoint. This document noted that, alongside other departments, the Department of Education should implement actions to promote intercultural education within all schools. Thus, following this recommendation, in 1996 the Department of Education published a document entitled *Cross-cutting Line on Intercultural Education*, which is considered to be the first strong commitment to interculturalism in the field of education.

This document was based on the idea that intercultural education is the pedagogical response to prepare future generations to live in a culturally diverse society. In this vein, it affirmed that intercultural education should develop in all students a set of attitudes and skills not only towards their own culture but also towards the cultural diversity found in society and at school. Further, it explicitly highlighted that intercultural education cannot be a superficial practice, outside the official curriculum, neither should it be targeted solely at culturally diverse students. Instead, it should be taught to all students and in all schools (and not just in those schools with students of foreign origin). Moreover, this document also asked schools to gradually incorporate into the main school documents the principles of an intercultural

education and provided some basic guidelines to help schools in such a commitment. In this regard, it proposed, amongst others, a number of lines of action to eradicate prejudice, as well as actions to welcome and support newly-arrived students.

In 1996, the Department of Education also published a document entitled *Orientations for the Unfolding of the Curriculum. Intercultural Education*, which also highlighted the idea that the educational policies and practices to support and tackle cultural diversity are the responsibility of each and every member of society, and they should not only address the compensation of inequalities. Therefore, it can be stated that in the 1990s the discourse of the Catalan government took an intercultural approach within the field of education.

3.2. National policies on cultural diversity: the evolution of discourses from 2000 to 2015

Going back to the broader context, in 2000 Catalonia consolidated the global policy of immigration which had started in the 1990s with the creation of the Secretariat for Immigration. With the new millennium, national policies on migration were considered a key issue since diversity began to be an emerging social phenomenon of great concern. In this sense, the *Second Interministerial Immigration Plan* (2001-2004) was approved. Like the previous Interministerial Immigration Plan, it was a general plan coordinated by the Secretariat for Immigration that established the set of actions and programmes that the different departments in the government should carry out. Thus, bound up in the guidelines of this *Interministerial Immigration Plan*, the Department of Education created the *General Subdirectorate of Language and Social Cohesion*, a body that sought to cope with the new challenges posed by the reception and integration of those students who have just joined the national education system. Further, two important plans were published: the *2003-2006 Action Plan for Students of Foreign Nationality* and the *Language and Social Cohesion Plan* (2004). The former has the objective of schooling and integrating all students, but especially those of foreign origin. However, in practice, it was basically focused on the student's language learning, without taking into account other fundamental elements in the reception and integration of newly-arrived migrants, such as the emotional, relational and social aspects (Llevot, 2005). The latter, which was aimed at fostering social cohesion and Catalan language learning, is considered to be a core document within the educational policies on immigration matters.

Until the publication of this plan (*Language and Social Cohesion Plan, 2004*), two specific programmes and services were in force in Catalonia. First, there was the *Compensatory Education Programme*, which was first implemented in the Spanish government in 1983, and was then assumed by the Department of Education of Catalonia in 1990. This programme was aimed at disadvantaged students and those at risk of marginalisation and social exclusion—to summarise, pupils with deficient schooling—with the aim of ensuring their integration and normalisation within the education system, focusing mainly on the social aspect. Besides this, there was the *Catalan Teaching Service (SEDEC)*, responsible for the language aspect and also aimed at disadvantaged and marginalised pupils. Thus, with the arrival of migrants during the 1990s, the two projects included migrant students as an important part of their target. In

this sense, in 2000 the Compensatory Education Programme included within its objectives supporting schools with the welcoming of newly-arrived students of foreign origin and the elaboration of specific material for their learning. Similarly, the Catalan Teaching Service developed a project specifically designed to attend migrant pupils, which included language and school adaptation workshops.

However, in 2004, the implementation of the *Language and Social Cohesion Plan* led to the disappearance of the Compensatory Education Programme as well as the Catalan Teaching Service. Instead, the *Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams* were created, which encompassed both the social and the language issue. Therefore, a new organisational scheme appeared with a more global vision and a greater endowment of resources, with the final aim of fostering and consolidating intercultural education and the Catalan language. Specifically, the *Language and Social Cohesion Plan* was accompanied by many innovative measures, the following being the most important ones since they are still in force: the creation of the welcome classrooms (and the figure of the tutor of such classrooms) and the creation of the Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams, which was accompanied by the creation of the school's coordinator on language, interculturality and social cohesion.⁸ Within the Language and Social Cohesion Plan, the *First Integral Plan for the Gypsy People 2005-2008* was also framed, which, as an educational intervention, highlighted intercultural mediation and learning communities. Further, it aimed to incorporate gypsy culture into the organisation and into the curriculum with an intercultural orientation.

Looking again at the general policies on migration, in 2005 the Catalan Secretariat for Immigration approved the *2005-2008 Citizenship and Immigration Plan*, which could be considered the third Interministerial Immigration Plan. In the educational field, it maintained the measures established by the Language and Social Cohesion Plan, but developed further actions to welcome and attend migrant pupils. Some of these actions were improving communication with migrant students and their families with newly-published materials, fostering teacher training regarding the reception of newly arrived students, providing specific guidelines on curricular adaptation to diversity and hiring intercultural mediators.

In 2009 the above plan was revised, and the *2009-2012 Citizenship and Immigration Plan* was implemented. The general strategies, transversal to all departments, were grouped into three main areas: the management of migration and the integration of migrant citizenship into the labour market; the adaptation of public services to a diverse society; and the creation of a common public culture. Regarding education, the measures and programmes developed were the following: maintaining the welcome classrooms and the LIC Teams; fostering the school promotion of gypsy pupils from Eastern European countries; giving more financial resources to schools to acquire teaching materials related to newly-arrived migrants; promoting afternoon

8. These resources have been explained in detail in section 2 (Description of the Catalan Education System).

workshops to support students with their homework; and fostering specific training for LIC coordinators and tutors of the welcome classrooms.

In 2009 the second *Integral Plan for the Gypsy People 2009-2013* was also created, which gave continuity to the first Plan 2005-2008. Within this new plan, the School Promotion Project was designed in the field of education, which has the aim of promoting equal opportunities, equity, inclusion and social cohesion for gypsy pupils. In this regard, a new figure was created, named gypsy school promoters, specifically designed to integrate and attend gypsy people. This promoter was a professional member of the gypsy community who knows their culture and identity, as well as their entities and associations, so he/she is able to maintain effective relationships with families and better understand the families' expectations and actions towards their children's education. To summarise, this person, created to be a reference point for the gypsy community, is aimed at fostering gypsy families' participation in their children's education, informing them about school-related issues and creating links between schools, families and the gypsy community. In 2014, these actions continued with the third *Integral Plan for the Gypsy People 2014-2016*, following the same educational approach.

Although not specifically created to deal with migration in schools, it is worth noting the implementation of an ambitious and far-reaching programme called the *National Offensive for Academic Success (2012-2018)*. With the aim of improving the skills level of primary and secondary students and reducing the school dropout rate, this programme included a number of strategies aimed at culturally diverse students, as well as other actions aimed at all students to develop in them the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to thrive in a culturally diverse society. According to this programme, intercultural education was considered the ideal pedagogical response for preparing pupils to live in a plural and democratic society. However, this relational and skills-based aspect of intercultural education was particularly addressed within the actions concerning language and literacy learning—with the support and advice, when needed, of the Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams—and not transversally within the whole curriculum. Another key action is the promotion of families' involvement and commitment towards their children's education. To this end, this programme offered an information section on the institutional webpage of the Catalan Ministry of Education, called 'School and Family', which provided many suggestions, guidelines and advice on six lines of family-school intervention. This information section, which is still in force, includes advice on the following areas and issues: the reception of families; the signing of a letter of commitment to education; the acceptance of migrant families; shared tutorial actions regarding information and communication; the participation of families in the school setting; and training and courses for families⁹.

Later, in 2013, the *Citizenship and Migrations Plan: Horizon 2016* was implemented. This maintained a line of continuity with the previous interministerial plans, while at the same

9. See <http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/comunitat/escolaifamilia/>

time assuming the economic changes occurred over the last period. With regard to education, the plan maintained the measures of promoting the welcome classes for migrant students and the Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams.

3.3. National policies on cultural diversity: and now what?

In 2017 the *2017-2020 Citizens and Migration Plan* was approved (which represents the sixth interdepartmental plan). In this plan, the Catalan government makes a clear commitment to interculturality as a model for cohesion and coexistence under the umbrella of respect and the sharing of common cultural values. In addition, it focuses on co-responsibility in education and the implementation of a collaborative network with other administrations and bodies, encouraging volunteering. Looking first at the general goals encompassing all departments, the plan is focused on two key lines of action with their corresponding programmes. First, there is the line of action named ‘visibility of diversity as a core value that enriches society’. Within this broad line of action, there is a *programme to promote the participation of immigrants, refugees and returnees* with the goal of empowering citizenship. In other words, it looks at migrants as active agents who can promote the values of the common public culture. Secondly, there is the *programme on visibility of cultural diversity*, which is aimed at giving visibility in the media to people from diverse origins, as well as at promoting diversity in public institutional spaces and in the private sphere. The second line of action is training for preventing racism and discrimination. Within this goal, there is a *public training programme for the prevention of discrimination and racism*, whose principal goals are preventing such behaviours in public employees and institutional representatives and giving them the necessary strategies to have an open and respectful attitude towards diversity.

Regarding education, the general lines of action with their corresponding programmes are the following:

1. *Promoting the educational success of migrant children, refugees and returned families.* Within this goal, the Department of Education has launched many educational programmes. First, there is a *programme for improving the welcoming of migrant families to the school*, which has the objectives of enhancing migrant parental involvement in their children’s education, heightening their expectations towards their children’s educational success and improving parents’ knowledge regarding the education system. Specific areas of action in this regard are the following:

- Welcoming of migrant families.
- Knowledge about the Catalan education system, how it works and its services.
- Academic orientation adapted to migrant families.
- Language and socialisation workshops for families within the school environment.

- Training plan for families so that they can be involved in their children's education.
- Strategies to foster interaction between students and families.

Secondly, there is the *school success programme for children with a migratory background*. This programme aims to improve the immigrant and minority students' lower academic performance —when it is compared to non-migrant majority students— in order to achieve a graduation rate for migrant pupils similar to that of native students. The specific actions within this programme (which are carried out both during school hours and outside them), are the following:

- Improving the welcome classrooms by increasing human and material resources.
- Producing and disseminating language and social support resources.
- Implementing activities to reinforce the migrant students' learning.
- Enhancing the support given by the Language, Interculturality and Cohesion teams to schools.
- Producing individualised welcome plans for students who join the education system late.

Finally, there is the *programme for promoting good practices concerning the educational success of pupils with a migrant background*. The objective of this programme is to promote an institutional and pedagogical change in the so-called 'schools of maximum complexity', a type of school which is catalogued as complex based on indicators such as the level of education and/or the occupation of parents, the number of students of foreign origin in the school and the number of students with specific education needs in the school. Within this programme, there are two key actions that should be highlighted:

- The identification and dissemination of good practices regarding institutional changes and pedagogical innovation in schools of maximum complexity.
- The identification and dissemination of good practices regarding community learning in schools of maximum complexity.

2. *Implementing a holistic intercultural education in all schools, with the programme of interculturality in schools*. The most notable actions carried out within this educational programme are the following: promoting school menus that respect diversity; incorporating dining room monitors of immigrant origin in schools with a high percentage of students of foreign origin; extending resources to introduce interculturality within the curriculum; incorporating the languages of origin of migrant pupils as second foreign languages, like English; also promoting the languages of origin of migrant pupils in extracurricular

activities; incorporating in schools the celebration of festivities of different cultures present in the school; and creating the figure of the professional on interculturality and coexistence within schools.

At this point, it is important to note that all the educational programmes mentioned above are accompanied by educational regulations that also place social cohesion and the achievement of an inclusive education as fundamental principles of the Catalan education system. First, there is *Ruling ENS/2754/2018, of 20 November 2018*, creating the *Programme of languages and cultures of origin*. This programme promotes the integration of different cultures and languages into the school curriculum in order to heighten the plurilingual and multicultural competence of all students, both in extra-curricular activities and within the ordinary classroom.

Secondly, there is *Decree 150/2017 of students' educational attention within the framework of an inclusive system*. This sets out a series of measures aimed at all students with the aim of fostering their personal and social development within an inclusive education system. However, what is understood by an inclusive education system? According to the above decree, an inclusive school determines ethical and educational principals in defence of equity and social justice, which includes intercultural education in all schools, special attention to diversity and the search for equal opportunities. It also highlights that it is compulsory to continue the process that began decades ago, in which it is necessary to maintain the dialogue, complicity and involvement of all the people who have the possibility of improving the quality of education: teachers, professionals for attending diverse students, administration and services staff, management teams of schools, students, families, schools inspection, education services, university, pedagogical renewal movements, union organisations, and all the institutions and entities that are committed to education. Hence, it must be stressed that families take an important role in the achievement of this inclusive school through their collaboration and active participation within the educational community. Moreover, the functions carried out by the Language, Interculturality and Cohesion Teams are extended. In this regard, they can also collaborate in the migrant pupils' detection of needs to determine the specific measures and additional support that they need to receive.

Thirdly, there is *Ruling ENS/585/2017, of 17 March 2017*, which establishes the design and implementation of the *Project of coexistence and educational success* in all schools. This project reflects the actions that schools must carry out in order to train all students and the whole educational community in coexistence, social cohesion and the positive management of conflicts. The attitudes and values that should be developed include respect, effort and responsibility. Similarly, regarding the kind of education that should be enhanced, there is intercultural education and education for peace. To this end, this project stresses concrete actions and provides some resources to help schools in this commitment, such as a protocol of prevention, detection and intervention in situations of discrimination and hatred.

Finally, we should cite the fourth *Integral Plan for the Gypsy People 2017-2020*, which continues with the implementation of the measures established in the previous plans. It notes, however,

the importance of taking actions to increase the enrolment of gypsy students in early childhood education (from one to six years), enhancing their academic success and extending the figure of the school promoter to more schools.

Further, apart from the aforementioned educational regulations, the Department of Education has recently published a number of documents to guide schools in the integration of migrant pupils—and their families—as well as to guide schools in the commitment of incorporating the intercultural view transversally in the curriculum. The first document worth noting concerns the welcome and language support for students of foreign origin and students recently settled in the country. This document distinguishes between migrant pupils who have recently arrived in school and those who have been in the education system for longer but who still need some complementary support. For the former, the document shows an itinerary which starts with the initial welcome, continues in the welcome classroom, where students learn the Catalan language and are given the necessary emotional and social support, and finishes with the specific support for migrant pupils in the ordinary classroom once they have acquired the necessary competence at the language level. This process is not new—in fact, it appeared in 2004 with the creation of the welcome classrooms—but points to the affective communication between migrant students—and their families—and the school's staff, the importance of the teachers' beliefs and attitudes, and their capacity to empathise with migrant families, valuing and respecting their traditions and culture. The second document to be mentioned is one that defines several orientations for ensuring that diversity is represented in the teaching material used in classrooms. It also describes the importance of including different learning activities to teach students to recognise and value cultural diversity.

4. National policies and legislation on parental involvement

4.1. Evolution and main traits of national policies on parental involvement: the case of Spain

In Spain, the first law which refers directly to parental involvement in schools is the General Education Law (1970), which was considered the First Modern Law of the State. This law brought autonomy to schools, enabling them to develop their own specific rules according to their context, and also highlighted the rights and duties of families (among others, the right of families to choose the school for their children and the need to constitute associations). In other words, in 1970 the legal framework recognised the right of parents to be associated, although this type of participation did not recognise their right to intervene in the management of schools. At this time, the Franco dictatorship was about to end and Spain was immersed in a context of social and legislative changes, so these parents' associations became protest platforms that joined the fight for democracy. The education renewal movements and other progressive teachers, as well as parents' associations that were created in some state schools, defended the need to democratise the management of schools, a democratisation that included the participation of parents, students, neighbours and administrative personnel. This request did not take long to materialise since in 1978, after the death of Franco, the Spanish Constitution was published, which included the participation of families in its education regulations (Garreta, 2008a).

In this sense, the involvement of families in their children's education is a recognised right at the highest level in the Spanish legal system. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 establishes that the public authorities must guarantee the right to education of all Spaniards with 'the effective participation of all the affected sectors' (art.27.5 CE) and that 'teachers, parents and, when appropriate, students, will intervene in the control and management of the schools maintained by the Administration with public funds, in the terms established by law' (art.27.7 CE). As anecdotal data, but at the same time as a representative example of the multiple barriers and confrontations found regarding the legislation on parental involvement, it should be highlighted that Constitutional Article 27 brought many confrontations and debates between political parties during its elaboration (Gil Villa, 1995). Thus, the inclusion of Article 27 in the Spanish Constitution was considered a great step forward towards developing a democratic society, and consequently, the subsequent education legislation has taken parental involvement as a key issue to be regulated.

However, all these subsequent regulations have been characterised by a lack of precision regarding Article 27.5, an article that leaves the door open to any type of parental involvement. By contrast, all of them have focused on specifying Article 27.7, which points to an important but demarcated type of parental involvement: their involvement in the control and management of schools. In other words, the legislation on parental involvement has left parental involvement to a legal reductionism of families' participation in the School Councils and their involvement in the parents' associations, so that it reproduces the forms of parliamentary representation in the school. To acknowledge this reality, we shall take a brief look at the different education laws.

In 1985, the Organic Law of the Right to Education (LODE) established the creation of the School Councils as the body for handling the participation of the school community in the control and management of schools. This law considered the democratic management of schools as a formal structure of representation (School Councils) for groups (parents, students, teachers and school management teams), an idea that has been widely disseminated in the educational reforms postulated during recent decades (Bolívar, 2006). The law itself also created the State School Council as a body of participation of the educational community in the general programming of education. Further, it also established that each autonomous community must create their own Regional School Council to give advice to their specific governments in educational matters (Frías del Val., 2014).

Focusing on the School Council, their specific composition depended on the regulations developed by each autonomous community, although the general law established that it must be composed of the following members: the head teacher, the head of studies, a representative of the City Council, some teachers, some parents and some students. More specifically, it stated that the number of parents and students could not be less than one third of the total members of the School Council. It should be pointed out, therefore, that the representation of parents on the School Council counts alongside that of the students, a regulation that has been maintained in later reforms (Frías del Val., 2014).

Thus, this formal body can be considered the norm that lays the basic foundations of parental involvement, along with parents' participation in schools through their associations. Moreover, this law designed a new organisational model for managing and governing schools in which the typical vertical structure was inverted: the head teacher was no longer at the top of the organisational chart but the School Council, which also has the competence of choosing the management. So from this moment, the following laws widely regulated the function of the School Council and the parents' associations, as well as their attributions, composition and characteristics.

In 1990, the Organic Law of General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE) was published, which did not add any innovation regarding the involvement of families. After this, the Organic Law on the Participation, Evaluation and Government of the Schools (LOPEG, 1995) tried to reinforce parental participation by enhancing the competences of the School Council, which continued to select the schools' head teacher from among the teachers previously accredited by the Catalan Administration to carry out this function. Further, one of the most important new features of this law was the channelling of the right of participation through a double way. On the one hand, there was the exercise of participation as an individual right and, on the other, the right of association, which would be maintained in subsequent laws. In this regard, this law empowered parents' associations since it established that one of the families' representatives in the School Council had to be directly elected by the AMPA, a regulation that is still in force (Feito, 2014).

However, in 2002, the Organic Law on Education Quality (LOCE) reduced and limited the functions of the School Council to a mere consultation body, a step backwards that lasted little, since in 2006, the Organic Law of Education (LOE) re-established the School Councils as decision-making bodies. This new education law (LOE) also promoted the drafting of education commitments between schools and families by creating a school document that detailed the activities that both agents are committed to undertake to improve the children's education (Frías del Val., 2014). This document, known as the education commitment letter and which is still in force, has to be signed by both agents at the beginning of the academic year as a sign of the commitment that both parts adopt. Nevertheless, this progressive law did not imply substantial changes in terms of parental involvement as a collaborative instrument, since it equated parental involvement to 'parents receiving information from the school', and 'parents participating in their associations and the School Council' (Collet & Tort, 2008).

Finally, and currently in place, there is the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE), approved in 2013, which again substantially reduces the real decision-making capacity of families by strengthening the role of management teams and reducing the functions of the School Councils. In this regard, the functions attributed to the School Council are the following (Macià & Garreta, 2018):

- Evaluating the projects, norms and school schedule (in the LOE, also 'approving').

- Knowing the candidacies regarding the management of the school and participating in their selection.
- Knowing the students' admission (in the LOE, 'deciding').
- Knowing the rulings on disciplinary disputes, and reviewing the decision adopted when it seriously harms the schools' coexistence.
- Proposing different measures and initiatives to promote coexistence, equality and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.
- Promoting the conservation and renovation of the school facilities and equipment, and knowing (in the LOE, 'approving') how to obtain complementary resources.
- Knowing the guidelines for collaboration with other institutions (in the LOE, 'setting').
- Analysing and assessing the general functioning of the school, the evolution of the school performance and the results of evaluations, and preparing proposals and reports in this regard.

4.2. Regulations at regional level: how the Catalan government regulates and promotes parental involvement, specifically with migrant families

Focusing on Catalonia, the Catalan Government also recognises by means of legal documents the importance of parental involvement in their children's education. In this regard, Catalan legislation echoes the influence of the family-school relationship on the students' success in various rulings. For example, we can cite the Ruling of 20 May 2001, which gave instructions for the organisation and operation of primary education and secondary education in Catalonia. It affirmed that the collaboration and participation of families was essential to achieve better educational results (Garreta, 2007). Similarly, the Ruling of 10-11 July 2007 (which gave instructions for the organisation and operation of childhood education, primary education and secondary education in Catalonia) included a section entitled 'Participation of families', in which it was clearly stated that parental involvement and collaboration with schools was essential to achieve the best educational results and to contribute to the social and educational integration of students (Garreta, 2012).

This ruling also promoted two types of parental involvement (the involvement at classroom level and the involvement in formal bodies of participation) and developed different measures to help schools in the commitment of improving such involvement. Regarding parental involvement at classroom level, it was suggested that the scheduling should take into account the possibilities of parents, and that the school must facilitate the necessary spatial and temporal resources for parents to be able to attend the teachers' initiatives. Looking at parents' associations, this document stated that schools should provide a space for them to

hold their meetings, that schools should reserve some space in the schools' notice board for the associations' news, and that schools should establish a calendar of regular contacts between the school's management team and the association, among others. Finally, regarding the School Council's meetings, the document highlighted the need to schedule a meeting calendar, to inform families about it, to plan these meetings in a proper schedule (allowing the attendance of families) and to include in the session suggestions and topics proposed by families.

For its part, the current Law of Education of Catalonia (LEC, 2009) also highlights the need to write a letter of educational commitment between families and schools, which was first regulated by the national Organic Law of Education in 2006. Moreover, this Catalan Law¹⁰ establishes the following parental rights and duties:

- Families have the right to receive information about the schools' education project, the services offered by the school, the characteristics of the school, the letter of educational commitment, the rules of organisation and operation of the school, the complementary and extracurricular activities, the scholarships, the educational evolution of their children, etc.
- Families have the right to participate in the school's life through the City Council and other bodies or instruments provided by the schools (which have autonomy to establish the specific forms of involvement).
- Families have the right to create parents' associations, whose principal goal is to facilitate their participation in the school's activities.
- Families have the right and the duty to be involved in their children's education.
- Families have the duty to respect the school's education project
- Families have the duty to contribute to the coexistence among all the members of the educational community.

When looking at migrant families, it should be highlighted that Catalonia is one of the Spanish regions that is most concerned about the integration of foreign families into school, implementing different policies and measures in this regard. In other words, the participation of migrant families in schools is not a national issue concerning the whole country (Spain). On the contrary, only those regions with the highest percentages of migrant students, such as

10. For more information about the Decrees and Organic Laws regarding parental involvement, visit <http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/comunitat/escolaifamilia>. On this website, the Department of Education collects all the regulations regarding the involvement of families, classified in 6 areas: reception, education commitment letter, tutorial action, information and communication, participation and, finally, training.

Catalonia, have drafted specific plans to promote the integration of migrant people in schools (González Falcón, 2007).

In this regard, according to the European Council, countries should implement the following measures to achieve the integration of migrant families (Eurydice, 2004):

1. Giving migrant families written information about the host education system, which is translated into different languages according to the main origins of families. This measure, which normally depends on the Ministry of Education, aims to inform foreign families about the structure and functioning of the host school system, as well as the main characteristics of the schools.
2. Implementing additional and specific meetings for migrant families.
3. Providing by law an interpreter service in schools.
4. Improving the availability of people or committees to help schools in the integration of migrant families, such as intercultural mediators.

Regarding the information given to migrant families, Catalonia has implemented this measure since the beginning of the century. The Catalan government has translated into different languages (Spanish, English, German, Chinese and Arabic, among others) the most important documents for the registration of migrant students in schools. It has also translated other specific documents informing about key aspects of the functioning of schools and the structure of the education system, such as the general timetable, the rules of the Catalan school system, the educational services that families can use and the notes that schools can send to inform parents about their children's education¹¹.

Concerning the implementation of additional and specific meetings for migrant families, the Catalan Government urges schools to conduct these specific meetings aimed at foreign families in order to explain to them how the school works and to clarify other matters of common interest. However, since it is not a measure regulated by law, the execution of this initiative depends on the will of each school's management team (González Falcón, 2007). Similarly, the third measure (the provision of an interpreter service by law) is not a measure that is regulated in Catalonia. However, this autonomous community, as in other European countries, promotes the use of interpreters in schools when necessary, although it is not mandatory and the government does not finance its use by all schools.

Finally, Catalonia also promotes the figure of the 'intercultural mediator', although their recruitment obeys specific agreements between the specific delegations and some governmental

11. See <http://xtec.gencat.cat/ca/projectes/alumnat-origen-estranger/alumnatnou/acollida/notes/>

organisations. So, again, in practice, it is not a measure that is implemented homogeneously in all Catalan schools (González Falcón, 2007).

To summarise, the Catalan government is concerned with the importance of implementing strategies to involve migrant families in their children's education, and consequently, some actions are taken in this direction. However, there are still many steps to be taken to achieve an effective regulatory framework for promoting the involvement of families (and specifically, of foreign families) in school. In this sense, given the national and regional legal framework, it could be claimed that, at a political level, there is still a lack of efficient regulations regarding parental involvement since the most visible and predominant way of parental involvement in national and regional legislation is their participation in the School Council and in the parents' associations. Therefore, it could be argued that, at a regulatory level, there is a reduction of parental involvement to just formal bodies, whilst the implementation of innovative involvement experiences in less formal areas of participation is left to the will of the school staff.

5. National meta-analysis: parental involvement in schools

5.1. General parental involvement in schools: an introduction

In light of current legislation, it is inevitable that we should begin this section by talking about parental involvement in formal bodies of participation, that is, in parents' associations (AMPA) and on the School Board. Regarding parental involvement in parents' associations, Garreta (2008b) showed that only 57.5% of parents are members of the AMPA (which means that they pay the association fee); 32% participate in activities organised by the AMPA and 18.3% attend the meetings organised by this body. More recently, Gomariz, Parra, García and Hernández (2019) also conducted a study with 14,876 families to analyse parental involvement in the AMPAs, and the percentage of parents who are members of the AMPA is quite similar to the one expressed by Garreta (2008b): 57.3% of parents are (or have been) members of the AMPA. When analysing their involvement in the different activities organised by the association, results are also aligned with previous research: only 29.1% of parents participate in meetings; 20.5% participate in activities aimed at training for parents on educational issues; and another 19.8% state that they participate in other activities organised by the body. In addition, this study also shows that 55.6% of parents do not know the members of the AMPA Board whilst the vast majority of families (86.1%) have never been part of it, with a high percentage (69%) being unwilling to do so. To summarise, parental involvement in parents' associations remains a challenge, maybe because of their function as a service provider. We shall take a look at the evolution of this body to better understand their low rates of parental involvement.

The origin of the parents' movement should be placed in context in the last years of the dictatorial regime (1970s), when the lack of social ways of participating in the public sphere led to the labour movement, along with the neighbourhood and educational associations, becoming political platforms. Thus, the parents' associations were born with great potential to

make demands. Nevertheless, nowadays the AMPAs' functions and goals are quite different. In the 1980s and 1990s, Spain underwent a strategy of economic rationalisation whereby many schools that had school canteens with their own kitchen had to stop offering this service, and teaching hours were reduced with the subsequent reduction of the students' schedule. As a consequence of this, parents' associations began to meet the needs that the Administration had stopped meeting and started to manage services such as the canteen and extracurricular activities. Moreover, the need to offer these services meant that parents' associations became widespread, and many schools created this body to be able to manage these services. Thus, economic criteria began to govern the associations, since they had to be financed by families and, in many cases, the services and activities were offered only to parents who were members of the AMPA, so it was an incentive for families to pay the association fee (Garreta, 2008b). To summarise, parents' associations have gone from having a role more to do with making demands to the provision of services (Garreta, 2016b). However, on the negative side, parents who do not need these services do not tend to join the association, and for many families it is seen just as a service provider (and not as a democratic body of parental involvement in the school).

Concerning the School Council, the data are even worse. Parra, García, Gomariz and Hernández (2014) state that only 16% of parents in primary schools exercise their right to vote in the elections to choose the parents' representatives on the School Council. However, the information that they receive regarding the electoral process (56.3%), the candidates (52.2%) and the functions of these representatives within the formal body (48%) is sufficient. Nevertheless, only 38.5% of parents claim to know the parents who are representatives on the School Council, and only 27.3% show willingness to be a member of this formal body. In fact, only 13% of parents are active members of it (Proyecto IPPE, 2012). In this sense, to contest these data, the latest report from the State School Council (Consejo Escolar del Estado, 2017) highlights that the members of the School Council should be trained, as they often do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to exercise their functions. This lack of training is a barrier for the efficient operation of these bodies, which nowadays are too often limited to ratifying the decisions taken by the management team.

Similarly, many authors (Bernad & Llevot, 2017; Feito, 2014) conceive the School Councils as non-democratic bodies, since in practice they are dominated by teachers and the school management team. More specifically, these authors explain that on many occasions, the questions that are taken to the School Council have already been discussed and debated previously among the school staff, which gives the teaching group an advantageous position with respect to other groups.

To summarise, the School Council is seen as a space dominated by the school management and teachers, with the consideration that, at a practical level, parental participation through School Councils is a mere fallacy. Therefore, given this situation, it is not surprising to find a lack of interest among families towards this "democratic" body of participation and consequently, a lack of participation in it. Furthermore, an idea defended by many authors

(Costa & Torrubia, 2007; Feito, 2010; San Fabián, 1996) is that the development of joint educational activities involving families, teachers and students is the precondition for active participation in the schools' management through formal bodies, whilst the reverse process is much more difficult. In other words, the active involvement of parents in formal bodies of participation becomes meaningful if it occurs as a natural consequence of a collaborative process involving different actions aimed at creating synergies between schools and families. That is, the School Councils and the parents' associations can only be the pinnacle of school democracy if the whole of the school's life is participatory.

5.2. An overview of the studies that deal with migrant families and schools

In Spain, many research groups are concerned with parental involvement in schools and, especially during the last years, with the involvement of foreign families. Thus, it can be stated that understanding how migrant families are involved and the factors influencing their parental involvement is of increasing theoretical interest. In this regard, this section collects some relevant studies that have been conducted in Spain during the last 10 years (from 2008 to 2018) which deal with the relationship between migrant parents and schools. The criteria used to select the studies included in this meta-analysis is the following: first, we chose studies published in peer-review national journals (not books) with great impact on the country; and secondly, we chose those manuscripts whose object of study was the involvement of migrant families in schools, either describing such involvement or analysing the factors (and therefore the barriers) that prevent them from being more involved. Table 2 summarises the Spanish research on this topic¹², highlighting the method, the sample/subjects involved, the research focus (description of parental involvement or analysis of factors influencing such involvement) and the region where the study has been conducted.

TABLE 2. SPANISH RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIGRANT PARENTS AND SCHOOL. 2008-2018

	Authors (year)	Method	Subjects involved	Research Focus	Region
1	Garreta (2008b)	Quantitative (questionnaire)	Families	Description	Catalonia
2	Sánchez & García (2009)	Qualitative (focus group)	Families	Analysis of factors	Andalusia
3	Garreta (2009)	Qualitative (interviews)	Families Teachers	Analysis of factors	Catalonia
4	Santos Rego & Lorenzo (2009)	Quantitative (questionnaire)	Families	Description	Galicia

12. We apologise if there are other studies on this topic, but we have selected those manuscripts published in open-access that we have found conducting in-depth research on the most important Spanish databases.

5	Carrasco, Pàmies & Bertran (2009)	Qualitative (interviews)	Families Teachers	Analysis of factors	Catalonia
6	Santos Rego, Lorenzo & Priegue (2011)	Quantitative (questionnaire)	Families	Analysis of factors	Galicia
7	Leiva (2011)	Qualitative (ethnography)	Families Teachers	Description Analysis of factors	Andalusia
8	Delgado & Ruiz (2012)	Qualitative (interviews)	Teachers	Analysis of factors	Andalusia
9	Maiztegui & Ibarrola (2012)	Qualitative (focus group)	Families	Description Analysis of factors	Basque Country
10	Esteban-Guitart & Vila (2013)	Action-research	Teachers	Analysis of factors	Catalonia
11	Lozano, Alcaraz & Colás (2013)	Quantitative (questionnaire)	Families	Description	Murcia Region
12	Vingut & Bertrán (2015)	Qualitative (focus group)	Teachers	Analysis of factors	Catalonia
13	Hernández, Gomariz, Parra & García (2016)	Quantitative (questionnaire)	Families	Description	Murcia Region
14	Santos Guerra & De la Rosa (2016)	Qualitative (ethnography)	Families Teachers	Description Analysis of factors	Andalusia
15	Lorenzo, Godás & Santos Rego (2017)	Quantitative (questionnaire)	Families	Analysis of factors	Galicia
16	Grané & Argelagués (2018)	Action-research	The whole community	Analysis of factors	Catalonia Madrid Valencia Canary Islands

Source: own elaboration.

Among the 16 studies selected, there are 6 quantitative studies, 8 studies in which a quantitative method approach was adopted, and 2 studies based on action-research. If we focus on the quantitative studies (6), all of them have involved just families (not teachers), and are mainly concerned with describing how migrant families are involved in their children's education (4). Regarding qualitative studies (8), 4 of them were carried out with samples of parents and teachers, whilst the rest just involved one agent (2 studies involved families and 2 studies involved teachers). The research focus of these studies was the analysis of factors influencing parental involvement, although 3 of them also combine this goal with some description of how migrant families are involved. Finally, the 2 studies using action-research were also focused on the conditioning affecting the involvement of migrant families. To summarise, quantitative studies are mainly used to know how migrant families are involved in their children's education (description), whilst a qualitative method approach is adopted when researchers want to go further and understand the reasons and conditioning of their involvement. Finally, it is worth noting that research into this subject is carried out by research groups located in basically 4 autonomous communities: Andalusia, Catalonia, Galicia and Murcia Region. Therefore,

whilst there are many studies concerned with migrant parental involvement, there are fewer research groups that investigate this topic.

The discussion is now going to expand on the content of these studies. Specifically, we will structure the text based on the two major research topics addressed: first, the description of parental involvement concerning migrant families and, secondly, the analysis of the factors influencing such involvement.

5.3. The involvement of migrant families in schools: a general description

As stated in the previous section, there are 7 studies which describe how migrant families are involved in their children's education. Focusing first on research based on quantitative data (Garreta, 2008b; Hernández, Gomariz, Parra & García, 2016; Lozano, Alcaraz & Colás, 2013; Santos Rego & Lorenzo, 2009), it shows that migrant families are quite often less involved in their children's education than their counterparts (non-migrant families).

Garreta (2008b) conducted a study in which 594 presidents or other representatives of the parents' association were surveyed. Results showed that, in general, parental involvement in the parent's association is low. However, when comparing schools with and without migrant families, the rates of participation were higher in those schools without a foreign population. Concerning parents' membership of the AMPA, 58% of parents are members of this organisation in schools with migrant parents versus 69% of parents in schools without this population. When looking at parents' participation in activities organised by the AMPA, the rates go from 32.5% versus 38.5%. Finally, regarding attendance at meetings, the difference was between 17.8% in schools with migration and 29.2% in schools without foreign families.

Similarly, two studies (Hernández, et al., 2016; Lozano et al., 2013) were conducted in the Murcia Region with families of foreign and non-migrant origin to compare their involvement in their children's learning. Lozano et al. (2013), in which study a total of 1,932 families participated, found statistically significant differences between native and foreign families concerning the following dimensions of parental involvement: parental attendance at school meetings, parental attendance at personal interviews, parental participation in parents' associations and parental participation in parents' school. Hernández et al. (2016), for their part, also found statistically significant differences between both groups of parents regarding all their dimensions analysed: knowledge of the daily life in schools, parental participation in the school setting and parental involvement at home. More specifically, this study, which took 2,360 families into account, registered the following results:

- *Knowledge of the daily life in schools.* Native parents know “pretty well” the primary school of their children (3.95) whilst foreign families do so less frequently (3.44).
- *Parental participation in the school.* Native parents participate “little” and/or “regularly” in the school (2.41), whilst foreign families do so with little assiduity (1.78).

- *Parental involvement at home.* Native parents are “highly” involved in their children’s education at home (4.19), whilst foreign families also do it “frequently” (3.85). In this type of parental involvement, however, the difference between both data is not statistically significant for all the items analysed. Specifically, talking with children about school, supervising the school work and helping children organise their study time are categories that although native parents register higher rates of involvement, the difference is not statistically significant.

Finally, Santos Rego and Lorenzo (2009) also conducted a study in Galicia with 458 families from diverse origin to analyse how migrant parents participate in schools, and their results are quite similar to the above ones:

- 69% of parents and 36% of mothers “never” or “almost never” attend information meetings.
- 55% of parents and 34% of mothers “do not” know or “almost do not” know their children’s teacher.
- 69% of parents and 57% of mothers “never” or “almost never” participate in celebrations at school.
- 89% of parents and 77% of mothers “never” or “almost never” participate in activities advertised by the AMPA.

This study also shows that there is a feminisation of parental involvement, highlighting the gender issue in the study of this subject. Similarly, Santos Guerra and De la Rosa (2016) also notes that this feminisation involves both native and foreign families, although the tendency is especially emphasised in the latter. They also discern differences depending on the culture of origin, so they argue the need to take into consideration the differences between migrant groups. In other words, they explain that migrant families are different, according to their origin, the migratory project, the immigration experiences, the years of school completed, the present occupation, the years of immigration to Spain, the Spanish language skill, etc. In this regard, they found that Latin American and EU families were the most involved in their children’s education, an idea supported by other research pointing to important differences among migrant groups. The Defensor del Pueblo (2003) states that Latin American and Eastern European families are the most involved in schools, with percentages of collaboration that sometimes exceed that of the native families. Garreta (2008b) also found that parents’ associations representatives perceived that native families were the most involved in such bodies (especially those of the same autonomous community), followed by Latin American families. On the contrary, the least involved are the gypsies, followed by those of sub-Saharan, Maghrebian and Asian origin. Similarly, Santos Rego and Lorenzo (2009) analysed two specific cultures: Latin American and Maghrebian parents. They found that Latin American families were more involved than families from Maghreb in all the forms of participation studied:

attending information meetings, participating in celebrations at school and participating in activities advertised by the AMPA.

Moving back again to the description of parental involvement, results from qualitative research (3) are a bit more optimistic regarding the involvement of foreign families. According to these studies, migrant families tend to participate actively in school parties, such as intercultural events or special celebrations, collaborating with the organisation of a henna painting workshop, telling stories or cooking typical food of the country (Leiva, 2011; Maiztegui & Ibarrola, 2012). Further, some migrant families also participate as active members in the parents' association and on the School Board (Leiva, 2011; Santos Guerra & De la Rosa, 2016) although they are, above all, involved in educational activities at home (Santos Guerra & De la Rosa, 2016).

If we look back in time (to the beginning of the century), the participation of migrant families in schools was, in general, higher with regard to attendance at information meetings and the knowledge of their children's teacher but, on the contrary, this participation registered lower rates in terms of participating in celebrations at school, participating in pedagogical activities, participating in activities advertised by the AMPA and attending meetings of the School Board (Baraibar, 2005; Bueno & Belda, 2005). Therefore, although we still have low rates of involvement of migrant families, the steps taken are notable and we must, therefore, continue working in this direction.

5.4. Factors influencing the involvement of migrant families in schools

Most of the studies (12) included in this meta-analysis report on factors influencing parental involvement in their children's education. Among these studies, 3 of them (Carrasco, Pàmies & Betran, 2009; Garreta, 2009; Leiva, 2011) include the discourse of teachers as well as families; 4 studies only show the families' point of view (Lorenzo, Godás & Santos Rego, 2017; Maiztegui & Ibarrola, 2012; Sánchez & García, 2009; Santos Rego, Lorenzo & Priegue, 2011); 1 study, on the contrary, takes into consideration only the teachers' voice (Delgado & Ruiz, 2012); and finally, there are 4 studies (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2013; Grané & Argelagués, 2018; Santos Guerra & De la Rosa, 2016; Vingut & Bertrán, 2015) whose authors list and comment on some factors influencing migrant families' involvement in their children's education after analysing the agents' behaviours and discourses. All these factors will each be explored respectively, although we will group them into two broad categories according to the educational agent concerned: factors regarding migrant families and factors regarding professional staff.

5.4.1. Factors regarding migrant families

Most of the factors cited by parents and teachers which can act as barriers (or strengths) to the involvement of migrant families in schools are related to the group of families, which we can summarise as follows:

- Migrant families' attitude towards education and school.

- The information and knowledge that migrant families have towards school and their cultural codes, as well as the cultural differences, influence their level of confidence in themselves in school-related issues.
- The language competence of migrant families in the host society language.
- The socioeconomic level of migrant families and their working schedules.

Migrant families' attitude towards education and school

In the 1970s and 1980s, many Spanish families considered school as an undervalued or desired imposition since their strategies and expectations went in other directions. However, many other hard-working families lived in close proximity to the school and supported the schooling of their children, even though they had few or scarce cultural resources. In fact, they saw the opportunity to bring about a social mobility that they had not always achieved, and they turned to their children's school project by paying for private classes or buying educational materials. These, along with many others, were indicators of interest and concern, and of the parents' expectations placed on the schooling of their sons and daughters. Phrases like 'study so you do not have to do the same job I do' were common expressions, also indicating such expectations and values towards the school (Garreta, 2008a). Nowadays, this portrait perfectly describes the expectations that many immigrant families hold towards school and their children's education, since they consider school to be an instrument of social promotion, integration and personal growth. In fact, 4 of the studies analysed claim this idea.

Carrasco et al. (2009) found that migrant families value education and school, and that they want their children to have a better future than the one they have had, seeing school as the way to achieve this commitment. Similarly, Maiztegui and Iberrola (2012) also showed that families value education highly and attach great importance to it, a research result consistent with the study conducted by Santos Rego, et al. (2011). In this case, they used a quantitative approach method to analyse the importance given to education and school-related matters by migrant families, and they found that families who participated in the study (111 families of foreign origin) attached great importance to all the aspects that were raised: they wanted their children to have the same knowledge and abilities as the native students (92.8%); they wanted to attend school meetings (87.2%); and they wanted to participate in the school setting (81.9%). Finally, Garreta (2009) argued that, in general, families are satisfied with the school and the teaching staff since they value the attention, patience and care that teachers show to their children, and the good reception, the affection and the good attitude of the school in solving practical problems make parents feel well treated and accepted by the whole school community.

The information and knowledge that migrant families have towards school and their cultural codes, as well as the cultural differences, influence their level of confidence in themselves in school-related issues

Practically half of immigrant parents do not know the subjects their children study (Santos Rego & Lorenzo, 2003) or how the school works (Baráibar, 2005). Moreover, they frequently

manage cultural codes and values which differ from the ones in the host society. This leads, quite often, to cultural clashes between parents and schools and triggers a feeling of inferiority and inability among many migrant families, which prevents them from being involved in their children's education. This idea, noted at the beginning of the century by some authors, continues to be of great importance since it is supported by many recent studies (6) included in the meta-analysis.

In the study of Carrasco et al. (2009), families explained that they did not know properly how the education system worked, which increased their uncertainties and fears and, consequently, prevented them from exercising greater control and monitoring of the progress of their children's learning. Further, they also cited the topic of cultural distance, noting that they see the teacher as an expert so they do not see the need to go to school unless the teacher calls them. Similarly, Sánchez and García (2009) found that many families were not usually involved in school activities or participatory bodies because of their lack of confidence in themselves. They also found that cultural differences in terms of the school system and parental involvement in schooling leads to parents only talking to the teacher when the teacher requires them. In this regard, Leiva (2011) showed that families were afraid to participate (due to fear, cultural distance, etc.), so they only approach the school to ask about their child's academic performance.

Another study that reveals the lack of knowledge and the cultural distance between migrant parents and schools is the one conducted by Santos Guerra and De la Rosa (2016). They mentioned that families have scant knowledge of the democratic participation bodies (AMPA, School Council, etc.) as well as of their rights and duties in the school. Regarding cultural differences, they cited as important factors the different conceptions that parents and teachers have of how school works and of the family-school relationship, which can constitute a core barrier in families from cultures where school participation does not exist or is unusual.

Similarly, Garreta (2009) showed that cultural differences in terms of the school system and parental involvement in schooling act as a particular barrier to involvement. In this regard, the teachers in the study reported that many migrant families value school performance and do not interfere in this field since teachers are highly respected and granted great authority over pupils. However, at the same time, they do not understand why they have to participate in an area which does not correspond to them. In other words, migrant families often do not know the ways they can be involved in school and the importance of doing so, believing instead that parental involvement in schooling would be seen as inappropriate and disrespectful. This information is aligned with parents' comments, who stated that they expected the school to contact them rather than the other way round. Moreover, according to many teachers (Garreta, 2009), the distance between the school's values and those of many immigrant families is enormous, and is manifested in the criteria for learning, in habits and patterns related to health or sleep, as well as in the need for children to attend school. In this regard, some parents in the same study expressed that the family-school relationship improved over time once they understood the cultural codes of the host society, such as why children have

to go to school when it rains or there are school trips, or why parents have to attend school meetings.

Finally, Santos Rego et al. (2011) asserted that families want to be better informed about school-related issues in order to improve their knowledge and, consequently, their confidence in themselves. More specifically, 91.9% of families want to know the aid that this country gives for education and 89.2% of families want to know how the school works and to have more information about the Spanish education system.

The language competence of migrant families in the host society language

According to Garreta (2009), many teachers expressed that language was a core barrier for family-school communication and consequently, for parents' involvement in school. Although there is often a relative, neighbour or parent of the same origin who translates the messages and facilitates family-school communication, and schools can also ask for a translator service if necessary, the Spanish language ability of migrant families is an important predictor of parental involvement. According to parents who took part in the study, written information appears as a major problem, either because of the channels used, because of ignorance of the host language or because some parents do not master literacy in a functional way. Very often, the children are responsible for translating the school marks to the parents, and they are not a secure and adequate channel. Thus, migrant parents prefer direct and verbal communication instead of written notes.

Similarly, Sánchez and García (2009) also found that families expressed their difficulty in helping the children with their homework due to their lack of language skills in the host language or their low level of education. Moreover, families are aware that the, often insufficient, language competence of many migrant families also prevents them from communicating with teachers and participating in many activities in school. Other studies (Leiva, 2011; Santos Guerra & De la Rosa, 2016) also cited language difficulties as an important barrier to family-school communication.

The socioeconomic level of migrant families and their working schedules

As explained before, many studies indicate that immigrant families positively value education, school-related issues and the treatment received by teachers. However, it should be highlighted that not all families value equally and have the same expectations of schooling. Many years ago, Garreta (1994) analysed the attitudes and expectations of families of African origin, and found that the baggage of these families (level of studies, family project, etc.) was a key element in the definition of their attitudes and expectations, as well as the socioeconomic situation that these families were living. Similarly, Terrén and Carrasco (2007) also showed that the migratory project highly influences the place that education occupies in the new family project, shaping the educational expectations that migrant parents have for their children. In fact, this idea is consistent with one of the studies included in the meta-analysis (Garreta, 2009), which states that, according to teachers' perceptions, migrant families' expectations are influenced by exogenous variables, such as their educational level and their socioeconomic status, with

those migrant families with more studies and a better socioeconomic position holding higher expectations and therefore higher levels of involvement.

For their part, Sánchez and García (2009) conducted a study with families of diverse origins who expressed that it is sometimes difficult to contact teachers or go to school because of their working timetables.

5.4.2. Factors regarding professional staff

The rejection of the native population towards migration highly influences the establishment of intercultural relations and migrant parental involvement (González Falcón, 2007). In other words, the social imaginary regarding immigration can easily impact the beliefs and attitudes of teachers who can explicitly or implicitly reproduce and reinforce it (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2013).

In this regard, Pàmies (2006) analysed the ideas that teachers hold towards migrant families (specifically Moroccan families), and he found that many teachers conceive migrant families as having little or no interest in their children's education. This perception must be caused by the different values held by both agents towards the school. That is, the cultural code of migrants of not going to school unless teachers call them is interpreted by many teachers as a lack of interest of these families towards parental involvement and the education of their children. In fact, some recent studies support this idea. Garreta (2009) indicates that some teachers interpret the behaviours of families as one of little interest in the schooling of their children. And, according to Carrasco et al. (2009), many teachers believe that migrant families, especially those of Moroccan origin, are not interested in their children's formal education, and consider that this lack of interest is observable due to their lack of support in academic tasks and requirements. In other words, the scant knowledge that teachers have of the cultural codes and the educational models of migrant families, along with the existence of a rather negative social imaginary around migration, models the existence of some teachers' attitudes based on stereotypes and non-founded ideas. In this regard, one of the studies analysed (Santos Guerra & De la Rosa, 2016) stressed that an important barrier to involving migrant families is inadequate teacher training to work in multicultural contexts as well as the inadequacy or inefficiency of the most common measures used by schools to enhance and foster parental involvement.

Another factor influencing parental involvement is how the school itself works. Vingut and Bertran (2015) show how relationships between migrant families and schools are influenced by the pedagogical characteristics of the schools. According to their study, in schools with a more academic tendency (focused mainly on overcoming cognitive contents and based on instrumental processes) the content of family-school communication is based on what should be learned, that is, on the pedagogical objectives and the mechanisms to achieve them: a kind of communication which seems to reduce family-school contacts. By contrast, in schools that follow more innovative pedagogies (more focused on the socio-emotional development of students than on contents), family-school relations are better and more frequent. Similarly,

Santos Guerra and De la Rosa (2016) found that in schools where relations between teachers are more democratic, participatory and supportive, the participation of families (migrants and non-migrants) is also more intense. In this sense, Lorenzo et al. (2017) stated that factors that negatively influence parental involvement are the perception of a lack of school support for their children and bad relationships with teachers. Thus, it seems that the educational institution itself and the teachers' actions are a factor of great importance for the involvement of foreign families.

In this regard, Grané and Argelagués (2018) conducted a research-action project in which, over five months, they implemented a number of activities aimed at improving parental involvement. More specifically, the actions were mainly based on improving positive parenting and support for learning. In addition, some activities were also aimed at fostering family-school communication and parental involvement in school, although this kind of activity was minority. After implementing these activities, the results were the following: improvement of parent-teacher relationships; improvement of parental involvement in school activities; improvement of parent-teacher communication, which was more frequent; improvement of parental involvement at home; improvement of the relationship among the families themselves and improvement of the parents' confidence, who felt more able to contribute positively to the education of their children.

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2

Migration and parental involvement

Italy

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1. Migrant characteristics in Italy and its evolution

Little information about migrations into Italy was available before its political unification. In 1871 the new national State launched the first census. From this moment on, more precise data through regular censuses became available (Cesareo, 2013).

1.1. A brief historical excursus of Italian migration processes

From a quantitative point of view, during its recent history, Italy was mainly a country of emigrants. Italian emigration had an important impact on the volume of transoceanic and intra-continental migrations: within one century, between 1876 and 1976, about 24 million Italians emigrated.

During the second half of the 19th century, Italian people emigrated from the northern regions: Liguria, Piedmont, High Lombardy and Veneto. Only afterwards did people start to emigrate in substantial numbers from the South, particularly from Calabria, Campania, Puglia, and Sicily.

Italian emigration has different characteristics from other European countries. It took place after the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic emigrations but quickly reached such dimensions that it became one of the leading European countries of emigration by the beginning of the 20th century. Moreover, it reached a high point between 1900 and 1914, a period of significant

1. The chapter has been written in collaboration by the authors; only for the scientific attribution, Paolo Barabanti has written the second paragraph, Maddalena Colombo has written the fourth paragraph, Diego Mesa has written the first and the third paragraph and Mariagrazia Santagati has written the fifth paragraph.

economic expansion in Italy, whilst other European countries economic development was marked by fewer emigration fluxes.

During the two world wars, migration fluxes declined, especially concerning to transoceanic migrations. This decrease was due to the combination of two different processes. Firstly, the destination countries, especially the United States of America, implemented mechanisms to contain fluxes. Secondly, emigration countries introduced measures to decrease the exodus of their nationals. The rapid drop of intercontinental migrations, however, was offset by the stability of intra-continental ones, primarily to France.

After the Second World War, migrations continued to affect traditional emigration destinations such as North America and South America and, at the same time, new destinations emerged, such as Australia, Venezuela and Israel. In this period, the main destinations of Italian immigrants were European: France and Switzerland.

Another characteristic phenomenon of the Italian context is internal migrations. Between the 1950s and 1960s, while the North recorded an economic boom, many moved from the South and the Triveneto to Lombardy, Piedmont and Liguria, attracted by the professional opportunities offered by large industries in the Northwest, the so-called triangle of the Italian miracle. This phenomenon is still ongoing albeit to a lesser extent.

From 1973, a new and greatly significant reverse trend was observed: for the first time, Italy recorded positive net migration that saw the country turning from a place of emigration into an immigration destination. According to the 12th general population census in 1981, foreigners residing in the country stood at 321,000.

An important turning point is in the second half of the 1990s when Italy saw the presence of foreign nationals constantly growing. In 20 years, the foreign population increased from 500,000 to about 5,000,000.

With regard to provenance and nationalities, up to the early years of the 1990s, a certain degree of heterogeneity was observed, with a particularly significant incidence of the presence of Moroccans. At the end of the 1990s, Moroccan immigrants were joined by Albanians, who increased by 200% in five years to become, in 2003, the most represented nationality. From 2007, following the entry of Romania into the EU, the number of foreigners coming from this country grew by 300% in five years, thus surpassing the Albanians.

Today, overall, Romanians, Albanians and Moroccans constitute over 40% of the foreign nationals in Italy.

The phenomenon of migration underwent significant changes over the last decades. The first indicator of this change is the increase in families of foreigners, shown by a growth in female presence and in family reunifications. As a confirmation of this, it is sufficient to know that

between 1993 and 2013, family units comprised of at least four people grew by 846%. The number of foreign minors also increased. At the beginning of the 1990s, there were a little over 100,000. After 10 years this number tripled, to exceed 300,000 people. Between 2001 and 2006 the number has been doubling (627,000) and in 2014 foreign minor populations surpassed 1,000,000.

Italy, which is considered a young country in terms of immigration, has for a long time been the protagonist of both great migration movements and internal migrations.

Today, it can be stated that three aspects coexist: immigration, emigration and internal migrations.

1.2. Current trends in the immigrant population

According to the national statistical institute (Istat, 2018) on 31 December 2017, Italy had 60,483,973 inhabitants, more than 5 million of whom had foreign citizenship: 8.5% at the national level (10.7 % in Central-northern regions, 4.2% in the South and Islands area).

In addition to this foreign population legally registered in their local council's Registry Office, it is estimated that there are another 420,000 legal non-residents and 491,000 with an irregular immigration status (Blangiardo, 2018).

With regard to nationality, over 50% of foreign residents (more than 2.6 million individuals) are nationals of a European country. Among the European citizens, more than 1 million people come from non-EU states in Central and Eastern Europe. African states are represented by a further 21.3%, mainly citizens of North African countries (12.7%) and West African countries (7.3%); more or less the same share of the total (20.5%) belongs to the citizens of Asian countries (over 1 million people for both continents). The American continent has over 370,000 residents in Italy (7.2%), almost all are citizens of Central and South America (6.9%). The citizens of Oceania and stateless persons complete the panorama with very small percentages.

Overall, just under 200 nationalities are present in our country.

Romanians are the largest foreign population with 1,190,091 residents, equal to 23.1% of the total. Following this are citizens of Albania (440,465, 8.6%), Morocco (416,531, 8.1%), China (290,681, 5.7%) and Ukraine (237,047, 4.6%) (Table 1).

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN POPULATION BY CITIZENSHIP. 31 DECEMBER 2017

Country of citizenship	Foreign residents by citizenship					Variation on 2016	
	Total A.V.	Males A.V.	Females A.V.	Total %	Females %	A.V.	%
Romania	1,190,091	505,961	684,130	23.1	57.5	21,539	1.8
Albania	440,465	225,103	215,362	8.6	48.9	-7,942	-1.8
Morocco	416,531	221,932	194,599	8.1	46.7	-4,120	-1.0
China, People's Republic	290,681	146,450	144,231	5.7	49.6	8,709	3.1
Ukraine	237,047	52,267	184,780	4.6	78.0	2,693	1.1
Philippines	167,859	72,599	95,260	3.3	56.8	1400	0.8
India	151,791	89,749	62,042	3.0	40.9	361	0.2
Bangladesh	131,967	96,424	35,543	2.6	26.9	9,539	7.8
Moldova	131,814	44,309	87,505	2.6	66.4	-3,847	-2.8
Egypt	119,513	80,394	39,119	2.3	32.7	6,748	6.0
Total of first 10	3,277,759	1,535,188	1,742,571	63.7	53.2	35,080	1.1
Other countries	1,866,681	936,534	930,147	36.3	49.8	62,332	3.5
Total	5,144,440	2,471,722	2,672,718	100.0	52.0	97,412	1.9

Source: Istat, 2018.

Since 2015, Italy has entered a phase of demographic decline. In 2017, as in the previous two years, the decrease in the number of inhabitants continued: the overall balance shows a significant drop (- 105,472 units). The reduction applied to people with Italian citizenship: -202,884 residents, while the foreign population increases slightly, +97,412. Both male and female components of the foreign have population increased (respectively +67,593 and +29,819 units). The natural population change (births minus deaths) negative by almost -200 thousand units. As the balance was positive for foreign nationals (almost +61 thousand units), for the Italian ones the decline was even more relevant (-251,537 units). The decrease in the number of births began in 2008 and it is still going on. In 2017, children born were less than half a million, just over 67,933 of whom were foreign (14.8% of the total). Compared to 2016, there was an overall reduction of 15,287 units (1,446 for the foreigners). Deaths are 649,061 (33,800 more than in 2016), of which 7,306 are foreigners (+779 than in 2016).

In 2017, the international migratory flows to/from Italy determined a positive balance of 188,330 units (+44,572 compared to the previous year). Registrations from abroad increased: 343,440 (+14.2% over 2016), 87.7% of them involving a foreign citizen. By contrast, cancellations for emigration decreased (-1.9%): for Italian nationals (by birth and by naturalisation) they remain unchanged (+114,559 units) compared to the previous year; for foreigners, they decreased to 40,551 (-4.7%). The results of analyses conducted on registrations and cancellations of personal data for the transfer of residence show peculiarities

in the migratory behaviour depending on the country of origin. Italian citizens of Asian origin emigrate mainly to another EU country, while natives of Latin America show a tendency to return to the country of origin.

Citizenship variations by country of birth outline typical behaviour of citizens from Latin American countries with an Italian ancestor, who stay for a very short period of residence in our country for the sole purpose of acquiring citizenship "*ius sanguinis*" presenting the necessary certificates at the registry.

1.3. Acquisition of legal citizenship

The number of new Italian citizens is decreasing: in 2017 there were fewer than 147,000, 30 for every thousand foreigners, with a decrease compared to 2016 of 38 percentage points. It is, in any case, a substantial figure, the third-highest after those of 2016 and 2015. The count includes acquisitions and recognition of citizenship by marriage, naturalisation, automatic transmission to the cohabiting minor by the foreign parent who became an Italian citizen, by-election by the 18-year-olds regularly resident uninterruptedly from birth, for "*ius sanguinis*" of citizens with an Italian ancestor. The decrease recorded in 2017 occurred after the strong growth trend of recent years. It is possible that this decrease is due to a reduction in the number of those eligible. However, it is also possible that these data have been affected by a change in the way in which the Italian citizenship application is submitted, introduced in 2015, but whose effects can only occur two years later, given the technical time required to complete administrative procedures.

The first analyses of the distribution by citizenship of origin and age of foreign citizens who became Italian in 2017 (provisional data) confirm that these are mostly members of the community of ancient settlement in Italy, at a stage of the migration process that probably in many cases has seen family reunions or the formation of new families. Over a third of Italian citizenship acquisitions have in affected minors: they are children cohabiting with a naturalised Italian parent, who in turn have become Italian by the automatic transmission of citizenship. Among the new Italian citizens, there is a substantial balance between genders, with a modest female prevalence in all regions except in the Northeast.

1.4. The immigrant population in different geographical areas

In 2017 the total internal mobility volume amounted to 1,335,000 transfers and remained substantially stable compared with 2016 (+0.2%). Opposing trends characterised movements between regions (323,000; -0.6%) and those within regions (1,012,000; + 0.5%). Following an established pattern, population shifts occur mainly from the southern regions to those of the North and the Centre.

The internal migration rate of 2017 fluctuates between -4.4% in Calabria and 3.1% of the autonomous province of Bolzano. All regions of the South and the Islands present negative

values, to which are added slightly negative values also in Marche, Umbria and Valle d’Aosta. Internal migrations are also due to the movements of foreigners residing in our country who, compared to Italians, have a greater propensity to mobility. Although they represent 8.5% of the population, they contribute to the internal movement of 17.6%.

The attractiveness of the northern and central regions to which most migration flows are aimed (both internal and from foreign countries) is confirmed. In these areas, there is an incidence of foreigners of over 10% of the total residents. In the South of Italy, foreign presence remains more contained although it is growing: 4.5% foreign residents per hundred inhabitants in the South and 3.7% in the Islands. In absolute terms there are 1,727,178 foreign residents in the Northwestern regions (equal to 33.6% of foreign residents in Italy), 1,225,466 in the Northeast (23.8%), 1,319,692 in the Centre regions (25.7%). In the South and Islands, foreign citizen residents are respectively 624,866 (12.1%) and 247,238 (4.8%).

The different communities show very different migration patterns, regarding to distribution in the territory, to composition by gender, to the size of the family nucleus and often also to the work activity carried out in our country, so much so that for some communities we talk about real and own “productive specialisations”. If in general the foreign presence is concentrated in the central-northern regions, special cases are not lacking, such as that of the Ukrainian community, which has a relatively recent migration history and is comprised of 78.0% of women breadwinners.

18.3% of Ukrainian citizens reside in Campania, particularly in Naples and the surrounding areas. Then there are nationalities of the older settlement, such as the Filipino one, which has a much more balanced gender ratio (women are just under 57%). The distribution in the territory is polarised above all-around some metropolitan cities like Rome, Milan, Bologna and Florence. Another numerically important community—and concentrated in some areas of the Peninsula—is the Chinese one. From some main centres such as Milan, Florence-Prato and Rome, over time it has also spread widely elsewhere, especially in the north-east of the Adriatic ridge and in the area of Naples. The Chinese community has a balanced gender ratio (women make up 49.6%) and is usually structured in families. Like the Filipino community, the Moroccan community is also of ancient settlement in Italy but, compared to the first, shows a wide diffusion in the territory: in the North (especially in the Northeast), in the North-Adriatic coast, in Campania and Lazio. Men are 53.3%. Romanian citizens, despite being present throughout the Peninsula, are mostly concentrated in the large urban centres of Central and Northern Italy. In particular, one-fifth of Romanians reside in Lazio (19.6%) and, of these, 79.0% in the province of Rome.

1.5. Non-nationals living in Brescia

The stock of residents with non-Italian citizenships living in Brescia in 2018 was 156,000, thus representing 12.4% of the total population. According to data (Colombo 2018), Brescia is still one of the most multi-ethnic cities in Lombardy, but the huge growth of migrant

population in the city, which increased in past decades, has turned into a decrease since 2011. Comparing 2017 with 2018, we see that there is a 1.6 percentage-point decrease in absolute terms. The reasons for returning home are as complex as the human mind; however, the decline of migrant inflow can be attributed to the countrywide economic crisis (which not only discourages new arrivals but is also the cause and reason for returning home or moving to other European countries) and to the acquisition of citizenship (over 6,000 new Italians in 2017). Even if the growth of the migrant population has turned into a decrease in the city, Brescia also shows that “demography still matters”: migrants replace a declining population in terms of birth rate and workforce.

As far as the more stable migrant population living in Brescia is concerned, we can see that over the years a remarkable number of migrants acquired the possibility to uproot their lives and settle in a new environment and, according to this, Brescia has shown a significant capability of integration. It is also interesting to note that the female migrant population is “more established” than the male counterpart and is less likely to return home or to move to another country.

The immigrant population residing in Brescia displays huge diversity with regards to the country of origin; the nationalities most represented are Romanian (16% of the total foreign population), Albanian (12%) and Moroccan (9%). The nationalities that in 2017 showed a weak growth rate were: Romanian (+2.7%), Egyptian (+2.7%) and Chinese (+0.1%); all the other nationalities had a high return/moving away rate. Immigrants residing in Brescia are generally younger than natives and show a higher birth rate compared to Italians. In terms of numerosness, there is not a considerable difference regarding male and female migrant population, but this difference becomes remarkable inside certain ethnic groups (i.e. Ukrainian, more women; Senegalese, more men).

1.6. Students with an immigrant background in Italy

If we look in particular at the student population, we can generally observe that pupils with non-Italian citizenship are now a constant that affects about 80% of the educational institutions of the country. The presence of students with non-Italian citizenship is a phenomenon that has now reached a “static phase”, passing through rapid growth and a subsequent slowing trend in schools of all levels (Santagati & Colussi, 2019a).

According to the Ministry of University and Research (MIUR, 2018) in S.Y. 2016-2017, pupils with non-Italian citizenship were 826,000, equal to 9.4% of the total school population. 60.9% of students with non-Italian citizenship were born in Italy. Between S.Y. 2007-2008 (first year in which the data was taken over by the MIUR) and S.Y. 2016-2017, those born in Italy more than doubled.

The origin of foreign students is in line with the general composition of the foreign population. For about a decade, Romania, Albania and Morocco have continued to represent the most

numerous communities in schools. In S.Y. 2016-2017, Romanians were 158,428 (almost 20% of pupils with non-Italian citizenship), followed by Albanians (112,171, 13.6%) and Moroccans (102,121, 12.3%). Also, the regional presence reflects the general trend of the foreign population with more foreign students in the northern and central regions.

Regarding the concentration of foreign students in schools, in S.Y. 2016-2017, there were 3,171 schools with 30% and more students with non-Italian citizenship (5.6%), up compared to the last decade: 691 of them were made up of a majority of students with non-Italian citizenship (1.2% of the total of Italian schools). If we exclude the category of pupils born in Italy, classes with over 30% of pupils born abroad are reduced to 0.7%. 42,237 Italian schools (three-quarters of the total) are characterised by a percentage lower than 30%, while there are 10,929 institutes (around 20%) untouched by the migration phenomenon.

From the point of view of scholastic trajectories, some problematic aspects are reported (Santagati, 2019).

The first of these concerns access to education itself. Only 77% of children with non-Italian citizenship between the ages of 3 and 5 attend kindergartens, Italian children are 96%. Also, the school attendance rate in upper secondary schools drops to 64.8% (80.9% among Italians) in the 17-18 age group.

A second important aspect concerns the school delay that includes (in addition to the repeaters) those who, born abroad, were included in classes lower than their age at the time of entry into the Italian school. Although the phenomenon has been significantly reduced in the last decade, in S.Y. 2016-2017 it affects 12.6% of pupils with non-Italian citizenship in primary school, 33.4% in lower secondary school and 59.1% in upper secondary school.

A third critical element is early school leaving, which affects foreigners more than Italians. In lower secondary school the percentage of students with non-Italian citizenship leaving school is 3.3%, against 0.6% of students with Italian citizenship. Foreigners born abroad, with a percentage of 4.2%, are in a situation of greater difficulty than those born in Italy. 5.7% of students with non-Italian citizenship drop out during the transition between lower and upper secondary schools, compared to 1.2% of pupils with Italian citizenship. In the upper secondary schools, the percentage of students with non-Italian citizenship who drop out is 11.6% (12.6% of those born abroad) compared to 3.8% of Italians.

A fourth indicator to consider concerns the Early Leavers from Education and Training (ELET), that is the percentage of the population between 18 and 24 that is not in possession of an upper secondary education qualification or a professional qualification and that is not included in school or training. Also, in this case, there is a significant decline over the years. The share of Early Leavers stood at 14% in 2017 (580,000 young people), but with a much more acute problem for youths with non-Italian citizenship (33.1%) than for Italians (12.1%). According

to Eurostat data of 2017, Italy appears to be one of the European countries that has the largest gap between natives and those born abroad in the percentages of ELET.

In conclusion, on the one hand in the last few years, there is a general improvement in the situation concerning the scholastic trajectory of students, on the other hand, there are still significant inequalities of educational opportunities between students with non-Italian and Italian citizenship, particularly for those who were not born abroad.

1.7. Students with an immigrant background in Brescia

In the S.Y. 2016-2017 Brescia was confirmed as the fourth province in Italy by number of foreign students (after Milan, Rome and Turin and before Bergamo, Florence and Bologna); among the non-regional capital provinces, it is the fourth in terms of the incidence of foreign students. There are almost 33,000 foreign students in Brescia, 17.7% of the students (Barabanti, 2018). This quota is higher than the Lombard average and has remained almost unchanged for some years. 67.7% of foreign students in the province of Brescia were born in Italy, with an increase of 2.5 percentage points compared to the previous year. The regional average is 65.3% and the national average 60.9%.

Regarding distribution by school order, pupils with non-Italian citizenship in kindergarten are 6,319 (19.3% of the total). In primary school, there are 13,675, equal to 41.7% of the total. In lower and upper secondary education, the number is lower (respectively 6,724 and 6,089, equal to 20.7% and 18.6%). In order of school choices, foreign students are less present in high schools and more present in technical institutes and especially in vocational schools.

Foreign females frequent various types of upper secondary schools. They are more numerous than foreign males not only in high schools (which is also the case for Italians) but also in technical institutes and in vocational schools. Even in the various institutes in the Brescia area there are still evident differences between Italian and foreign students. The most disadvantaged in school performance are foreigners born abroad. For them, the obstacle of the socioeconomic level of the family of origin is higher than for those born in Italy. According to INVALSI 2016-2017 data, in Brescia students of immigrant origin are marked by economically less solid families than the “native” ones. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a certain proportion of high-performance students even among the children of immigrants. In all the technical institutes it is 37.5% of first-generation foreigners, while in vocational schools 40% of second-generation foreigners have excellent results. Also, the number of students who are enrolled in the two universities of Brescia increase year by year.

The multi-ethnic character of schools in Brescia province and the dynamic evolution of the foreign student population make this territory an interesting observatory of scholastic integration processes.

2. Description of the education system in Italy

2.1. Organisation and structure

The Italian education system is divided into different levels and organised as follows: nursery schools, pre-primary school, primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education, and tertiary education.

Early childhood education and care has two different stages: nursery schools and pre-primary school. Neither of them are compulsory. *Nursery schools* (for babies and toddlers between 3 months and 3 years of age) are not part of the education system and their services are directly managed by the municipalities, in accordance with general criteria defined at regional level. *Pre-primary school* lasts up to three years (usually for children from 3 to 6 years of age); it is part of the education system and there are different institutions which can provide pre-primary education: not only the State but also municipalities and the private sector at local level. Pre-primary schools are organised into groups called “sections” and, in accordance with the schools organisational autonomy, these sections can be comprised of children of the same age or of different ages. The number of pupils per section usually ranges from a minimum of 18 to a maximum of 26 and in school-year 2015-2016 there were 22.4 pupils per section on average (ISTAT, 2018). Although pre-primary school is not compulsory, over the years, and also driven by the Europe 2020 and Lisbon 2010 strategies, the State has adopted a policy of extending attendance: in 2014 in nursery schools the attendance rate was low (one toddler out of 10 at the country level) whereas in pre-primary school the attendance rate was very high (95.1% of children of the corresponding age) (Azzolini, Mantovani & Santagati, 2019). In school-year 2018-2019 around 919,000 pupils were enrolled in this level (MIUR, 2018).

The *first cycle of education*, which is compulsory and lasts eight years, is comprised of two different levels, each with its own specificities: primary school and lower secondary school. “The aim of this cycle is to provide pupils with basic learning and to give them basic tools for an active citizenship” (MIUR, INDIRE, 2014, p. 21).

Primary school lasts five years (for students who are from 6 to 11 years old) and subjects taught to students are: Art, Catholic Religious Education (optional), Civics, English, Geography, History, Italian, Maths, Music, Physical Education, Science, and Technology. Teachers in primary schools are generalists (except for Catholic Religious Education teachers). In each class there may be a different number of teachers according to the different timetable models (24, 27, 30 or 40 hours per week) and teachers usually work with the same class (or classes) throughout the whole five-year period. In each class there are normally from 15 to 26-27 pupils and in school-year 2015-2016 there were 19.2 pupils per class on average (ISTAT, 2018). In school-year 2018-2019, 2,500,000 students were enrolled in this level (MIUR, 2018).

Lower secondary school, lasting three years, is for students between 11 and 14 years of age. The subjects taught are the same as the ones in primary school but there is also a second foreign language (usually French or German or Spanish). Teachers are specialists in one or

more subjects belonging to the same area (e.g. Maths and Sciences) and they usually work in the same classes throughout the whole three-year period. In each class there are generally from 18 to 27-28 students and in school-year 2015-2016 there were 21.1 pupils per class on average (ISTAT, 2018). In school-year 2018-2019 1,630,000 students were enrolled in this level (MIUR, 2018).

The first cycle of education ends with a final exam. This exam is the first formal national assessment of students' achievement. It includes three written tests (Italian, Mathematics and Foreign Languages), set by the local examination committee, and a multidisciplinary oral test.

The *second cycle of education* consists of *upper secondary school* (lasting five years from 15 to 19). Since school-year 2010-2011 (MIUR, 2010; 2011), upper secondary education has provided different pathways:

- *Lyceums* offer a general upper secondary education. There are six different courses according to the specialisation area: art, classical studies, science, languages, music and dance, human sciences.
- *Technical Institutes* offer an education in the economics and technology sectors. There are eleven different options (two of them have economics-based programmes and nine of them technology-based programmes) with specific target learning outcomes for each option and each subject.
- *Vocational Institutes* offer an education in the service and industry and crafts sectors. There are six different options (four of them have service sector programmes and two of them industry and crafts programmes) with different options and specific guidelines for targets, as described above for technical institutes.

These three pathways are structured in a two-year period (compulsory) and a three-year period (non-compulsory)². At this level, knowledge and competences are organised into “cultural areas” such as languages, mathematics, science/technology and history/social studies. As in lower secondary school, teachers are specialists. At this level, classes should generally have no fewer than 27 and no more than 30 students in the first grade (but this number tends to decrease in subsequent grades, based on school rejections and school drop-outs). In school-year 2015-2016 there were 20.5 students per class on average (ISTAT, 2018). In school-year 2018-2019 2,665,000 students were enrolled in this level (MIUR, 2018). The second cycle of education ends with a final exam. It includes two written tests (the first one is about Italian and the second one is an interdisciplinary test) and a multidisciplinary oral test, set by a scientific committee in the Ministry of Education.

2. Presently, along with the eight compulsory years of the first cycle of education, they are part of the 10 years of compulsory education (from 6 to 16 years of age).

Vocational Institutes also offer *vocational education and training courses* (lasting 3 or 4 years), aimed at students who have completed the first cycle of education. They are more labour market-oriented courses and are organised in partnership with the Regions. There are 22 three-year vocational qualifications and 21 four-year vocational qualifications. The purpose of these courses is to qualify 14/17-year olds who wish to enter the labour market after a short period of training, ensuring also a certain level of key competences and skills required on completion of compulsory education. (MIUR, INDIRE, 2014).

The majority of young learners opt for one of the three main tracks in upper secondary education: in the school-year 2018-2019, 49.1% of students were enrolled in lyceums, 31.4% in technical institutes and 19.5% in vocational institutes. Around 1 in 10 students chooses a regional vocational training course. (MIUR, 2018).

Higher education is offered both by universities (State and non-State institutions; with traditional and e-courses) and by the Higher Education in Art and Music System and Higher Technical Institutes. According to Bologna process regulations, tertiary education is organised as follows: first level (bachelor's courses, lasting three years), second level (master's courses, lasting two years) and third level (Doctorate or PhD, usually lasting three or four years). Access to tertiary education is only for students who have passed the State examination at the end of upper secondary school.

2.2. Administration and governance

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (with its headquarters in Rome) is responsible for general administration at national level. At decentralised level, there are Regional School Offices and Local Offices. The Regional School Office is a branch of the Ministry of Education; it oversees the observance of general requirements for education, the effectiveness of training actions and the conformity with criteria and standards. At provincial level there are the Local Offices: they are an internal division of the Regional School Office and have no autonomy. They have several functions: advising schools on administrative and accounting procedures, dealing with the integration of migrant students and pupils with special needs, supporting the planning and innovation of the educational offer, promoting student participation in schools and, in collaboration with municipalities, monitoring compliance with compulsory schooling, monitoring the implementation of provisions on school buildings and their safety.

Schools at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary level are clustered together in single institutes, known as comprehensive institutes. Comprehensive institutes and State upper secondary institutes are managed by a head teacher, who is its legal representative and is responsible for its overall management.

At all school levels from pre-primary school, parents elect their teacher representative for the Class Council and School Council in order to take part in school meetings and to exercise

their right to be part of the school's activities. Parents also have the possibility to form in each institution a parents' association with a view to supporting the educational goals and strategic vision of the school by partnering with staff, students and other stakeholders in the community to plan events, to facilitate communication and to provide a welcoming social environment.

2.3. Organisation of the school year

Every year, it is up to the Ministry of Education to establish the calendar for national holidays and to the Regions to define the school calendar (i.e. start and end dates of school's activities, duration of breaks for national holidays, other holidays).

The weekly teaching timetable for pre-primary school is set at central level, whereas in the first and in the second cycle of education the school is responsible for setting up the weekly and daily timetable and to decide how to spread activities across the days of the week.

For pre-primary education, educational activities are from 1st September to 30th June for a total of 35 weeks. Usually, the weekly timetable is 40 hours a week but there is the chance to extend it to up to 50 hours a week or, at the request of parents, to shorten it to 25 hours a week. Pupils go to school for five days a week, from Monday to Friday.

For the first cycle, educational activities should take place for no fewer than 200 teaching days in a year, for a total of 33 weeks, in the period between 1st September and 30th June. Pupils go to school for no fewer than five days a week, from Monday to Friday or Saturday. For primary school, the teaching timetable offers parents the possibility to choose from different options: 24 hours a week, 27 hours a week, up to 30 hours a week (involving additional activities to the 27-hour timetable) and 40 hours a week (including lunchtime). For lower secondary school, there are two options: the "mainstream compulsory timetable" with 30 hours a week and the "extended timetable" with 36 or 40 hours a week (including mealtimes).

For the second cycle of education, the organisation is more complex because of different tracks and several options. Basically, activities should take place for no fewer than 200 teaching days in a year, for a total of 33 weeks, in the period between 1 September and 30 June. The compulsory teaching time is approximately from 27 to 34 hours per week. Students go to school for no fewer than five days a week (usually 6 days a week), from Monday to Friday or Saturday.

2.4. Assessment

At pre-primary schools, teachers do not have to assess children's educational performance, instead they are asked to observe the pupils occasionally and systematically, sharing their educational suggestions with the children's parents.

From primary school, for assessment reasons, the school year is split into three-month or four-month terms (this second option is more common), as established autonomously by each school. Periodic and final evaluation of pupils' learning outcomes in each subject is expressed in numerical marks from 0 to 10. At the end of each term and at the end of the school year, teachers have to fill out a personal assessment document (one for each student) which includes an overall mark for each subject, the report of their behaviour (conduct), as well as the declaration of admission (or non-admission) to the following school grade. Schools are free to develop their own assessment document, with respect for the guidance of the Ministry of Education. Class teachers (that is the Class Council) are responsible for managing the periodic and final evaluation of the students. Students do not take examinations to progress to the next grade, except for the end of both the first and second cycle of education.

There are different rules regarding students' admission to the next grade, according to the school level. In primary school, non-admission of a pupil to the following school grade is very infrequent and must be decided unanimously by all class teachers who have to provide specific reasons in order to justify this decision. At this level, pupils are usually also admitted to the following grade with learning gaps and, in this case, the school might inform parents with a private letter or in a note on the personal assessment document.

In lower secondary school, admission to the next grade and to the final first-cycle education exam needs both the minimum school attendance and an overall mark of 6/10 or higher in each subject and in conduct. The Class Council can, by majority ruling, refuse admission or grant it to students with a mark lower than 6/10 in one or more subjects, according to certain criteria set previously by the Teachers' Council.

In upper secondary education, as in lower secondary school, admission to the following grade requires, besides the fulfilment of minimum attendance requirements, overall marks equal to or higher than 6/10 in each subject and in conduct. The assessment is suspended if a student obtains a mark below 6/10 in one or more subjects and, if so, he/she will be re-assessed before the beginning of the next school year in each subject in which he/she has failed.

In all levels, admission to the following grade is always refused to students with a mark below 6/10 in conduct. For this reason, a bad mark in conduct is generally assigned only in serious and duly explained cases.

2.5. Compulsory education

Compulsory education refers to both enrolment and attendance. According to article 34 of the Italian Constitution, compulsory education lasts 10 years between the ages of 6 and 16 and covers the whole of the first cycle of education and the first two years of the second cycle.

It can be undertaken at either a State school or a non-State one³, publicly subsidised school (charter school) or even, in certain conditions, through home education or private schools.

After the successful completion of the first cycle of education, the final two years of compulsory education (from 14 to 16 years of age) can be done in an upper secondary school (lyceum, technical institute or vocational institute) or in a three —or four— year vocational education and training course. Moreover, everyone has the right and the duty to receive education and training for at least 12 years within the education system or until they have achieved a three-year vocational qualification by the age of 18. 15-year-old learners also have the chance to spend the last year of compulsory education on an apprenticeship, thanks to a special arrangement between the Regions, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the trade unions.

2.6. School autonomy and freedom of teaching

The organisation of the Italian education system is nowadays based on two principles: *subsidiarity* (both vertically —i.e. the State places the order with other public administrative offices at a local level— and horizontally —i.e. there is a cooperation between the State and local societies) and *autonomy* of schools (Benadusi, Giancola & Viteritti, 2008). This intervention has been necessary in order to cope with the crisis of a centralised structure of the education system, which continually proved to be less and less able to answer needs of efficiency, transparency and effectiveness. One of the aims of the reformers was to establish a new institutional structure granting autonomy to each school within the framework of a soft decentralisation (Grimaldi & Serpieri, 2012).

Law n.59/1997, concerning the reform of the public administration, introduces the idea of autonomy of schools, conferring them the status of “juridical subjects”, with powers and prerogatives that were previously exclusive to the central authorities. Presently, the term “autonomy” refers to the return to the local communities of the power to organise education services (Colombo, 2001). The Law states that autonomy includes three basic aspects:

- Curricular and didactic autonomy: freedom to take independent decisions on enriching curricular provisions and adopting more effective teaching methods and approaches (i.e. design, implementation, evaluation).
- Organisational autonomy: freedom to take independent decisions about the school timetable, delegation of authority and internal allocation of human resources.

3. In school-year 2018-2019 10.3% of pupils attended a charter school. In particular: 37.1% at pre-primary school, 6.3% at primary school, 3.8% both at lower secondary school and at upper secondary school (MIUR, 2018).

- Financial autonomy: school capability to diversify funding sources (public or private), as well as to allocate the State funds without constraints.

According to this new settlement, The Ministry of Education lays down a general framework for school autonomy (to ensure uniformity within the Italian education system) and each school is asked to draw up its own three-year educational offer plan, by which each institute has the opportunity to show and to make public its own school projects, its local curricular priorities and its specific internal organisation (see below, on point 4.1).

Moreover, according to article 33 of the Italian Constitution, teachers are free to choose teaching methods. However, the national guidelines establish some general criteria for the organisation of the learning environment and suggest some basic methodological approaches. The choice and use of teaching methods and materials must be consistent with each school's three-year educational offer plan, which has to respect the general and educational objectives of the different branches and levels of study established at national level.

3. National policy regarding the management of cultural diversity and immigrants' integration into the country

Since the beginning of mass immigration to Italy (1980-1998), the Italian discipline of immigration was marked by instability and fragmentation. In paragraph 3.1., the evolution of national immigration policies will be presented. Attention will be given to work in paragraph 3.2, and in paragraph 3.3 to health. Finally, in paragraph 3.4 the guidelines for the scholastic integration of foreign students will be illustrated.

3.1. In general

Immigrant policies must be distinguished from immigration policies: the first concern citizenship rights for immigrants and the regulations for the cohabitation of natives and immigrants. The latter, which are usually at the heart of public and political debates, concerns the incoming flows, in other words, the regulations that rule the selection and admission of foreign nationals. This distinction, which is at risk of blurring because of the high politicisation of the immigration issue, is fundamental since immigrant and immigration policies have very different aims and objectives.

3.1.1. *First regulatory interventions on immigrant and immigration policies*

In Italy, as in many other European countries, it is possible to observe a trend that sees immigrant policies turn into immigration policies (Lovison & Riniolo, 2018).

The Italian political system began to deal with the immigration phenomenon only towards the beginning of the 1980s. The situation was buffered with continuous amnesties until the economic crisis and growing unemployment led to the total blocking of job entries launched in 1982.

The first legal intervention for the regulation of immigration and above all regulating immigrants' professional activity dates to 1986 with the law n. 943 rules on placement and treatment of third-country immigrant workers and against illegal immigration. It contained general principles of importance such as the enjoyment of equal rights between Italian and foreign workers, the guarantee of access to social services and healthcare, the safeguard of cultural identity and the regulation of family reunion. The law also introduced a rule on family reunification, provisions relating to tourist accommodation and for study purposes (Cesareo, 2013). Moreover, it provided for the establishment of a series of authorities and services to ensure these rights be respected. It was accompanied by a major amnesty involving immigrants (over 100,000) who could prove they were residing in Italy within three months of the promulgation of the law.

In the 1990s, immigration became such a phenomenon that a new law had to be adopted. In 1990 law n. 39/90 (the so-called "Martelli law") was adopted in an attempt to regulate migration into Italy in an organic way.

This law provided, on the one hand, a preventive mechanism, implemented through the first example of quantitative programming of the inflows of economic immigrants based on the needs of the Italian labour market. On the other hand, for the first time in Italy, it regulated the procedure for the expulsion of socially dangerous foreigners and illegal immigrants. The law also implemented yet another amnesty for irregular immigrants already present in the territory and established the first measures aimed at favouring the integration of immigrants. Compared to the previous provisions, the "Martelli law" is characterised by the severely restrictive approach to entry conditions in the country, also in order to meet the demands coming from other European states, which, by virtue of the simultaneous accession of Italy to the Schengen treaty, feared a large influx of foreign workers into their territory. The expulsion procedure for foreign citizens was used not only in terms of repression of the behaviour of individual foreigners but also as an instrument to combat irregular immigration. It thus introduced the right to seek asylum and the recognition of migrants' fundamental rights as persons and no longer as mere workers.

The first massive influx of migrants to Italy occurred in 1991 and had an acute impact on the collective imagination. The fall of the Communist regime in Albania in 1990 and the subsequent grave economic crisis that hit the country spurred a great exodus that the media broadcast: images of thousands of people, aboard overcrowded boats, trying to cross the Adriatic in search of better living conditions and new promises.

In the following years, laws and decrees were approved to remedy the gaps in the "Martelli law": in 1992 a new law on citizenship raised the term for naturalisation of foreign citizens to 10 years of continuous legal residence, while in 1993 law n. 205 was approved, against xenophobia and discrimination. In the same year decree law n. 187 was also approved, which introduced new crimes attributable to foreigners and modified the expulsion procedure.

In 1995-1996, Italy adopted a series of decrees, which did not repeal but rather considerably amended previous provisions. In 1997, under pressing circumstances, an exceptional decree was enforced dictating an ad hoc discipline for the around 17,000 Albanians that landed in Puglia.

3.1.2. The turning point of the Single Immigration Act

The significant increase of foreigners in Italy urged the drafting of a new law, law n. 40 of 1998 (also called the “Turco-Napolitano” law). Among the major changes introduced by this law, there was the expansion and the greater definition of the programming of migratory flows, which was integrated into national foreign policy through a system of privileged quotas in favour of the countries that collaborated in the repatriation of immigrants expelled from Italy.

On the one hand, the “Turco-Napolitano” law operated with a view to integrating immigrants into work and society, through provisions such as the anticipation of entry for job search, the establishment of a residence card to stabilise long-term residents and extension of basic health care also to illegal immigrants. It also provided for the protection of the family and for the schooling of children.

On the other hand, it strengthened control and expulsion policies. The law increased the cases in which expelled irregular immigrants could be subjected to being accompanied to the border, and moreover temporary detention and assistance centres (Centri di Permanenza Temporanea or CPT), created to hold and identify immigrants and eventually expel them, were provided. Detention in these centres was scheduled for a maximum of 30 days.

The law introduced the Single Immigration Act (decree-law n. 286/98 - Testo unico sull’immigrazione) into the Italian legal framework, which concentrated all the national regulations concerning this sector, contributing to simplifying Italian legislation on the subject.

Article 4-bis also introduces a definition of integration that has become a guideline of the whole provision: “Integration is a process aimed at promoting the cohabitation of Italian and foreign nationals, in full compliance with the values enshrined in the Italian Constitution, with the mutual commitment of participating in the economic, social and cultural life of society” (Art. 4-bis, comma 1 law 286/98).

In connection with integration, we can observe that before the Turco-Napolitano law, laws were not particularly focused on immigrants’ integration because of their emergency-oriented nature. Law n. 40/98 thus represents a turning point by affording great attention to this issue and establishing a discipline that was only marginally amended by the subsequent laws. The basic logic is to promote integration by treating immigrants and nationals almost completely equally. The Single Immigration Act, in particular, does not only reaffirm the acknowledgement of foreigner’s fundamental rights, and hence of irregular migrants too, but also states that, barring exceptions, the foreigner who regularly resides in the territory enjoys the same civil rights as those granted to Italian citizens. The law has provided for

a right-duty of compulsory education for all foreign minor residents, disregarding their parents' status regarding residence discipline. That is, school is regarded —as can be deduced from the substance of these provisions— not only as a place in which a fundamental right is implemented but also as an essential “integration agency”. As a matter of fact, the whole welfare sector has been “opened” to immigrants, even if some exceptions or limitations as regards irregular immigrants remain.

3.1.3. The policies of the new millennium: the tension between national and European rules

The Single Immigration Act was partly amended by law n. 189 of 2002 (the so-called “Bossi-Fini” law), aiming to render the rule stricter. The new law acted on the side of the control of those who already resided in Italy, shortening the duration of residence permits from 3 to 2 years, giving greater weight to the role of CPTs and to accompanying them to the border, introducing fingerprinting for all foreigners and the crime of clandestine stay. As for the new entries, it removed the sponsor system introduced by the previous law and created a single procedure, based on the residence contract, which made it much more difficult for the non-EU citizen to come to work legally in Italy. This law was accompanied by a giant amnesty involving over 650,000 individuals.

In the meantime, the transposition of the EU legislation (in particular, see the data sheets on directives 2004/83/CE, 2003/109/EC 2003/86 / EC) intervened to modify the system again, making the first harmonisation with the other European states.

In 2008 the Government approved new amendments with the so-called “Security Package” (*pacchetto sicurezza*). The package introduced new types of crime for illegal immigrants and for those who favoured their illegal stay in Italian territory (including employers who hire them illegally), the new aggravating circumstance of clandestinity for criminal offences, the penalties for those who declared false generality and expulsion for EU citizens or non-EU citizens affected by prison sentences of more than 2 years. The new rules introduced the crime of illegal entry and stay, exacerbated the penalties for aiding and abetting illegal immigration, extended the maximum time for detention in the CPTs (renamed CIE, identification and expulsion centres) up to 6 months. The “security package” also included new devices for entry, family reunification and renewal of the residence permit, including the integration agreement and the points residence permit.

This restrictive approach was partially mitigated in the following period by the decrees to implement the European directives that had been approved in the meantime: 2009/50/EC, 2009/52/EC, 2004/38/EC.

To govern the presence of immigrants in their territories, some European states have written Integration Plans (Lovison & Riniolo, 2018), a coherent set of principles and objectives as guidelines for the processes of inclusion of the immigrants into European societies.

In Italy, according to the Single Immigration Act concerning immigration and the condition of third-country nationals (law 286/1998), the responsibility to define and implement integration plans for foreign nationals is under the jurisdiction of the Regions. This is in line with the reform of Title V of the Italian Constitution approved in 2001, which saw a considerable extension of the tasks and functions of the Regions and the local entities for multi-level governance.

3.1.4. Responses to the 'migrant crisis' in the last decade

As an opposite trend to this approach, in 2009, as part of the “Security Package”, the first national set of regulations regarding integration was introduced. It was called the “Integration Agreement”.

In 2011, a regulation concerning the “Integration Agreement” (Accordo di integrazione) was laid down based on the French model (d.p.r. n. 179/11): every new migrant must commit to the achievement of language level A2, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference, within two years of arrival. In addition, the Agreement provides that foreigners must follow a civic education course and be informed about civic life in Italy. With regard to citizenship, it is well known that the Italian law system—strictly bound to the *ius soli* criterion typical of countries without significant immigration—is one of the most restrictive in this regard. The granting of citizenship, save for the case of marriage with an Italian citizen, requires a very long time of residence, both for immigrants—who may only apply after ten years of legal residence—and their children born in Italy, who are regarded as foreigners until the age of eighteen years old, when only then they may apply for citizenship. Generally speaking, immigration-related issues highlight the need to radically rethink the law concerning citizenship acquisition in order to link it to actual political integration processes, thus changing the citizenship from a belated “admission” to a booster of such processes.

In 2011 vis-à-vis the new large-scale arrivals of economic migrants and later on of refugees from Tunisia and Libya, a state of humanitarian emergency was declared. As a matter of fact, there were two emergencies: the first one stemmed from the thousands of economic migrants who landed illegally in Italy in only three months (from January to March 2008); the second emergency stemmed from the much higher number of people requesting international protection than in the previous years (Codini & Pasini, 2013). The response to the first emergency was a decree providing for all illegal economic migrants a permit “on humanitarian grounds”, renewable, with all the rights and the obligations ordinarily valid for legal immigrants, including the right to work. The response to the second one was essentially to issue exceptional measures of civil protection aimed at providing accommodation to those requesting asylum.

2017 witnessed the introduction of many new rules in connection with immigration, the objective of which was mainly to respond to the flows of asylum seekers (Codini, 2018). Law n. 47/17 (the so-called ‘Zampa law’) concerned unaccompanied foreign minors, which made a series of changes to existing law with a view to improve protection. Another measure, law-

decree n. 13/17 (the so-called “Minniti-Orlando decree”), converted by parliament into law n. 46/17, was more controversial because it touched upon very sensitive aspects of the rules governing the entry and stay of foreigners.

The “Minniti-Orlando decree” would appear to be an omnibus law characterised by a piecemeal approach. It contains provisions that range from the examination of asylum applications to how to treat foreigners facing deportation and from the setting up of specialised court sections dedicated to immigration disputes to the employment of asylum seekers in community service type work. The solutions would seem to have been adopted with a view to ensure efficiency: reorganise and simplify. Some provisions refer exclusively to asylum seekers, others do not. That said, the government’s decision to resort to a law-decree as opposed to other types of legislation hints at a link with the difficulties stemming from the increase in asylum seekers in 2016. First and foremost, the decree seeks to reduce the waiting times for a final decision on the right to international protection. The decree also contains provisions on identification with special reference to hotspots, although the rules are still inadequate (Asgi, 2017). But above all, there are new provisions on the deportation of illegal aliens, who in the future will mainly be asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected. The “Minniti-Orlando decree” has relaunched the detention centres, now called repatriation centres (CPR), which are supposed to be smaller in size than in the past and distributed throughout the country. As regards the impact of the change on the plan for the number of actual repatriations, the government is expressly relying on new agreements with the countries of origin. As for living conditions in the centres, the reduction in size could in itself contribute to raising standards. Finally, worth mentioning is an aspect of the decree that has caught attention, i.e. the employment of asylum seekers in community service type work.

Also, for the new government that took office in 2018, attention to security issues in migration policies remained a priority. In the same year, the government approved decree law n. 113 on security and immigration (the so-called “Salvini decree”).

The provision introduced a series of innovations in the field of immigration and international protection, public security and prevention and combating of terrorism and mafia crime.

The decree restricted the criteria for obtaining a humanitarian visa to remain in Italy. The visas have helped people who have experienced extreme hardship and abuse, including in Libya, but who do not meet the narrow refugee definition under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The decree doubled the amount of time people can be detained pending deportation, from 90 days to 180.

Moreover, it broadened the list of offences for which refugee status can be revoked and allows authorities to dismiss an asylum claim if the person is simply charged with any of those offences, even if they have not been convicted. Among the measures envisaged was the rationalisation of the use of the protection system for holders of international protection and unaccompanied

foreign minors. The revocation of citizenship acquired by foreigners definitively convicted of terrorist offences was also envisaged.

Among the main measures on security, the decree provided for interventions ranging from the extension of controls through electronic devices for particular types of crime (ill-treatment and stalking), to the provisions on motor vehicle hire contracts for the prevention of acts of terrorism, to the extension of the scope of application of the urban access prohibition (urban DASPO).

Measures were also envisaged to combat the phenomenon of arbitrary occupations of properties, through the tightening of penalties.

The mix of rules regarding migration policies and the fight against organised crime in the same law is indicative of the securitarian approach with which the current government deals with issues related to foreign citizens. In other words, immigration management is geared more towards responding to emergencies rather than planning long-term interventions.

3.1.5. Local migratory policies in Brescia

Adapting gradually to the changes, Brescia has certainly been a promoter, over time, of a model of success and the conquest of peace with a view to integration and participation, with a microcosm of multiple pro-immigrant actions (Colombo, 2018). To name just a few: the creation of a foreigner's office, urban redevelopment to avoid the formation of ethnic enclaves, health care for foreigners without a sanitary code (an outpatient clinic —the extension of inter-cultural support services); the widespread extension of the language facilitator and/or mediator service in schools, hospitals, courts; open dialogue —with informal channels— from the Questura to the most representative ethnic communities; the exceptional organisational effort of the prefecture in increasing the number of practices avoided by favouring naturalisations; a consolidated inter-institutional practice of supporting inter-religious dialogue and between Islamic administrations and communities and, finally, the sectors of direct and indirect assistance put into by the Church and the body of voluntary associations present everywhere and always very active, both in the Catholic world and in civil society, with progressive practices, on the intercultural profile, and innovative on the methodological level (e.g. the Agesci multi-ethnic scout group, the family-community for minors, co-housing, widespread acceptance in the Sprar system, etc.). In spite of everything, signs of resentment and impoverishment of social relations are also growing in the Brescia area, which awakens the conflicts or feelings of “relative deprivation”, not only among the poorer classes but also in the middle-class citizen. An inconvenience, or many small inconveniences, are linked to the failure to respond to the many questions that immigration and the multi-ethnic society pose in times of crisis.

3.2. Employment

In the case of labour policies, there is a strong fragmentation of rules and interventions.

The first two regularisations were launched in 1986 and 1990 respectively and allowed the emergence of dozens of thousands of work relations, but most of all allowed newly regularised workers to gain access to the opportunities that in the meantime had opened up in the Italian labour market, or more precisely, in the northern part of the country (Zanfrini, 2013).

In confirmation of the chronic dualism characterizing the national economy, researchers found that a mobility process inside the country was in progress, following the direction of the 1950s and 1960s migrations from the south to the north of the country. Provinces such as Bergamo, Brescia, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Verona, Vicenza, Trento, Treviso (besides, obviously, Milan), characterised by a widespread economic welfare, unemployment rates much below the national average, growing access to secondary and tertiary education, thus making worker turnover increasingly problematic, also due to the presence of a “Famiglia lunga” that encouraged mostly “voluntary” unemployment (Scabini & Donati, 1989). And just in those local realities a peculiar integration model began to take shape (along with the typical urban model, characterised by a prevalence of the tertiary industry providing services to enterprises and families and by a marked foreign presence “feminisation”), whose ideal-type figure is the immigrant worker employed in small and medium enterprises, particularly in the metal-mechanical and building industries.

As mentioned before, after a first phase characterised by an institutional regulation deficit, the lack of an organic law on immigration was filled in 1998 with the approval of the Single Immigration Act (law decree n. 286/98) which, among others, had the aim of disciplining economic migrations.

In the beginning, entry for work purposes was conditioned by the unavailability of suitable workers already present in the territory. The “Turco-Napolitano law” did not recall the reference to the lack of available workers in the territory and provided for regulation planning every year with an ad hoc decree (decreto flussi) of binding “numbers” of entries (quote). This regulation was only marginally amended by law n. 189/02. Another rule introduced by the “Turco-Napolitano law” and ultimately upheld by the “Bossi-Fini law” was that of making entries for subordinate work conditional to a previous engagement of the employer to recruit the immigrant. The major derogation was introduced by law n. 40/98 and provided for the possibility to authorise a certain number of entries for “seeking a job” with the guarantee of a sponsor; however, this derogation was soon after repealed by the “Bossi-Fini law”.

In the course of a few years, Italy had then passed from a situation of substantial invisibility of immigrants’ work to a sort of celebration of the idea of complementarity. The following years were characterised by a growing relevance of migration and by the strengthening of the new regulatory system, which has become the object of lively ideological controversies.

The incoming labour flow has been to a large extent independent of any law provision and, in particular, has escaped a real planning action that has at heart economic competitiveness and social cohesion goals. Furthermore, the years before the crisis coincided with the advent

of a sort of “demandist” orthodoxy (Zanfrini, 2013), according to which the mere existence of an employer willing to hire a migrant would determine a right to entry or a right to be regularised, as though this were sufficient to prove the existence of a need that could not be otherwise satisfied. This demandist approach concealed behind such statements – which is strangely mingled with humanitarian considerations – ends by driving politics to relinquish its task of governing migratory phenomena through an evaluation of their impact on the labour market, on the welfare system, and on the quality of coexistence. Besides other consequences, the hegemony of “demandism” have contributed to overestimating actual employment opportunities and to neglecting the basic element of the self-propelling nature of migrations, that is to say, their tendency to become, over time, relatively independent both of law constraints, and of integration chances in the host society.

3.2.1. The economic crisis and the failure of flow planning policies

The serious employment crisis has removed the veil of hypocrisy that has always accompanied the “planning of the admissions”: while formally aimed at addressing the needs of the economy, the planning decrees quickly turned out to be functional equivalents of amnesties and, more recently, instruments to grant legal entry under the justification of fictitious employment relationships simulated by friends and fellow-countrymen or bought at a high price in the market. To summarise, the recession gave the coup de grace to a legislative framework that has not met any of its objectives; certainly not that of preventing illegal arrivals, but neither that of satisfying the needs of the employers, nor, even less, that of managing the flow of workers from abroad in accordance with a plan aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of enterprises and to guarantee social cohesion. Moreover, it should be noted that the context in which the present discipline on immigration took its first steps, is then significantly changed: it took the threat of recession to bring to the surface the impact of immigrant labour on the Italian labour market. It is not by chance that some concerns about the competition that immigration might exert mostly towards the weaker segments of the local labour supply, which have long remained asleep due to a sort of exaltation of the idea of complementarity, have begun to become manifest. As already happened in other national experiences, the immigration issue started to feed new conflicts and reveal the difficulty in finding solutions in the position to combine different claims: altruistic claims, that is, those coming from large areas of civil society; claims from the business world, which is scarcely inclined to do without the benefits that resorting to immigrants’ labour indisputably brings about; and finally, the claims of the social categories that might be more penalised by immigration.

Undoubtedly, the fact that immigration for work purposes has extensively developed outside the framework of legality, except for subsequent periodical recoveries through mass-regularisation or using de facto decrees on migration flows as regularisation measures, does not play in favour of a regulation which has always proved unable to effectively manage this phenomenon. Unfortunately, the political debate did not reveal a complete awareness of this problem. A marked “dirigiste” approach has always prevailed up to now, in an attempt to subdue market logic to the government’s will, refusing a more liberal approach which would

not clash with the market's logic but that would instead be merely aimed at governing the practices resulting from these logics in order to safeguard the different interests at stake.

In this context, first of all, it is essential to rethink the idea of integration, which until today has been strongly unbalanced towards the purely working dimension.

3.2.2. Foreign workers in Brescia

The economic downturn and the rise in unemployment affect more migrant workers than native ones, evidence of which we can see in the report of ISTAT (National Statistics Institute) through the Database on the Workforce (data are drawn up every 3 months). Thus, the impact of the economic crisis and slack demand for labour falls hardest on the shoulders of those who are in the weakest position, such as migrant workers.

In Brescia, migrant workers are over-represented in such sectors as construction, manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, agriculture and domestic service; most of these sectors have been seriously affected by the economic crisis with migrant workers experiencing major shocks. Then, in the time of crisis, the demand for labour slackens and the likelihood increases of precarious and irregular employment; it is likely that migrant workers are forced to take on jobs in poor working conditions and/or the informal economy. We can find evidence for this in the ISTAT report: in Brescia, migrant workers are more active than their native counterparts in job searching and they accept almost any conditions just to retain their jobs or to find a new one, with their jobs being almost dependent, non-qualified and low profile (Colombo, 2018).

Despite this, in 2017 we saw a positive sign: the unemployment rate among migrants decreased (2016: 8.2% vs. 2017: 6.2%) and there was also foreign entrepreneurship growth (1.8%).

Despite the fact that migrants are trying to face the economic crisis and solve economic problems, the growth rate of remittance still increases: over 159 million in 2017. However, the data have serious limitations and should be interpreted with caution. First, remittances deriving from illegal activities, remittances such as gifts or material goals (gold, etc.) and remittances through informal channels (hand-carried, etc.) cannot be calculated. Second, the level of migrants' remittance flows depends on both migrants' ability, i.e. their income and the savings from income, and their motivation to send money to the home country. The willingness to send remittances is also determined by other factors such as families' expectations, etc. Relying on this, we see that many migrants gain debts or live in conditions of great deprivation in order to send remittances to their families in the country of origin.

3.3. Health

The Italian Constitution considers health to be a universal right to be guaranteed to all individuals present in the national territory and not just to Italian citizens (Art. 32). All third-country nationals with a legal residence permit, including beneficiaries of international protection, are entitled to equal treatment with Italian nationals in terms of rights (e.g. access

to free healthcare for deprived persons) and duties (e.g. fees for healthcare services). Like all Italian citizens, they have access to the services provided by the national health service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale, SSN) regardless of their economic conditions. Asylum seekers with a legal residence permit have the right to be affiliated to the SSN and are exempted from any fee for six months after the asylum application and beyond as long as they are found to be economically disadvantaged. Italian law is quite inclusive with regard to people without a legal residence permit and gives them access to basic healthcare (hospitalisation or out-patient care) without any risk of being reported to the authorities. The application of the legal framework appears to be quite heterogeneous, in particular at a territorial level. More specifically, the gap in the provision and access to healthcare services by immigrants (legal and irregular) among local and regional authorities hampers the potential effectiveness of the inclusive and universalistic legal framework at the national level (Idos, 2015). These disparities include the level of awareness of rights, the language and cultural barriers, psychological fragility due to traumas, and the legal hurdles for irregular migrants. The different interpretation of national laws by regional governments is responsible, to a large extent, for the misalignment of practices.

3.3.1. The health of refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants

Although the European Parliament and the European Commission have recently stressed the importance of providing healthcare to vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers, the application of this principle has ultimately been given to member states and in particular to the member states along the EU external border. The European regional office of the World Health Organization (WHO) has engaged more directly by creating a specific task force on refugees' health, namely in the peripheral member states. Italy's reception and human rights system is complex and diverse, as it involves both public authorities (regional and local authorities) and private bodies from the social sector. It is also organised in different facilities that can work as alternatives or as complementary in catering for asylum seekers throughout the application process. Italian law entitles asylum seekers to the same rights and duties as Italian citizens and an additional exemption from healthcare fees for the first six months after the application has been lodged. Migrants whose eligibility for international protection has not yet been assessed are provided with a general medical check-up on arriving at the reception centres. The public or private authorities managing initial reception centres (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria, CAS) must guarantee the presence of health operators and provide generic and specific social and psychological services. The same obligations apply to secondary reception and integration, the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (Sistema di Protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati, SPRAR). Despite the legal protection of fundamental rights such as the right to health, major gaps exist among the different reception and integration systems, in particular between the initial reception facilities (CAS) and the secondary reception and integration facilities (SPRAR).

3.3.2. Access to healthcare for foreigners

More generally, although migrants do not necessarily have poorer health conditions than Italian nationals, their specific situation entails different health profiles due to different risk

factors. In terms of diseases of affluence (i.e. selected diseases that are commonly thought to be a result of increased wealth in a society, such as obesity), migrants show lower levels of mortality than the overall Italian population. By contrast, they show higher levels of mortality and morbidity for transmissible diseases, injuries, violence, while migrant women are more exposed to social exclusion in terms of sexual and reproductive health (Osservasalute, 2016). Length of residence and membership of mixed families play a key role in improving health conditions. Migrants who have resided in Italy for a long time and migrants with an Italian partner show higher levels of health.

The data analysis of hospitalisations confirms the trend that access to hospital services is lower among migrants than Italian citizens and essentially limited to physiological factors (e.g. reproduction) and accidents (e.g. traumas and injuries). In 2014, 607,027 foreign-born nationals were hospitalised, specifically 477,510 under ordinary hospitalisation and 129,517 under day hospital procedure (Ministero della salute, 2015). Abortions: in 2013, Istat recorded 100,342 cases of voluntary interruption of pregnancy at a national level, 33.5% of which involved foreign-born women. Compared to the 2012 data, this shows a slight decrease. Infectious diseases: data on infectious diseases do not raise public health concerns and, on the contrary, show the healthcare system has weathered the recent and consistent flux of migrant and that no infectious disease has been found among these migrants. Viral hepatitis: between 2004 and 2013, 10,591 cases of acute viral hepatitis were reported to the SEIEVA (Italy's national integrated surveillance system for acute viral hepatitis). 15% (1,589 cases) involved non-Italian nationals and most of them were affected people from heavy migration pressure countries (97%).

To conclude, regarding the care of migrants' health, we can say that the Italian Constitution enshrines the right to health in an inclusive way by placing legal migrants and asylum seekers on the same footing as Italian citizens in terms of access to healthcare services. As for irregular migrants, some forms of protection exist beyond emergency care. Italian legislation is based, however, on a strong delegation of competence in the field of social and health policies to regions. The way regions respond to migrants' needs, including asylum seekers, is quite inconsistent. In particular, the Italian reception system for asylum seekers is complex and provides services that are not equal in terms of territories and programmes.

3.3.3. The healthcare system in Brescia

As many investigations in the sociology of health show, the use of health services is closely connected to the economic condition and social integration of migrant people. The ORIM 2016 survey takes into account access to the basic medical service (as self-declared by immigrants), specialist services, hospital admissions, the Emergency Department and volunteer care associations in the 12 months preceding the survey (Cesareo & Blangiardo, 2016). In the province of Brescia, access to the general healthcare system is positively correlated with the possession of a stable legal status. For this reason, foreigners with seniority in the highest province and a higher income, with more frequent features among those with a stable legal status, have greater access to these services. Those who find themselves in an irregular

condition must seek the care of the Emergency Department (29.3% against 27% of long-term residents) or care services organised by the voluntary service (42.9% against 0.5% of the long-term residents). Access to health services is easier for foreign citizens coming from macro-areas of Eastern Europe, North Africa and Latin America and is favoured by the possession of higher educational qualifications. Both variables are probably influenced by the presence of higher cultural capital in the reference populations and the consequent ease of carrying out the bureaucratic procedures necessary for access to the NHS and to relate to health workers.

3.4. Education

The presence of students with non-Italian citizenship in the Italian school system has been a matter of interest for some time now: over the last twenty years, the phenomenon has become a structural feature and a specific target of educational policies (Santagati, 2017). Like the right to health, the right to education is also universally protected by the Italian Constitution.

Following these principles, since the first inflow of immigration in 1989, Italian schools have ensured open access to all immigrant minors, regardless of their legal status, in order to grant their right to take part in compulsory education (Santagati, 2016). The abolition of “special classes” was implemented in 1977 with Law n. 517 for students with a disability, a choice which put forth a new educational model based on flexible modules or group activities conducted by specialised teachers. Consequently, Italy chose an *integrated model* also for immigrant pupils that favours the allocation of non-Italian students in classes of children of the same age group in mainstream education. It is based on the idea that immigrant students will benefit —both academically and socially— if they are integrated with other pupils and not allocated to separate *ad hoc* classrooms.

3.4.1. Interculturalism as the Italian model of integration through education

Since 1989, the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (hereafter Mir) has issued several *memoranda* concerning intercultural education, which is meant to promote dialogue between pupils belonging to different cultures, openness to diversity and shared common values. The Ministry has defined an “Italian model” for the educational integration of non-Italian students, based on the correspondence between the integration of foreigners (from the phase of reception up to the phase of teaching of Italian as second language and of support to the learning path) and the perspective of intercultural dialogue in school relations, knowledge and skills.

In 1990 the Italian Ministry of Education (Document 205/1990) defined the role of intercultural education as the fostering of “positive coexistence, preventing the creation of stereotypes and prejudices towards other peoples and cultures and overcoming any form of ethnocentrism”. A few years later Ministerial Document 73/1994, entitled Intercultural Dialogue and Democratic Coexistence: The Planning Commitment of Schools, represented the first systematic effort to shape what would later become “The Italian Approach to Intercultural” (Santagati, 2016). Intercultural education is defined not merely as a response to the issues raised by the presence

of pupils of immigrant origin but includes the complex issues deriving from the contact between different cultures [...] as one of the most important strategies to combat racism. [Intercultural] includes the possibility of reciprocal discoveries, while respecting the individual and collective identities, in a climate of dialogue and solidarity (C.M. 73/1994).

Later, the intercultural approach was taken up and expanded in various official documents.

In 2006, the university and research ministry issued the “Guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign students” and in 2007 “The Italian way for intercultural education and the integration of immigrant pupils”, where the Italian model of educational integration was further detailed, including both “actions for integration” —aimed at foreign students to promote their right to education— and “actions towards intercultural education” —which concern the promotion of intercultural dialogue. This model includes interventions aimed at improving interethnic relationships at school (both with teachers and with peers) that are to be carried out during curricular and extracurricular activities, and are aimed at combating discrimination and prejudice, and integrating intercultural perspectives in knowledge and competencies (i.e. disciplinary or multidisciplinary teaching, intercultural teaching, revision of curricula).

In 2010, the Italian Ministry of Education issued a new regulation setting a cap of a maximum at 30% of foreign students in each class. The measure was justified with the alleged need to maintain a certain level of heterogeneity in classes, as an indispensable condition for preventing implicit intra-school segregation policies and promoting a good level of integration and intercultural dialogue as well. Even if the regulation contained neither concrete indications nor activated financial resources to enforce this reorganisation in the class formation and hence has remained a “symbolic policy”, the concentration of foreign students in class seems not to be problematic.

The Guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign students was updated in 2014 in consideration of 1) the increase in second-generation foreigners; 2) the dissemination of inclusive good practices that were characterizing the Italian school. Also in 2014, the university and research ministry established the National Observatory for the integration of foreign students and intercultural education, to identify solutions for an effective adaptation of school integration policies to the real needs of an increasingly multicultural society in constant transformation.

The Guidelines entrust regional school offices with the role of guarantors of agreements between schools and local authorities to prepare the coordinated management of foreign minors’ enrolments. Only a careful and coordinated management, preceded by necessary planning, by school administrators and local institutions, in fact, can avoid both the segregation of classes and the excessive nomadism of children in the territory.

The Guidelines entrust local schools and administrations with the task of encouraging families of foreign minors to enrol their children first in kindergarten due to the fundamental role it plays in learning the Italian language and in socialisation processes.

The learning of the Italian language takes place mainly in the class to which it belongs, with the help of language laboratories and in small learning modules that reproduce the structure of the class, so as to be able to enhance the cultural baggage of each.

In the Guidelines, the theme of the concentration of foreign students in the classrooms is addressed to overcome the segregative tendencies of society, with a view to the territorial realities for which the catchment areas must guarantee the greatest heterogeneity and mixture. The university and research ministry has indicated inclusion as an inescapable process for the Italian school, to which all competitors must prepare to guarantee those equal opportunities that are dear to our Constitution.

3.4.2. Limits of education policies for non-native students

At the same time, this inclusive model also appears as a *non-systematic* model of integration of immigrant children, in the sense that it is characterised by the lack of national-level policies, random variations in the support provided, and fragmented measures (European Commission, 2013). Schools have developed different practices aimed at promoting children of immigrants' educational inclusion, especially regarding the assessment of pupils' competences upon entry and their class allocation (Azzolini et al., 2019). Recent immigrant-origin students are often allocated to classes with younger peers. This practice is officially discouraged, but is quite widespread, motivated by schools' lack of resources (both financial and human) and the need to address the inadequate language proficiency of children of immigrants. This "lower class enrolment" practice might have important implications on pupils' subsequent educational career, such as school delay, the choice of shorter educational paths and early school leaving.

Although the orientations and the ordering of the school system are formally very open and inclusive, as we shall see, there are significant inequalities in education levels between Italians and non-Italians.

Despite some positive experiences, however, in many schools there is still a lack of awareness of the aims, the actions and the approaches to adopt to foster a true intercultural perspective. This is what emerges, for example, from the survey conducted by the "Database of Intercultural Education Projects" (BDEI) in Lombardy (Colombo, 2010). This database (managed by the ISMU Foundation and Lombardy Regional Government) includes 2,000 projects and is the only example of an effort to monitor and analyse school projects on interculturalism in Italy. The database is also an interesting experience because it offers a model for the evaluation of different projects (mostly in terms of new project development rather than an evaluation of efficiency or efficacy), albeit without a thorough analysis of actions and results. The BDEI statistics suggest that the most significant experiences conducted within single schools are still too isolated and remote, and their success is often connected to the actions carried out by

small, innovative groups who are unable to disseminate and spread their results and, more importantly, to ensure they reach broader stakeholders. In practice, those teachers that carry out intercultural projects still confuse different visions of intercultural education.

Although the principle of educational inclusion has been incorporated in the legislation for a long time, it has never been systematically implemented in practice and the ideal of universal access to education does not always translate into real equal opportunities (Niessen & Huddleston, 2011). Even in the presence of very articulate legislation, this model has been differently implemented in the country. Experiences of quality and excellence coexist with emergency and improvisation approaches and inaction (Landri, Milione & Nicolaus, 2012).

4. National policies and legislation on parental involvement

Italy has a strong tradition of centralisation and elitism in the way public education has been (and still is) organised (Besozzi, 2017: 296ss) and the way teachers have been socialised to maintain a neat social and symbolic distance, within the school life, between professionals and users (Colombo, 2005). Notwithstanding this fact, several factors of change, over the decades, have pushed the public system of education to shift towards more democratic and inclusive management. Among others, the main changing factors can be identified in: decentralisation; co-management with users; and multiculturalism.

4.1. Decentralisation and school autonomy

In Italy the public system of education—which includes State and non-State schools on the basis of the “parity regime” according to Law n.62 promulgated in 2000—is ruled by national laws only as regards general addresses for study planning, structuring of the school offer (stock of schools and teachers) and norms for access and duration of schooling. The timetabling and the provision of all related services (transportation, personal support for students with special needs, infrastructures, etc.) are up to local administrations (regions and municipalities).

Since 1997, with Law n. 59 on school autonomy, the process of decentralisation progressed. It is up to each school establishment to plan and carry out a specific “3-year plan of the scholastic offer” (PTOF) with a relatively wide range of autonomous decision-making. The preparation of PTOF is supposed to be a collective action, in which representatives of all stakeholders (school manager, teachers, parents, non-teaching staff) take part. According to the European Observatory “parentsparticipation.eu”, the planning of PTOF since then is (and still represents) the preferred way to involve parents in Italian state schools (EACEA, 2011).

Implementation of PTOF is monitored by the internal Assessment Committee (made up of principal, representative teachers and representative parents). Therefore for their operation school institutions receive funds from the State (they get a “Fondo strutturale per l’autonomia”) and they also receive additional resources from Local Authorities, such as Councils and

Regions, or from corporate bodies and private actors⁴. The principal has the legal responsibility for accounting and economic balance, and his work is checked at the end of every school year by the MIUR inspection. Financial autonomy of the principal includes decisions over: funding extra-curricular activities (included in the PTOF); funding substitute teaching and administrative staff, only if the substitute is taken from among the internal teaching and non-teaching staff; bonus and allowances for professional merit; purchase of teaching materials.

By contrast, the principal cannot autonomously manage the fund as regards employment of teaching and non-teaching personnel (the whole procedure is managed by the MIUR); salary payment of any personnel (wholly managed by the MIUR), purchase of assistance or care services for pupils, purchase of infrastructures (managed by local authorities), and construction and renovation work on infrastructures (managed by Local Authorities).

As a consequence of school autonomy, the role of school principal (from now on called “school manager”) has been extended and strengthened. Now the principal can take local decisions autonomously by auditing the stakeholders, i.e. regarding: 20% of local curriculum, funds for extra-curricular activities, employment of extra-curricular assistants, experimental projects for specific targets, and so on: in all these items the parents’ participation in decision-making is welcome. By contrast, the school principal cannot share decisions either with users or with the staff as regards: amount of ordinary “functioning budget”, teachers’ recruitment, and classroom size.

Briefly, while on the MIUR website one can read that since 2000 school institutions have gained a (certain degree of) administrative, educational and organisational autonomy, which can be seen as a result of a long process, still ongoing and not yet accomplished.

Properly, we have in Italy an “imperfect autonomy” (Benadusi et al., 2008) as, in fact, the spaces for school autonomy are constrained by the State (which is, in any event, less powerful than before), and local institutions (councils and regions). Within the public system of education, the voice and the interest of family —as beneficiary and stakeholder— is not always listened to and respected, as it is argued, in defence of the principle of equity and freedom of choice (Ribolzi, 2019). However, at a micro level, the creation of new partnerships between school institutions and local authorities, companies, and other inner and external stakeholders, has led over the years to the development of a kind of “corporate agent” for a joint governance of educational policy-making (Grimaldi, Landri & Serpieri, 2006).

4.2. Parents as stakeholders in the schooling process

We can sum up the recent history of parental involvement in the co-management of the schooling process in Italy by designing four steps.

4. MIUR website (the website of the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research), URL: <http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/famiglie/autonomia-scolastica>, consulted 22/04/2017.

1. The first step, ruled by national legislation, was due to the President of the Italian Republic's Decree n. 416. It was promulgated in 1974 after strong pressure exerted by "grassroots movements" of parents, the most politicised and progressive teachers and civic stakeholders (trade union representatives, neighbourhood committee members, etc.). They called for the right to be informed and consulted by the school management for every issue regarding students and families.

The so-called "social management of schooling" was justified with the need to involve users in the education process, given the importance schools have in urban life, both for beneficiaries and other inhabitants. Within the school establishment, parents asked to be given "room and voice" in the decision-making process, with the creation of participatory bodies, such as assembly, forum, sit-in, social campaign, constitution of association, etc. Since the 1970s, then, a number of collective moments were attended by the majority of parents and innovative decisions were carried out (on both curricular and extra-curricular activities) making the schools more open and democratic than before.

Unfortunately this period of social participation lasted only a couple of decades (1975-1995). After the decrease in the political engagement of citizens in every sphere of social life and the increase in individualisation and the need for privacy, the attendance of parents and social representatives on the collective bodies established by law (Board of Institute; Board of Classroom; etc.) became softer and more random everywhere. Thus, democratic involvement gave way to the self-reference of the school personnel, with some negative consequences on the legitimation of teachers and the misunderstanding of principals' decisions by the parents (Colombo, 2001; 2007).

2. The second step towards the openness of schools to parental participation is due to Law n. 59/1997 on school autonomy (see above), which noted that each school—in a semi-market regime (Benadusi & Consoli, 2004)—must create its specific legitimation in the catchment area. For this purpose, stronger leadership had been given to the school principal, who became school manager by Legislative Decree n. 29, promulgated in 1993, not without difficulties (Paletta & Vidoni, 2006). From this time, schools significantly improved their actions aimed at involving parents, with formal and informal invitations to participation. Local projects to support parents' initiatives also began to be welcomed: parents were allowed to organise celebrations, parties, extra-curricular courses, sport races and so on autonomously. The attempt by school administrations at the time was to engage users in school activities to recover the "gap" between school supply and educational demand: this gap was considered one of the main factors of early school leaving, which was at the time particularly serious in secondary education (Colombo, 2013). Moreover, within the "neoliberal frame" (Gunter, Grimaldi, Hall & Serpieri, 2016), the active commitment of parents and students was seen as the best way to audit stakeholders in order to test and improve the quality of education provision.

During this period several changes occurred in public education:

- On the one hand, schools became more digitalised and school-family communication started to be through websites, emails and digital monitoring of students' achievement, replacing the traditional channels (Panarese, 2009).
- On the other hand, the share of pupils with an immigrant background increased from 0.7% in 1996 to 9.4% in 2016 (incidence rate over the total population); thus the school population gradually changed multiculturally; immigrant parents often live at lower standards than natives, being the non-natives often reluctant to participate in school activities.

As a consequence of both changes, the "detachment" between school and society widened and the educational alliance between teachers and parents, necessary to cope with serious problems such as bullying and drug addiction among youngsters (Gilles, Potvin & Tièche Christinat, 2012), got lost.

3. A third step in parental involvement was reached in 2007, when a new social alert led the Central Direction for Students (DG Studente) by the MIUR to pushing the promulgation of the President of the Italian Republic's Decree n. 235. In Article 5, this act sets up the "Co-responsible Agreement between School, Student and Parents" (CASSP) ("Patto di corresponsabilità educativa tra scuola, studente e genitori"), an educational contract that has to be signed by everyone on first registration in school. The CASSP aims to involve parents, with both the school authority and the child, in taking their responsibility formally, in helping the education system to reach best results in: planning, evaluation and well-being of students. In fact, parents are often far from a direct and spontaneous engagement. The signing of a formal act might make them more aware and self-committed in school issues: according to the MIUR Guidelines (2009), each school is advised to conduct a collective negotiation between school professionals and stakeholders in order to write a shared CASSP. The MIUR Guidelines do not include legal obligations, only recommendations; in fact, the school authority can recognise not only formal parents' associations, but every informal type of participation, even if informal and non-organised.

The democratic process of parental involvement, aiming to finalise a CASSP, is seen as a best practice to include parents of any social condition, especially the more isolated and poor (separated parents, migrant groups, newly arrived, etc.). The CASSP seems a sort of "personal call" addressed to any parent that engages all parents to fulfil their duties with school choices (function of family guidance) and school difficulties (function of family support in student achievement).

In 2007 the MIUR recommendations in favour of a CASSP aroused great expectations, but they were not able to overcome the problems already met in the past in increasing parental involvement: the mere formal signing of a CASSP, signed by all parents, does

not guarantee their deep and systematic engagement in the co-management of the school. Moreover, the process by which a CASSP has been prepared in several schools has shown that often the most integrated parents are attending the meetings with the school staff, while the less integrated do not. Consequently, the policy that supports parental involvement through a CASSP seems to miss its target. To facilitate parental involvement in a CASSP, some of the regional School Offices (such as in Lombardy) provided schools with a “format”, which could help them follow a multi-step democratic process, large, inclusive and open to the contribution of every extra-school educational agent: “Parents, teachers and non-teaching school professionals, trade unions, advisors, parish priests and representatives of churches, sport associations, cultural and arts associations, volunteers of charity and civic entities, house and neighbourhood committees, social centres, public libraries and educators” (USR, 2009, p. 8; see also Colombo & Tièche-Christinat, 2017).

4. The final step of parental involvement in Italy, according to national legislation, was reached by the last school reform (Law n. 107), promulgated in 2015 by the Matteo Renzi government, still operational. This law (called “The Good School” act) notes the central role of parents as co-builders of the educational process and co-beneficiaries of the school service. It states in Article 3: “The full implementation of the school curriculum and the achievement of educational objectives; the improvement of learning potential and individual styles; the maturation of a professional school community with cooperative learning methods, by respecting the liberty of teaching; the collaboration, shared planning and daily interaction with parents and other local stakeholders, are pursued by means of all kinds of flexibility given by the educational and organisational school autonomy”⁵. Consistently, in Article 7 (comma m), Law 107 points out that the local school policy (PTOF) must “stimulate the creation of the school as an active community, open to everybody in the local area, and ready to develop and improve the interaction with families and the local territory”⁶. In Law 107 parents are specifically mentioned in four articles:
 - (Article 14) “Parents’ associations can express their opinion on PTOF and it is a duty of the principal to take this opinion into account”⁷.

5. In original language: « La piena realizzazione del curricolo della scuola e il raggiungimento degli obiettivi, la valorizzazione delle potenzialità e degli stili di apprendimento nonché della comunità professionale scolastica con lo sviluppo del metodo cooperativo, nel rispetto della libertà di insegnamento, la collaborazione e la progettazione, l’interazione con le famiglie e il territorio sono perseguiti mediante le forme di flessibilità dell’autonomia didattica e organizzativa » (art. 3).

6. In original language: « Valorizzazione della scuola intesa come comunità attiva, aperta al territorio e in grado di sviluppare e aumentare l’interazione con le famiglie e con la comunità locale ». (art. 7, comma m).

7. In original language: « Le associazioni dei genitori possono esprimere parere sul PTOF (Piano triennale dell’Offerta formativa) divenuto obbligatorio, di cui il Preside dovrà tenere conto » (art. 14).

- (Article 16) “Parents are targeted with awareness-raising campaigns, made by the school, on topics relevant for civiness, such as: gender parity; gender violence; and social discrimination”⁸.
- (Article 22) “Parents can collaborate in making proposals and suggestions for cultural, sport and entertainment activities, etc. within the school establishment outside of the school timetable”⁹.
- (Article 129) “Parents are involved in the evaluation committee, which formulates assessments on newly-recruited teachers”¹⁰.

Thus, the co-responsibility of children’s education between school and family is the current trend-topic that re-designs the role of parents within the school environment. The rising importance of co-responsibility is due to the need for shared rules among educational agents (teachers, non-teaching staff, parents), which must facilitate school work for everyone. The lack of reciprocal trust and legitimation between teachers and parents, created a “systemic distance”, erases the moral basis of civic and scholastic coexistence (Colombo, 2016). As a lot of research shows, the non-attending family, on the one hand, and the self-referring teacher, on the other, are the two main factors in the malfunctioning of education. Educational achievements and social reputations of schools are also threatened by the lack of reciprocal acknowledgment among the adults involved in education. For this reason, the national legislation in Italy currently endorses a new collaborative trend in school-family relationships.

4.3. Legislation aimed at foreign pupils’ inclusion and immigrant parents’ involvement

As we mentioned before, the Italian school system has been challenged by diversity issues over the last two decades as the migrant population has increased, particularly by the early 1990s. By 2010, however, some migrants had left Italy after the economic downturn, so these challenges have lessened somewhat.

In some classrooms the presence of ethnic minority students brought about either preoccupation for learning (on average non-natives are expected to get lower results than natives) and anxiety for pacific coexistence between students from different origins (Colombo & Santagati, 2017), or motivation to introduce educational innovations according to the “intercultural turn” of schooling (Caneva, 2012; Contini & Pica-Smith, 2017; Santagati & Zanzottera, 2018). As a result, the negative and positive effects of multiculturalism affected the Italian school system at the same time. The schools that suffered the most due to the negative externalisation

8. In original language : « I genitori sono destinatari di interventi di sensibilizzazione su temi di rilevanza civica come la parità tra i sessi, la violenza di genere e le discriminazioni » (art. 16).

9. In original language: « I genitori possono concorrere alla proposta di attività culturali, sportive ricreative ecc. nei locali scolastici nei periodi di sospensione delle lezioni”(art. 22).

10. In original language: « I genitori sono coinvolti nel comitato di valutazione dei docenti » (art. 129).

of multiculturalism are those located in specific urban or rural areas (in the most populated regions) where there is an over-representation and space concentration of immigrants, because a high number of foreign students in the same educational setting may be an indicator of social and educational risk. As many studies show, the connection between the geographical mobility of immigrant families and the socio-territorial selection process makes grow the risk of “school segregation” significantly, thus the need for policies of de-segregation becomes even more urgent (Colombo & Santagati, 2014).

Let us consider briefly the trend of Italian legislation to regulate the acceptance and integration of non-native students. Italy has a moderate profile as a “receiving country”, according to MIPEX Indicators (Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki & Vankova, 2015), because it paid some attention to foreign students and their families by highlighting the two-fold character of the multicultural change of schooling: it could be either a risk or an opportunity, depending on how it is managed by schools (Santagati, 2013).

With Ministerial Memorandum n.73 issued in 1994 (“Intercultural dialogue and democratic coexistence: the planning engagement of the school”), the MIUR outlined that intercultural education should be considered the pedagogical answer to cultural pluralism, not as a subject to be taught or a mere compensatory activity, but rather an “integrating background” of the whole school education.

In 1998, the national regulation on immigration established (by Legislative Decree D.LGS n.286) that every foreign citizen living in Italy has the duty to attend compulsory education; consequently, migrant children have the right to benefit from all the necessary services for their participation in school life on the same conditions as natives (transportation, economic support, textbooks etc.). Respect for the duty of education, for immigrant children, is the responsibility of the parents or other legal substitutes. According to D.LGS 286, state schools must receive any pupils with non-Italian citizenship, no matter the legal status of their parents.

The main official document devoted to immigrant pupils and their families is the Circular Letter issued by the MIUR n. 24 in 2006 “Guidelines for the first reception and integration of foreign students” (CM 24): this calls for an Italian way to make schools intercultural and to foster the integration of these students. CM 24 reinforces the principle contained in the 1994 Memorandum and goes against any possible attempt to settle separate or non-inclusive education. Its main lines of action refer not only to “integration” but also to “intercultural interaction”. It invites autonomous schools to carry out intercultural education programmes, even in partnership with non-profit organisations and local services and authorities. This document was upgraded in 2014 (Circular Letter n. 4233) by confirming the same rationale and adding recommendations for VET and adult education for immigrants. As regards parental involvement, CM 24 says: “It is down to the school to audit and listen to immigrant families, which are often affected by strong destabilizing factors, at a cultural and psychological level, including frequent inter-generational distress and crisis. Receiving the family, coaching

it along the difficult path it must complete, and helping it towards integration in the new environment, are indeed among the most difficult tasks of an intercultural and open school”¹¹.

The Circular Letter n. 2 issued by the MIUR in 2010 “Recommendations and indications for the integration of students with non-Italian citizenship” (CM 2/2010) aimed at setting the limit of foreign students with limited Italian language skills at 30% for each class. The issue raised by the limit on the ethnic composition of classes, over and above other issues, provoked arguments among politicians, civil society actors, public opinion leaders and teachers’ representatives. For some, the imposition of an arbitrary and “symbolic limit” to the open access to education, due to cultural diversity, was a political discrimination (wanted by the right-wing government at the time); for others by contrast this limit takes into account the need to maintain a certain level of heterogeneity among schools and classrooms as an indispensable condition for a good level of integration and intercultural dialogue. In fact, the introduction of the “30% threshold” did not affect the overall inclusive orientation of state schools so much: by law, the 30% threshold may be exceeded, in cases when there are NIC students who already have adequate language proficiency or if schools are unable to redistribute students among other nearby schools (because of territorial isolation or non-cooperation between the schools).

Recently a document issued by the Observatory of Foreign Student Integration (established by the MIUR in Ministerial Decree n. 643 in 2017) pointed out specific recommendations to deal with parents of non-Italian students¹². It says: “The dialogue between schools and families with an immigrant background must be intense and close during the topical moment of the schooling of their children: first arrival in school; assessment of performance; school guidance and educational choices; but constant attention must be paid to ordinary interactions with parents, within daily routines which must be inclusive and facilitating, through multilingual communications, formal and informal mediation (both linguistic and cultural), and overall a positive attitude of closeness with them”¹³.

In light of this document, it seems more and more urgent to start a new deal for parental involvement, with concrete suggestions of best practices. We can extract some examples of the MIUR’s recommendations to teachers and principals:

11. In original language: “E’ necessario da parte della scuola un ascolto capace di comprendere la specifica condizione in cui la famiglia si trova, quasi sempre contrassegnata da delicati percorsi di destrutturazione-ristrutturazione culturale, con frequenti crisi nelle relazioni intergenerazionali. Accogliere la famiglia e accompagnarla intelligentemente nel difficile viaggio cui è sottoposta, aiutandola nella graduale dinamica di integrazione nel nuovo contesto è indubbiamente uno dei compiti più complessi della scuola aperta all’intercultura”.

12. This is Ministerial Memorandum 9 September 2015, prot. n. 5535 “Diversi da chi?” (Different from whom?).

13. In original language : “Il dialogo tra scuole e famiglie di origine straniera deve essere costante, denso e ravvicinato nei momenti topici della scolarità dei figli: l’ingresso, i momenti della valutazione, l’orientamento e le scelte, ma un’attenzione costante va data alle interazioni quotidiane e di routine che devono essere inclusive e facilitate attraverso i messaggi plurilingue, attraverso strumenti formali o informali di mediazione linguistico-culturale e soprattutto attraverso gli atteggiamenti di vicinanza”.

- “Recommendation 2: Informing and convincing immigrant parents of the importance of preschool education.”
- “Recommendation 9a: Involving immigrant parents in the educational plan for their children.”
- “Recommendation 9b: Using multilingual communications and the language intermediation service.”
- “Recommendation 9c: Encouraging immigrant parents to take part in democratic elections for representatives of parents on the management boards of school.”
- “Recommendation 9d: Organizing learning opportunities for parents with an immigrant origin, particularly aimed at those who are unemployed and more isolated (such as the mothers).”

5. National meta-analysis: parental involvement in schools

5.1. The contribution of the Italian studies on school-family relationships

Sociological research has highlighted the positive association between parental involvement and students’ achievement (Oliver, 2016): a recent meta-analysis of studies carried out in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools shows that the parental models most linked to high achievement are those focusing on general supervision of the children’s learning activities (Castro, Expósito-Casas, López-Martín, Lizasoain, Navarro-Asencio & Gaviria, 2015). The strongest associations are found when the families have high academic expectations for their children, develop and maintain communication with them about school activities and help them to develop reading habits. The determinants and consequences of multidimensional parental practices appear to be associated to family socioeconomic status —what Lareau calls “concerted cultivation”, typical of middle-class parents as opposed to “accomplishment of natural growth” (2003), which is prevalent among working-class families— but cultural differences in child-rearing occur along class, race and gender boundaries, as an interesting study on a large representative database of USA primary school students pointed out (Bodovski, 2010).

If parental involvement in school activities seems to be related to student outcomes, this means that the lack of parental involvement could produce negative effects on student learning. Immigrant parents, for example (as well as the lower educated parents, lower status families, separated fathers, etc.: see Mantovani & Gasperoni, 2017), interact less with school than natives do, not only because they are likely to belong to a lower social class, but also because they are limited by poor language proficiency and a scant knowledge of the school system.

Furthermore, in recent decades, school and family have been affected by radical transformations that have undermined their respective roles, functions and authority. The plurality of family models (Di Nicola, 2017; Rossi & Mazzucchelli, 2014), their multiple and precarious

socioeconomic conditions and the difficulties of the current education system in responding to the various requests of parents, have contributed to question the delicate relationship between family and school, with an increase of relational conflicts and tensions, which have negative implications for the socialisation of youngsters.

In 2000 Censi (2009) described the school-family relationship as a “no man’s land”, where teachers and parents mutually delegate their responsibilities to the other and renounce their traditional and necessary role in the primary and secondary socialisation of children. This “land” is often filled with inappropriate interventions through which school and family try to compensate the real or presumed lack of the other, creating negative interferences, confusion between roles, messages and behaviours (p. 89). In her various analyses on this topic, the author (cf. Censi, 2009) highlights a wide crisis of the socialisation process, which requires a “new agreement” between the two main education agencies (school and family), a pact that has to recognise, develop and regulate the possibilities of cooperating.

Recently, other scholars have dealt with this topic, especially within the analysis of the crisis of socialisation. However, this issue is under-represented in Italian studies in sociology of education and sociology of family: only a few researchers (Besozzi, 2017; Garelli, Palmonari & Sciolla, 2006; Di Nicola, Masotto & Landuzzi, 2006; Ribolzi, 2003; Ronci, Fiore, Lucia, Massa & Gallina, 2010) in their theoretical reflexions and/or empirical studies have looked more in-depth at radical and plural changes affecting education and also family-school relationships. Studies underline that the complexity of the relation between teachers and parents reflects wider changes and uncertainties of contemporary society in its problematic transition to new forms of social order (Maccarini, 2019). More than a school crisis or a family crisis, Colombo (2016) writes about a “loss of charisma” within the educational domain, a social fact that concerns both norms and values and teachers’ authority. Also, Massa (2000) discussed the decline of the *educational milieu*, the crisis of collective and community contexts that allowed value transmission in the past: this is the consequence of the modification of the experience/belonging/lifestyles among new generations, who do not experience a real encounter and connection with adults. Horizontal and peer socialisation prevails, while an intergenerational dialectic, criticism and conflict seem harder to take place (Ib., p. 21).

In Italy, the analyses of this topic are more pedagogical than sociological; they point out the passage from a past situation in which parents tended to support, respect and appreciate teachers’ work, without discussing the school’s authority (Dusi & Pati, 2011), to a deregulated present in which this relationship is marked by the parents’ request for having an active role in the school, by less trust of parents towards teachers and an oscillation of the two agencies between delegating and intervening. A research review confirms this crisis of school-family alliance and the authoritativeness crisis of adults in the transmission of values, norms and models (well analysed by Furedi, 2012), revealing that in Europe the parent-teacher relationships represents an unresolved and problematic issue marked by contradictions between behaviours, social orientations and institutional frameworks (scant parental participation, lack

of adequate forms of home-school communication, the need to make investments in parents and teachers' training: Dusi, 2012, p. 26).

For this reason, as Freddano (2011) points out in her interesting study on parental participation in Italian schools, the formal parental participation in school, regulated by laws and based on the institutional setting, is somewhat in decline. At the same time, in line with the broad decentralisation and autonomy from central government to local governances in Italy, different levels of intersection between citizens and institution appear: dialogic and negotiating participation; informing and training; listening and learning; dialoguing and deliberating (Palumbo & Torrigiani, 2009).

In general, the research maintains a focus on the importance of parents' support, however less attention has been devoted to examining parent-teacher interaction, considered the most common form of involvement in which parents engage. Using PISA data, Mantovani and Gasperoni (2017) recently demonstrated that parent-teacher interaction varies considerably according to the nature of parental participation, student characteristics, and family and schooling contexts. Highly-educated parents tend to participate more in spontaneous or formal manners, immigrant parents are more likely to be invited and stimulated by teachers to participate in school meetings such as interviews and assemblies.

5.2. The interaction between migrant parents and teachers

In a recent systematic review on ethnic inequalities in education, four research traditions are identified among nearly one hundred Italian studies carried out from 1990 to 2017 (Azzolini et al., 2019). The first tradition, called "school inclusion and intercultural practices", includes pioneering research on the topic of the transformation of Italian schools, facing the challenge of immigration for the first time. These studies investigate the school practices that were implemented to receive the newly-arrived students, highlighting the role of the key actors in the process of educational integration of these children, and analysing school-family relationships and interactions. This research focuses on school practices aimed at encouraging parental involvement and inspired by the intercultural approach. In fact, since the 1990s in Italian schools many educational interventions concern migrant families in school: i.e. second language teaching for parents and children; guidance to support school choice; support through extra-school activities and help with homework; acceptance and recognition of linguistic, cultural, and religious diversities (deriving from family background); maintenance of mother tongue and plurilingualism; linguistic-cultural mediation to facilitate school-family relations; involvement of immigrant students and parents as leaders and initiators of projects, and as representative on school bodies (Santagati & Zanzottera, 2018).

Following the process and the methodology used in previous literature review (cf. the sampling process in: Santagati, 2012; Santagati, 2015; Azzolini et al., 2019), this chapter updates and broadens the number of studies on the family-school relationship, presenting a synthesis of sociological research on migrant families' involvement through a meta-analysis of 34 studies

from kindergarten to secondary schools carried out between 1990 and 2018 (par. 5.3), then focusing on studies carried out in primary schools (14 out of 34, par. 5.4). In general, most studies related to the “school inclusion and intercultural practices (family-school relationship)” research tradition adopt a qualitative or mixed-method approach and focus on local contexts (cities or regions). Then, in the early 1990s, some qualitative inquiries were carried out, placing special focus on foreign families’ involvement in schools and aimed at investigating school-level practices that may facilitate or hamper foreign families’ participation.

5.3. Migrant parents, resource for their children’s education? An overview of Italian literature from preschool to secondary schools

Since the 1990s, the attention to migrant families and their relationship with teachers has been significant in studies on children attending *preschool*. This research focuses on parents’ cultural distance and on organisational issues and obstacles (i.e. the parents’ scant knowledge of the Italian language and school system rules). Childcare educators place emphasis on “non-integration” of migrant parents, even in the case of the good insertion of their children: they refer to “unacceptable” differences in educational and care practices, to different ideas of time, body care, food, authority, gender, rules, values, and religion (Favaro, 1990; Favaro & Genovese, 1996).

However, research shows differentiated attitudes of parents towards educational institutions: foreign families’ lower involvement in school activities and lower engagement in meeting educators seems to be more a matter of school time being incompatible with work than a lack of interest in their children’s educational activities. In some cases, the migrant family does not recognise some school messages, claiming their primary role in the transmission of the fundamental values, and seem to view the school as an agency that can only offer specific skills (Favaro & Genovese, 1996). In other cases, families accept and transform the knowledge of the school, evaluating what is essential in their culture and what can be changed to facilitate adaptation to the new context. Moreover, the attitude of parents consists mainly of remaining “on the threshold” of the school, meeting teachers and other parents at the border of the school. These families are quite “invisible” within the educational institutions: this condition is a consequence not only of parents’ behaviour, but also of the lack of an explicit project for the improvement of the school-family relationship (Besozzi, 2005; 2008). Immigrant parents have to “cross the doorstep”, since the interaction between parents and school appears to be occasional and temporary.

In effect, foreign parents are often alone with educational tasks, without the support of their family network, still living in the country of origin. Thus, on the one hand, the integration of their children in childcare services can represent an opportunity for future school outcomes and socio-professional development of the new generations, useful to learning rapidly Italian, socializing, having fewer problems in the other school levels (Favaro & Genovese, 1996). On the other hand, it represents a threat for family ties, values and models: there could be a cultural risk of an “Italianisation” of their children, so they try to defend, preserving linguistic and food traditions (Favaro, 1990).

Ricucci and Premazzi (2014), twenty years later, considered the effects of a long economic crisis on immigrant families, analysing possible changes in the relationship with childcare services. The research confirms that little misunderstandings between parents and educators sometimes degenerate to the point of leading parents to assume a detached attitude towards educators, fostering the stereotypical image of immigrant families among educators. The relationship between foreign parents and educational staff is presented as asymmetric, due to the different roles and belongings, and the scant competence in the Italian language reduces families to a condition of “silence”, which makes it difficult to forge an agreement between educational figures. Many services have created informal moments to involve families in the daily activities in which their children participate: some initiatives aim at promoting socialisation among mothers, learning Italian and discussing educational issues in a more familiar environment. However, it is not possible to recognise a clear strategy, because there are single and variable attempts of the educators, based on their availability and goodwill.

The topic of school-family relationships is also looked at in in-depth in studies on the role of the *intercultural mediator*, a member of the immigrant culture of origin that can intervene to translate or facilitate communication and understanding, offering information and guidance to those parents who have recently arrived, but also promoting minority languages and cultures (Santagati, 2004). Even if this figure is formally defined, the presence of intercultural mediators in Italian schools is occasional and limited, due to the low budget available to schools (Lagomarsino & Torre, 2009). Positive and negative evaluations are given by teachers and parents about mediators’ work: they are appreciated for promoting “good communication” with specific attention to the language and culture of origin of families (Mantovani, 2011), but they are also criticised for their interference in classroom questions (Tarozzi, 2006).

In *lower secondary schools* the interactions with immigrant families remain problematic. These studies are focused mainly on the educational achievement of students with an immigrant background: their gap and disadvantage with respect to natives could be a consequence of the higher instability in immigrant family composition, which also affects the quality and quantity of time devoted by the family to parent-teacher conferences and reduce family involvement in school activities (Giovannini & Queirolo, 2002). Other studies confirm the limited family support that children of immigrants receive with homework in comparison with their native classmates (Barbagli, 2006). The under-achievement of immigrant students (analysed by the ITAGEN2 research: Casacchia, Natale, Paterno & Terzera, 2008; Gilardoni, 2008; Dalla Zuanna, Farina & Strozza, 2009) seems to be directly connected to the vulnerability of families, when they are not able to integrate school lessons with further help, cultural stimuli which should be in line with what is requested at school, work-related constraints and uncomfortable space at home to do homework.

A research-action on the participation of immigrant families in school life (SAFE Project, 2014), based on study cases, recently produced guidelines with strategies for family empowerment. A model of intervention is proposed in which parents become increasingly present and active in the school context: from “informed” (e.g. through multilingual materials and linguistic-

cultural mediators) to “competent” parents (also in Italian L2), capable of accompanying their children in school tasks and life, up to “proactive” parents who co-plan and co-build school activities and paths. The project also proposes an online benchmarking system, a tool for the evaluation and evidence-based measurement of the interventions carried out, with the aim of increasing their effectiveness in the comparison between different territories, for the empowerment of families with an immigrant background that is as measurable as possible.

Finally, a key point for family-school relations concerns the *choice of upper secondary school*, in which children can continue their education. Culturally disadvantaged families—including most of the foreign ones—are less likely to benefit from school counselling than Italian and advantaged families (Romito, 2016). Italian teachers use a sophisticated linguistic code, which is less understandable to families with lower cultural capital and which takes for granted at least some knowledge of the educational and occupational implications connected with the different upper secondary school tracks. For these reasons, immigrant families and students are more likely to accept teachers’ advice, which usually encourages them to attend “safer”, non-academic institutes, regardless of students’ aspirations and scholastic performance: micro-mechanisms affect school choice and strategies are important as structural constraints in reproducing inequalities (Perino & Allasino, 2014; Colombo, 2008).

In *upper secondary schools*, in different research projects (ORIM education project – Santagati, 2009; PhD thesis – Ravecca, 2009; SecondGen – Eve, 2015; PRIN, project of relevant national interest – Eve, 2017; Su.Per. project – Santagati, 2018a), family plays a crucial role during the educational integration of their offspring and not only in an ascribed sense. Santagati (2009) recognises three roles for migrant families as a resource for the educational paths of their children. 1) Family shapes a significant daily *experience*, the quality and the care of the relationship affect the school experience and also the mobility tracks due to migration; 2) family provides an *heredity*, such as a set of resources and capitals (economic, social, linguistic, of support to education), which can influence part of the new generation’s destiny; 3) family offers an *ethos*, a set of values (sacrifice, commitment, redemption, etc.) sacrifice and redemption which give great motivational support to young immigrants attending schools. Other studies underline the fact that immigrant parents have an important function in academic socialisation: they consider the investment in education to be very important, irrespective of the immediate outcomes, which are not always positive (Ravecca, 2009): in fact, children of immigrants have high aspirations, their families encourage them to undertake ambitious educational projects and continue studying (Eve, 2015). So, new generations show significant persistence and commitment by spending a relatively long time in education, even in spite of difficulties: also in Italy we observe the “aspirations-achievement paradox”, because of high aspirations, high parental expectations, and low school results that characterised second generations (Eve, 2017).

A recent research on successful students with an immigrant background (Santagati, 2018a) points out that immigrant families are an important “driver for qualifications” and this determines a success-driven habitus among the younger generation. Family migration acts

as a multiplier of resources (languages, cultures, lifestyles, religions, beliefs, attitudes, etc.), increasing the chance of a student with an immigrant background, who works hard, to be good at school. These students perceive their parents' support and motivation: however, the meaning of migration as an investment for the future creates a strong sense of pressure and obligation among children of immigrants, but here it emerges as part of an optimistic vision of the immigrant as someone who trusts in the improvement of life conditions and in social mobility for him/herself and the whole family.

Finally, three studies consider the difficulties in the interaction between teacher and immigrant parents in secondary schools. Reciprocal prejudices between teachers and parents are linked more to communication problems, misunderstanding about rules and functioning of the education system than to low importance attributed to education. Immigrant families, in fact, talk a lot about school with their children (Colussi, 2011).

By contrast, educational failures or early school leaving among immigrant students is explained by teachers by referring to the difficult living conditions of immigrant families; the complex management of daily life; economic problems given the usual inclusion of parents in unqualified jobs; the weak social and relational integration; workloads (inside and outside the family); and the emotional fragility of all members, especially the youngest ones (Santagati, 2018b).

Furthermore, immigrant-origin parents —like disadvantaged natives— are more likely to face many barriers to parental involvement in schools, as Mantovani and Gasperoni (2018) suggest. These obstacles concern their working hours, language problems, other children to care for, weak social networks, limited economic, social, and cultural resources. However, the analysis of the two scholars shows that the probability of attending scheduled meetings is significantly lower among socioeconomically and culturally disadvantaged immigrant parents than among natives in the same condition.

5.4. A focus on primary schools

Many studies that deal with the relationship between migrant parents and school are carried out in primary schools. Among 14 studies belonging to this group, we find some qualitative ones (5), involving migrant parents, children, teachers, that describe the reception of newly-arrived pupils and families in Italian schools, comparing their point of view with the one of Italian families. In some cases (5), quantitative studies are carried out mainly with samples of parents or teachers or pupils attending primary schools. Finally, a group of 4 studies uses mixed-method for explorative and focused research in which the main social actors express their opinions about school-family relationships.

In the following table, Italian research on the topic concerning primary schools are summarised, highlighting the method, the sample/subjects involved in the research, the research focus, the main results, and the dimensions of parental involvement analysed in the research.

TABLE 2. ITALIAN RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIGRANT PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS. 1996-2018

	Authors	Method	Subjects involved	Research Focus and Results	Analysed dimensions*
1	Giovannini (1996)	Quantitative	Teachers	Teacher attitudes toward immigrant pupils and parents: ambivalence and oscillation between welcoming and positive reception inside school, due to the professional role and mission of teachers; and refusal and prejudice towards immigrants in the town, outside school	1
2	Pinelli, Ranuzzi, Coppola & Decarli, 2004	Qualitative Quantitative	Immigrant parents and children	Expectations of immigrant families for their children: interest in school outcomes, not in relational wellbeing; positive climate linked to the strategy of “invisibility”	1 5
3	Maggioni & Vincenti (2007)	Qualitative	Immigrant parents, children, teachers	The opinions of immigrant families of Italian school: criticisms (lack of discipline, too permissive contexts, scant request for commitment, etc.), and positive elements (importance for the future)	2
4	Cotesta, Di Franco & Tognonato, (2009)	Qualitative	Immigrant parents, children, teachers	Family-school communication and migrant parents’ participation: analysis of multiple difficulties and barriers (language problems, limited informal and formal participation in school activities, no representation)	3 4
5	Pattaro (2011)	Quantitative Qualitative	Immigrant parents and children	Parental involvement and participation: a way to increase social capital of immigrant families, access to relational circuits that generate trust	4
6	Colombo/ Valtolina (2012)	Quantitative Qualitative	Immigrant parents and children	Family-school relationship among Romanian families in Italy: high expectations of parents, criticisms towards Italian schools, help from the Italian teacher and from mediators	2 4 5
7	Santagati (2013b)	Qualitative	Teachers	Analysis of migrant family needs: list of learning needs (welcoming, understanding and being informed about how the school works, support during school choice) / relational needs (mediation, communication, participation, maintaining parental authority, etc.)	1 2 4 5
8	Serpieri & Grimaldi (2013)	Qualitative	Immigrant children, teachers	Analysis of primary schools in disadvantaged areas and neighbourhood: use of the same strategies for disadvantaged Italian and migrant families and children; informal dialogue with families	1 4

9	Azzolini (2014)	Quantitative	Children	Analysis of school achievement of immigrant and native pupils in primary schools: influence of the family dimension, parental education and occupation, language spoken at home, help with homework, etc.	1 5
10	Monteduro (2015, 2018)	Quantitative	Immigrant parents and children	Social capital of immigrant and Italian families with children in primary schools: fewer relations of immigrant parents with Italian parents of the classmates of their children / more commitment of immigrant fathers in school activities / more hours of help at home by immigrant families	1 3 5
11	Daher, Gamuzza & Leonora (2016)	Qualitative Quantitative	Teachers	Teachers' opinions of school-family relationships: most of the teachers (50%) stated they receive moderate support from foreign parents, 7% no support	3
12	Istat (2016)	Quantitative	Immigrant children, teachers	Teachers' opinions of multicultural schools: teachers at schools with more than 20% of migrant pupils consider the relationship with migrant families more complex than the one with Italian parents, but they list weak points (communication, no interest in education) and strong points of this relationship (acceptance of teacher indications, trust in institution, etc.)	4 5
13	Pacchi & Ranci (2017)	Quantitative	Immigrant parents	Transition from primary to lower secondary education in a urban area: white flights of Italian families from school with a high concentration of migrant pupils, analysis of the decision process of Italian and foreign families	2 4
14	Cavallo (2018)	Qualitative	Immigrant parents, teachers	Transition from primary to lower secondary education in an urban area: school choice in the catchment area is the "natural choice" of immigrant families deriving from a social automatism; school choice out of the catchment area derives from a negotiated choice of middle-class families	2 4

* The dimensions considered in the meta-analysis are the following: 1) Reception, first contact with Italian schools of migrant families and educational integration of children with an immigrant background; 2) Information about the local education system, evaluation and comparison with the education system of the country of origin; 3) Parental involvement, attendance and participation in school activities; 4) School-parents communication (formal and informal, use of intercultural mediators, etc.); 5) Parental support at home and academic socialisation (supervision of homework, conversation about school, parents' expectations, etc.).

Source: own elaboration.

Most of the studies (9) deal with communication problems in school-family relationships: in effect, parents and teachers have reciprocal difficulties during formal and informal meetings to discuss and understand each other using a common language. Only in a few cases do schools have mediators who facilitate the exchange and communication.

Another relevant dimension in (6) Italian studies concerns academic socialisation and parental support and help at home: research focuses on “immigrant optimism” of families, parents’ expectations and high aspirations for their children’s educational success. Furthermore, on the one hand, 5 studies analyse the reception and integration of immigrant pupils and, consequently, the starting of the relationship with their parents; on the other hand, 5 studies consider how and to what extent migrant families know the Italian education system. The less considered topic is parental engagement in school activities, only 3 studies refer to this dimension of the school-family relationship. It seems that primary schools are still at the first phase of welcoming and reception of immigrant families, in which they emphasise only difficulties (due to lack of language competence or lack of knowledge of educational institutions) and responsibilities that parents have (at home) to overcome deficit and learning gaps of their children since the beginning of their Italian educational pathways. For these reasons in Italian studies, the active, competent, informed, engaged and involved attitude of migrant parents is still neglected.

However, immigrant parents are the protagonist and have a voice in most of the studies (8) through interviews or as respondents of questionnaires: they express high aspirations (Pinelli, Ranuzzi, Coppola & Decarli, 2004), especially those coming from Eastern Europe, such as Romanian families (Colombo & Valtolina, 2012). These parents are very ambitious about their children’s path in Italian schools, and their motivation affects decisions to extend their stay in Italy or return home. Moreover, they are very critical and not completely satisfied with Italian schools: Romanian pupils are also high-performers and they ask not to be confused with other immigrant pupils. For example, they speak Italian very well and they adopt the habit of speaking it at home; they are very committed to studying because they have come from a very effective and rigorous education system. Also, in the study by Maggioni and Vincenti (2007), it emerges that, for these families, education is a priority for their children’s present and future life: they regret it when state schools and teachers give children a poor curriculum; they state that teachers are excessively permissive and do not propose that the students work hard.

The CNEL study (Cotesta, Di Franco & Tognonato, 2009) replicates the topic of immigrant families asking for meritocratic and high-quality education. However, many problems appear in the school-family relationship, obstacles in mutual understanding and in the possibility of collaboration: in fact, foreign parents show difficulties in complying with school rules, receive information that they do not understand, do not participate in representative bodies. This criticality becomes more serious due to the living conditions of parents, an overload of working hours, the numerous economic, cultural, linguistic, and legal disadvantages, that do not allow them to attend initiatives, meetings and interviews, and to assume an active role in school activities organised by the educational institution.

Despite these dilemmas, the school environment maintains a crucial role in increasing the cultural and social capital of immigrant families, through the promotion of socializing opportunities, the increase of informal relationships among different generations, and also

offering parents the opportunity to access relationship circuits that generate trust and social capital (Pattaro, 2011).

Recently a survey with pupils (and their families) attending multi-ethnic primary schools have focused on the relationship—both in and out of school—among students and between their families (Monteduro, 2015; 2018). Research results point out that Italian families meet other families often, particularly Italian parents; foreign families have little or no relationship with the other families of their child’s classroom. Despite this, immigrant fathers show more commitment to school activities than Italian fathers, who are almost not present at school. Immigrant parents (mothers and fathers), moreover, help their children with homework more than natives.

The last two pieces of research involving immigrant parents focus on the transition from primary to lower secondary education in an urban area (Milan) through quantitative (Pacchi & Ranci, 2017) and qualitative methods (Cavallo, 2018). These studies analyse the decision-making process concerning the school choice: Italian families tend to enrol their children in “white schools”, and school administrators may adopt recruitment policies that reproduce ethnically homogeneous classes. In Milan, the risk of a strong segmentation of school users rises (“school segregation”), with a concentration of disadvantaged pupils in some educational institutions of the mandatory cycle. This situation leads to other problematic implications: the flight of natives from multicultural schools; the increase of the negative reputation and isolation of some schools due to lower quality, high turnover, stress and burn-out of teachers, etc.

At the same time, these “schools of foreigners” display unexpected resources and can take advantage of their current situation of marginality. Some schools rethink their role in social integration by reaching out to the entire local community in order to promote the encounter of natives and non-natives. Some highly-educated parents in Milan sometimes consciously choose mixed and multicultural schools for their children, considering them the best choice for the growth of the new cosmopolitan generations of the metropolis (Cavallo, 2018). Only in this case does the school choice of the advantaged and disadvantaged pupils’ overlap. In many other cases, though, school choice in the catchment area (when we speak of multicultural schools) becomes the “natural and automatic choice” of immigrant families. By contrast, school choice out of the catchment area derives from a rational and negotiated choice of Italian middle-class families.

The other group of 6 studies involves mainly teachers, or (in a few cases) children. From the children’s point of view, we have to remember the work of Azzolini (2014), which analysed the achievement gap between native and migrant pupils in primary schools, on the basis of micro-data gathered by Invalsi [Italian institute for the evaluation of the education system]. He demonstrates that the children of immigrants achieve significantly lower results compared to their native classmates and the family dimension remains crucial for understanding the phenomenon. Parental education and occupation, as well as the family resources in terms of

support for children's schooling (language spoken at home, the number of books at home, ICT tools, help with homework, etc.), are very explicative variables of the underachievement of migrant pupils.

From the teachers' point of view, we should mention one of the first sociological research projects on multicultural schools in Italy: the national and quantitative survey (Giovannini, 1996) analysed the attitudes of primary teachers towards immigrant families (and children). At that time (1993-94), teachers were very confused about their role: inside school, a welcoming, open and positive behaviour prevailed —corresponding to the professional task and mission of teaching. Outside school, teachers were common people and citizens that saw children not as pupils, but as immigrants: thus, teachers also show prejudices, hostility or indifference towards migrant residents in their territories.

Reciprocal hostility also appears in other studies (Daher, Gamuzza & Leonora, 2016; Istat, 2016), in which teachers complain about the moderate or absent support of families to their children's educational path; they are worried by the complexity of the relationship with migrant parents, especially in highly multicultural schools, above all due to the language and communication difficulties. They interpret this as a sort of distancing of families from their children's education. On the other hand, however, teachers consider migrant parents very open to accepting suggestions and indications from them, they express more trust towards the educational institution than natives, and they give great importance to their children's education (Istat, 2016).

Prejudice, racism and other forms of discrimination and marginalisation, which affect children of immigrants, are often perceived as invisible or treated with indifference. In primary schools, one piece of research points out the risk of racism, particularly in disadvantaged contexts such as those of the old city and outskirts of Naples. In these areas, teachers tend not to recognise racist behaviour, considering the existence of a conflict among disadvantaged pupils, no matter their ethnic origin, even more serious when economic resources are limited (Serpieri & Grimaldi, 2013).

To conclude, another piece of research among teachers allows us to create a wide list of learning and relational needs of migrant families, many of those still to be satisfied (Santagati, 2013). Among the cognitive needs, families need welcoming and open schools, in which they ask to learn Italian to help their children, they can be informed and can understand the school's requests or be accompanied in the difficult transition from one educational level to another in the Italian system. Among the relational needs, families express the need for mediation, simple communication in which they can understand and to be understood, knowing chances and opportunities to participate and to be represented. This list of needs should be completed with more effective research, evidence and measures that can support the implementation of measures for parental involvement.

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3

Migration and parental involvement

Luxembourg

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1. Migrant characteristics in Luxembourg and its evolution

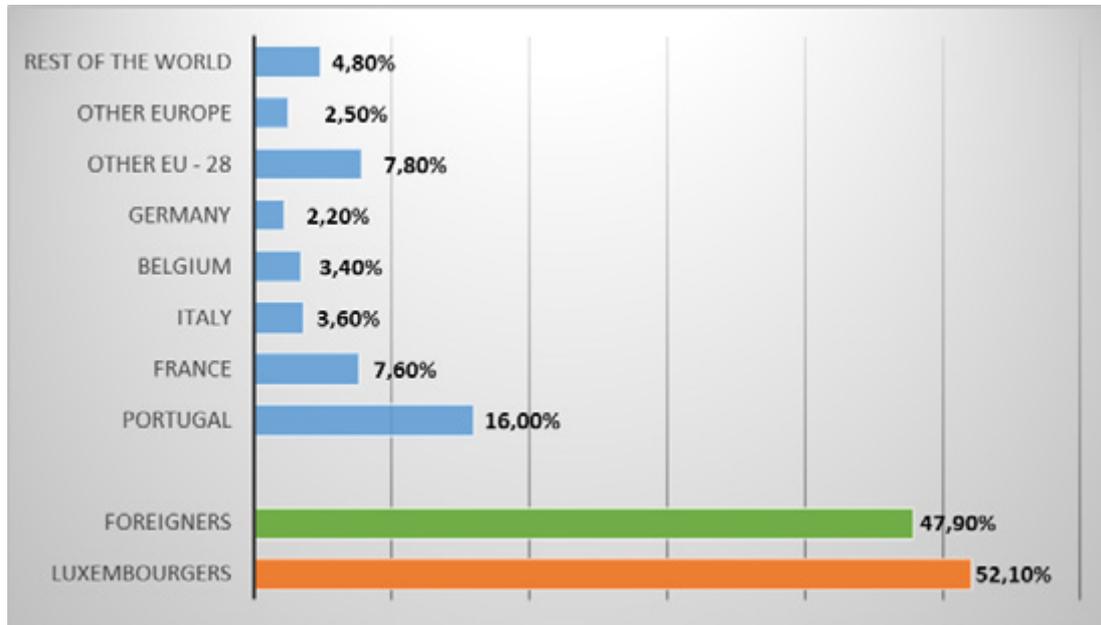
1.1. Luxembourg, a country of migration

Nowadays, Luxembourg is well known for being a country of immigration but this has not always been the case. Until the mid-19th century, given that the country was poor and rural, it was affected by different waves of emigration for economic reasons (e.g. to Transylvania in the 12th century and to Banat, a region of south-eastern Europe in the 18th century). In the course of the 19th century and until the First World War, the number of emigrants was particularly high: almost 34% of the population left the country between 1841 and 1891 (72,000 emigrants out of a total population of 212,800 in 1891). The main destinations were overseas (e.g. USA, Brazil, Argentina) or France in order to work as artisans in the case of men or as house cleaners or housekeepers in the case of young girls (STATEC, 2016).

However, in the 20th century, the situation steadily changed: emigration turned into immigration fuelled by the development of the steel industry. The size of the population was constantly growing: between 1910 and 2010, it doubled (from a population of 260,000 to a population of 500,000), and nowadays (data from 1 January 2018), Luxembourg's population stands at about 602,005 residents. Of this population, almost 48% have foreign nationality: there are 313,042 Luxembourgers and 288,963 foreigners. More specifically, in 2017, positive net migration of 10,548 people (arrivals: 24,379 and departures: 13,831) was observed in Luxembourg. Since 2014, the percentage of French migrants has been higher than the percentage of Portuguese migrants; prior to that, Portuguese nationality had represented the top nationality in terms of migration flow. Figure 1 presents the percentage of each nationality in the total population on 1 January 2018. Portuguese people (16%) remain the largest foreign community in Luxembourg, followed respectively by French people (7.60%), people from the other 28 European countries (7.80%), people from the rest of the world (4.80%),

Italian people (3.60), Belgian people (3.40%), German people (2.20%), and finally, other people from Europe (2.50%).

FIGURE 1: PROPORTION OF DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES IN THE TOTAL POPULATION ON 1 JANUARY 2018



Source: STATEC (2018a; 2018b).

Moreover, Luxembourg is considered an important pole of attraction for workers coming from the Greater Region. This is the reason why, on workdays, 177,110 cross-border people (from France, Belgium and Germany) come to Luxembourg to work there (STATEC, 2018a; 2018b).

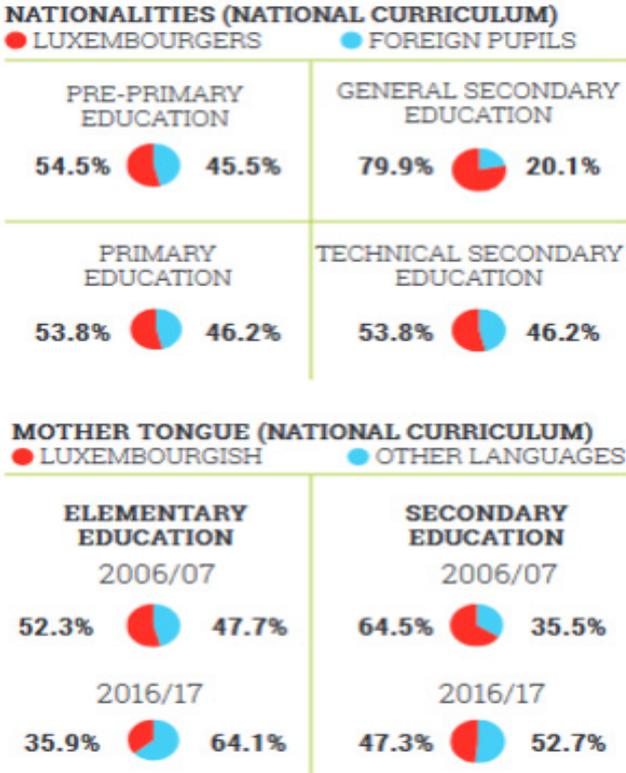
To summarise, Luxembourg is recognised for its huge diverse, multilingual and multicultural diversity. According to STATEC (2013), a migratory background characterises more than sixty percent of the Luxembourgish population either directly or indirectly through parents. In a complementary way, a little less than 40% of residents have no migration background (Luxembourgers born in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg with parents both also born in Luxembourg). The person's migratory background is determined through their nationality, their place of birth or through the parents' place of birth. Foreign nationality residents, born abroad and both parents of whom were also born abroad represent 32.0% of the population. Almost one tenth of the population (8.5%) was born in Luxembourg to parents both born abroad but who have remained their foreign nationality (almost half of these people are Portuguese). Around five percent of residents are Luxembourgers born in the Grand Duchy with the two parents born abroad. Another five percent of residents have Luxembourgish nationality but were born abroad and whose parents were also born abroad. This group

includes foreign-born immigrants who have been naturalised (94.9% of cases). It should also be noted that 11.3% of the population have a migration background through one of the two parents.

1.2. Immigration and its influence on the school system

The main characteristic of Luxembourg is its singular multilingual context wherein three languages daily coexist: Luxembourgish, German and French. However, with the increase in the population of foreign origin, there is a decrease in the percentage of children whose first language spoken at home is Luxembourgish. In the 2016-2017 academic year, we observe (see Figure 2 below), in pre-primary education: 54.5% of foreign pupils, in primary education: 53.8% of foreign pupils, in general secondary education: 20.1% of foreign pupils, and 53.8% of foreign pupils in technical secondary education. The mother tongue of these pupils differs from Luxembourgish for 64.4% of pupils in elementary education and 52.7% in secondary education.

FIGURE 2. PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND VS. LUXEMBOURGISH CHILDREN WITHIN EACH EDUCATIONAL LEVEL / PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHOSE MOTHER TONGUE IS LUXEMBOURGISH OR NOT WITHIN EACH EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



Source: MENJE (2018b).

In politics, the mastery of three major European languages allows Luxembourg to hold a prominent place in the European arena. This language knowledge constitutes an asset for the Luxembourgish high socio-cultural classes. However, it increasingly becomes a problem for migrant families and their children who attend Luxembourgish schools (Meyers, Busana, Langers & Poncelet, 2008). In this regard, Kirsch (2018) notes that pupils with a low socioeconomic background are characterised by lower performance in mathematics, languages and sciences. To support these children in their Luxembourgish competences and consequently, to enhance their access to the Luxembourgish school curriculum, the Ministry of Education has set up a language policy. For example, at the elementary school level, Luxembourgish learning will remain an important aspect of the curriculum and teachers will benefit from new pedagogical and educational material. Moreover, special attention will be paid to the teaching of Luxembourgish as a foreign language to very young children. In secondary education and technical secondary education, additional resources will also be developed to teach Luxembourgish as a foreign language in a more targeted way (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2018).

However, to cope with the heterogeneity found in schools, it seems that teachers make massive use of repetition. By the end of primary school, 20 to 25% of pupils have already repeated at least one grade. At the age of 15, 40% of students are behind in school. For pupils of foreign origin, the educational delay rates are even higher.

In addition to repetition, a second external management mechanism exists to manage learning differences between pupils: the early orientation procedure for pupils at the end of primary school (the theoretical age for the end of primary school is 11 years). The purpose of this procedure is to divide students into one of the three secondary education streams (classical education, technical education and vocational education). It seems that mastering the German language constitutes an important advantage for pupils. Consequently, pupils with a Romanic-speaking background (speaking a language derived from Latin such as French, Portuguese, Italian, etc.) are more often relegated than pupils with a German-speaking background to technical or vocational fields than in traditional secondary education. The Luxembourgish school system is, on this point, an inequitable school system: foreign students do not have the same opportunities to be oriented towards the most reputable educational streams or leading to the most socially desirable professions. Ultimately, this system leads to numerous academic failures, high repetition rates and relegation of many students to technical and especially vocational fields, which, according to the literature (Fortin, Royer, Potvin, Marcotte & Yergeau, 2004; Fortin, Marcotte, Royer & Potvin, 2005), are major factors likely to explain early school leaving.

2. Description of the education system in Luxembourg

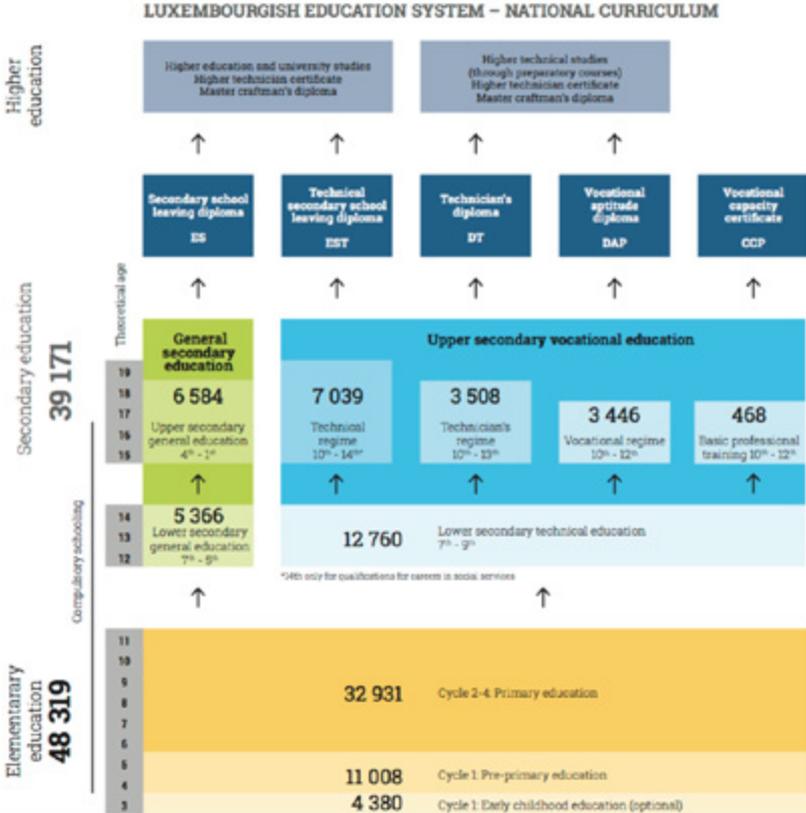
2.1. General description of the Luxembourgish education system

The small country of Luxembourg (2,586 km²) has 602,000 inhabitants. The country is plurilingual. The national language is Luxembourgish, the legislative language is French and the administrative and judiciary languages are German, Luxembourgish and French. Portuguese and English are the most widely-spoken languages by foreigners. In this context, the

Luxembourgish education system is principally defined by its multilingual tradition, in which language teaching occupies a central role. In preschool, the common language spoken at school is Luxembourgish. In the first year of elementary school, alphabetisation takes place in German. French is the second foreign language, also introduced in the first year of primary school. In secondary school, the general and technical sections are mainly in French and the professional sections are mainly in German.

In Luxembourg, there are 154 primary schools, 36 secondary schools and one university. By law, school is compulsory between the ages of 4 and 16. It encompasses a minimum of 12 years divided between elementary education and secondary education (see Figure 3, which summarises the national education system).

FIGURE 3: THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM - NATIONAL CURRICULUM



Source: MENJE (2018a).

At the elementary school level, parents are involved in the orientation procedure from the elementary school to the secondary school, which starts at the beginning of cycle 4.1¹. A first prognosis is made in the third quarter with detailed information on the supply of secondary and technical secondary education. At the end of cycle 4.2, the orientation decision is made jointly by the parents and the student's teacher. This joint decision is based on the student's productions, the results of his or her assessment, his or her results in standardised tests and the information collected by the psychologist, if this is desired by the parents. In the case of disagreement, a steering committee is convened to work with the parents and the teacher to reach a joint decision. If a common decision cannot be reached, students have to pass an examination for access either to classical secondary or technical secondary education.

Regarding secondary education, this includes two streams: classical secondary education and technical secondary education. In the former, studies last for 7 years and lead to a classical secondary school leaving diploma (Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires classiques - DFESC), which prepares the student for university studies. The latter, for its part, includes different training regimes lasting 6 to 8 years depending on the path chosen:

- *General secondary programmes* (General Secondary school leaving diploma – Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires générales – DFESG).
- *Technician programmes* (Technician's diploma – Diplôme de technicien – DT).
- *Vocational programmes* (Professional Competence Diploma – Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle – DAP).
- *Basic vocational programmes* (Certificate of professional competence – Certificat de capacité professionnelle – CCP).

At this point, it is important to mention (as stated in the previous section) that the repetition rate is particularly high in Luxembourg. This phenomenon, combined with longer schooling than elsewhere in Europe, means that Luxembourg students reach the labour market later. Regarding repetition rates, it should be noted that among the pupils attending regular classes of elementary education (cycle 2-4), 2.1% are below and 20.5% above the respective theoretical age corresponding to their level of education. In classical secondary education, 16.9% of the pupils are older than the respective theoretical age whilst in secondary technical education, 62.4% of the pupils are above the respective theoretical age (Table 1).

1. More precisely, elementary education (enseignement fondamental) consists of preschool and primary school. It is obligatory from the age of 4 onwards and is comprised of 4 cycles instead of school years: 1) 1st cycle: children aged 3-5 (at the beginning of the year); 2) 2nd cycle: ages 6-7; 3) 3rd cycle: ages 8-9 and 4) 4th cycle: ages 10-11. Each cycle, except cycle 1, includes two school levels (for example: cycle 4.1 and cycle 4.2). This system was introduced in the law of 21 January 2009.

TABLE 1. THE THEORETICAL AGE IN THE CLASSICAL SECONDARY SCHOOL AND IN TECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

Classical Secondary Education 2016-2017			
Theoretical age	>	=	>
Number	476	9456	2018
%	4.0%	79.1%	16.9%
Technical Secondary Education 2016-2017			
Theoretical age	>	=	>
Number	92	9818	16441
%	0.3%	37.3%	62,4%

Source: MENJE (2018a).

Moreover, as suggested before, the Luxembourgish education system divides students into one of the three secondary education streams (classical education, technical education and vocational education). For the 2016-2017 school year (most recent data available), 46.2% of students attending technical secondary education were foreign students, compared to 20.1% for general secondary education. By contrast, in classical secondary education, Luxembourgers mainly attend classical secondary school (79.9%) whilst only 53.8% attend technical secondary education (Table 2).

TABLE 2. NATIONALITY IN THE DIFFERENT SCHOOL LEVELS

Grade	Number of pupils 2016-2017			
	Luxembourgish nationality		Other nationalities	Total
Elementary school (cycle 1 - theoretical age: 3)	2471	56.4%	1909	4380
Elementary school (cycle 1 - theoretical age: 4-5 preschool)	6004	54.5%	5004	11008
Elementary school (cycle 2-4: theoretical age: 6-11)	17786	53.8%	15264	33050
Special needs	409	46.7%	466	875
Classical Secondary Education	9551	79.9%	2399	11950
Technical Secondary Education	14638	53.8%	12583	27221
Total	50859	57.5%	37625	88484

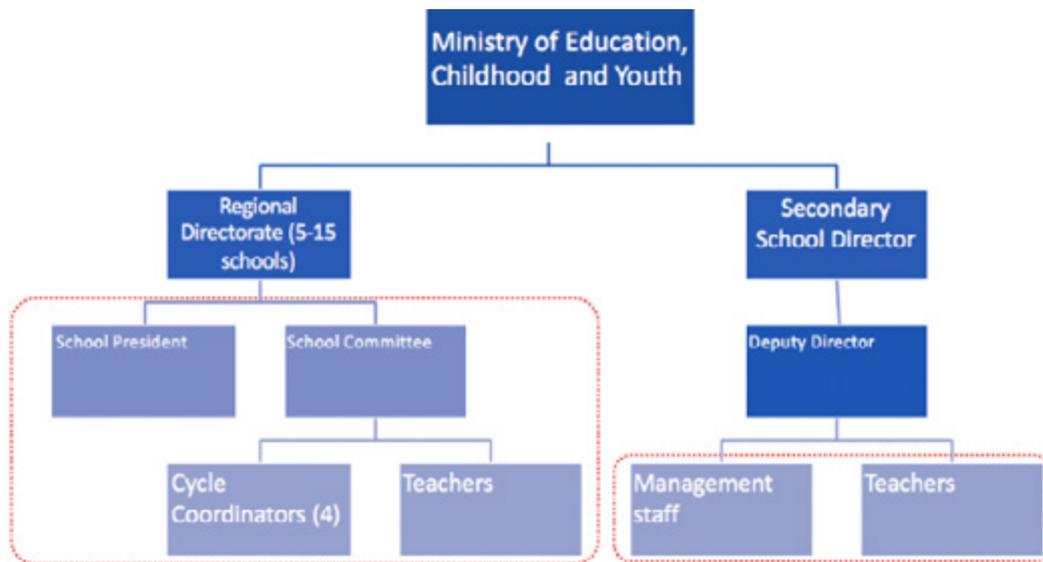
Source: MENJE (2018a).

2.2. The regional directorate

The school system of Luxembourg has a highly centralised administration. As the ERASMUS+ project will focus on the elementary school, we will describe this part of the system in more detail (left part of Figure 4).

The country is divided into 15 regional directorates. At the head of each directorate are the director and two to four deputy directors. They are the hierarchical heads of teachers and the liaison with parents in case of particular difficulties. They are responsible for the management and pedagogical supervision of schools, but also for coordinating the support of pupils with special needs. The primary education directorates are distributed throughout the country according to the number of students, the number of teachers, schools, municipalities and the distance between schools. The directors can allocate educational resources and enrolments to the needs of schools and the local population. This new regional structure enables a better exchange of experiences and information between schools, for a better development of school quality.

FIGURE 4: THE ACTORS



Source: According to information selected from MENJE (2018c).

For their part, each school has a school committee, elected by and from its staff. The president, elected for 5 years, ensures the proper functioning of the school and ensures relations with the community and the pupils' parents. Each class is managed by a class teacher. The teaching staff and the educational staff in charge of classes in the same cycle (C1 to C4) within a school form the pedagogical team of the cycle. However, each teacher remains responsible for the pupils in his or her class. Team meetings are managed by the cycle coordinator.

To support pupils who require special supervision in the classroom, 150 teachers specialised in the enrolment of pupils with special needs (I-EBS: **instituteurs spécialisés dans la scolarisation des élèves à besoins spécifiques**) are currently recruited over 4 years all over the country. These teachers are directly involved in the schools. For pupils with special educational needs, a support team (ESEB: **Équipe de soutien des élèves à besoins spécifiques**) can either advise school staff and parents concerned, or can provide support by itself, or it can make a proposal to the inclusion committee to refer the pupil to a specialised institution. ESEB personnel may include teachers, educators, psychologists, curative educators, speech-language pathologists, psychomotor and psycho-reeducation therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, nurses, paediatric nurses, graduate educators, educators and reserve members of the supply staff. The ESEB is under the responsibility of a deputy director in the regional directorate.

2.3. The school development plan and the monitoring of the school system

The website of the MEN specifies some important aspects of school development². The teachers in the school are led to participate in the school's development through the school development plan (PDS). The school's development plan includes the collaboration of teachers and all school partners, including parents. To establish the PDS, schools first take stock of what exists and document the school supply, traditions, the history of the school, its environment, its anchorage in the municipality and the composition of the student population. The aim of collecting this information is to detect the strengths and weaknesses of the school, to keep things running smoothly and to improve the weak points detected. In other words, from this inventory flow the priorities of the school, the objectives to be achieved and the strategies to be deployed. The law sets out the essential areas that must be addressed, which are the following: the organisation of pedagogical support, the supervision of children with special needs, cooperation and communication with parents, the integration of information and communication technologies and cooperation with non-formal education. Nevertheless, each school is free to add the areas that it considers essential.

To support primary schools, 15 teachers specialised in school development (I-DS, instituteurs spécialisés en développement scolaire) are assigned to a specific service, the Service de coordination de la recherche et de l'innovation pédagogiques et technologiques (SCRIPT). They directly intervene with the presidents and their school committees. With respect for autonomy and local specificities, they support teams in the development and implementation of their PDS and in all initiatives aimed at school development. This work is carried out in a collaborative and regular manner with the regional management and all other stakeholders concerned. For its part, the municipal school board oversees the implementation of the school organisation and the development plans of schools. It also advises the extracurricular supervision plan and the school budget. It is comprised in particular of the mayor or his or

2. For more information, see <http://www.men.public.lu/fr/themes-transversaux/developpement-scolaire/index.html>

her delegate, representatives of the town council, representatives of school staff and parents. Finally, regarding this monitoring of the school system, the website of the LUCET gives important information regarding this topic³. At national level, monitoring takes place with the ÉpStan (épreuves standardisées), which assess students' academic competences, learning motivation and attitudes towards school at the beginning of each learning cycle of compulsory education (i.e. at the beginning of grade levels 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9). Each year, the entire student population in each of the grade levels in question participates in the ÉpStan. This method is not only providing timely and policy-relevant information to national educational stakeholders, but is also assembling a unique and incredibly rich longitudinal database (panels are actually entire cohorts) about the evolution of students' competence profiles and their pathways through school (and possibly through life).

3. National policy regarding the management of cultural diversity and immigrants' integration into the country

3.1. In general terms: in different public spheres (health, employment, etc.)

In 2008, Luxembourg decided to reform immigration regulation. With Beine and Souy (2016), we learn that the reform of 2008 has been realised under European community pressure. Since this date, two main laws regulate migration issues in Luxembourg: 1) the law of 29 August 2008 related to the free circulation of people (applied on 1 October 2008) and 2) the law of 16 December 2008 related to the integration and welcoming of foreigners (applied on 1 June 2009).

The law of 29 August 2008 corresponds to the structure of the directive suggested by the European Council regarding the conditions of entry and stay. In its first article, the law specifies its two main goals: 1) regulating the entry and residence of foreigners in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; and 2) regulating the conditions under which foreigners may or must leave the territory. This law also aims to promote the integration of foreigners in such a way as to foster the social cohesion of the country and to enable foreigners to be involved in the economic, social and cultural life of the country.

The law of 16 December 2008 specifies how foreigners are welcomed in Luxembourg. This law announces, among other things, the creation of a Luxembourg office for the reception and integration of foreigners (office luxembourgeois de l'accueil et de l'intégration - *OLAI*). This office has a double mission: 1) organizing the welcome of new arrivals; and 2) facilitating the integration process of foreigners by implementing and coordinating reception and integration policy. In order to carry out this double mission, the *OLAI* collaborates with community and international authorities, as well as with those of foreigners' countries of origin. More specifically, *OLAI* is allowed to: 1) manage accommodation facilities for the temporary

3. For more information, see https://www.en.uni.lu/research/flshase/luxembourg_centre_for_educational_testing_lucet/research2/commissioned.

accommodation of foreigners; 2) collaborate with other organisations in the creation and management of accommodation facilities for the temporary accommodation of foreigners; and 3) promote together with the competent authorities the construction and development of accommodation centres for the temporary accommodation of foreigners. Further, every three years, *OLAI* organises a national conference on immigration. This conference is for Luxembourgish and foreign residents who work in associations and politics. It is an opportunity for exchange on current topics related to the integration of foreigners in Luxembourg.

The law of 16 December 2008 also states that a welcome and reception contract, for a maximum of two years, may be offered to foreigners who are legal residents and want to live in Luxembourg in a sustainable manner. This contract includes reciprocal commitments both for Luxembourg (for example, providing language and civic education training as well as measures aimed at enhancing social and economic integration) and for the newly-arrived population (for example, requirement regarding subsistence by their own means and active participation in the life of society) in order to organise and facilitate the foreigners' integration. The law also created a national council for foreigners. This council is an advisory board in charge of foreigners' issues and their integration, which either works on its own initiative (for example, submitting to the government any proposal considered as useful) or at the request of the government (giving its opinion within the time limits set by the government). A report is published annually regarding the integration of foreigners in Luxembourg. Finally, the law requires the mandatory establishment of an integration advisory committee in each municipality.

It should be highlighted that there are also support associations for foreigners: the *ASTI (Association de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés)* and the *CLAE (Comité de liaison des associations d'étrangers)* are the two most active associations at the service of immigrants. *ASTI* is a non-governmental organisation which was founded in 1979. Its goals are equal rights and the right to vote for all, with an emphasis on the participation of migrants in political life. The association deals with the problems of refugees, asylum seekers and "illegal" immigrants. *ASTI* has initiated many projects and services to help children, adolescents and adults of all nationalities. *CLAE* was founded in 1985. It is also committed to equal rights for all people living in Luxembourg and to the recognition of the cultures of all immigrants. To this end, *CLAE* organises various projects and round tables as well as festivals and fairs such as the Festival of Migration, Cultures and Citizenship.

3.2. The management of cultural diversity in schools

"Ensuring social cohesion and giving every student a chance of success, regardless of his or her origin and status, are the objectives to which the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth and the service aspires" (MENJE, 2019).

In Luxembourg, the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (2019) reports three main cases regarding pupils' migration status:

1. Foreign students born in Luxembourg or who arrived in Luxembourg at a relatively young age and are more likely to learn school languages.
2. Students who arrived at the end of their schooling.
3. Students from circular migration who only temporarily reside in Luxembourg.

Further, the Ministry of Luxembourgish Education (September 2018) defines that a pupil who does not know the teaching languages can be considered a newly-arrived student, and consequently, this pupil has the right to follow an intensive language course outside his or her reference classroom during a specified number of hours. Thus, because there is a huge variety of migrant students, this necessarily calls for a great variety of training objectives. The welcoming of migrant students, as well as their integration in the school system, reflects this variety of situations, and aims to:

- Foster the languages of schooling and strengthen language skills in general.
- Facilitate the integration of migrant pupils into the regular system and their access to a Luxembourgish diploma.
- Give access to a diploma recognised as equivalent (European baccalaureate, international, A-level).

In the following text, we will try to highlight the means and services available to parents⁴ and their children as well as elementary school teachers and school authorities with regard to the schooling of children with a migrant background.

3.2.1. Intercultural mediators

Parents, students, teachers and the school authority (regional director, secondary school head, municipal school service, psychosocial services, etc.) may request the free help of intercultural mediators. This may arise, for example, during an interview among education professionals, parents and students, for an informative meeting with parents, for school registration, during a first welcome at school, for translation of school documents, during a school report meeting, during intercultural projects or events in the classroom or for assistance with psychological or psychomotor tests or school medicine. The available languages are the following: Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Chinese, Creole (Cape Verdean), Spanish, Filipino, Hungarian, Italian, Dutch, Persian, Polish, Portuguese,

4. Specific webpages (<http://www.men.public.lu/fr/themes-transversaux/scolarisation-eleves-etrangers/index.html> or <https://guichet.public.lu/fr/citoyens/immigration/nouveau-resident-luxembourg/ecole-langues/nouvel-arrivant.html>) give information to migrant families to better understand the Luxembourgish school system. In this way, families receive advice and support regarding the administrative procedures related to the registration of children in school.

Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Wolof/Manish. However, it is also possible to request mediators who speak other languages than those mentioned. The role of mediators is to support students and their parents at the first meeting with school actors, to provide oral translations during parent/teacher meetings or to help on an occasional or on a regular basis in class. The mediator also informs students and parents of the school Luxembourgish system, their obligations and their rights, the different processes (including appeals) and finally, the Luxembourgish culture, language specificities and uses. To summarise, they facilitate communication and mutual understanding between families and students on the one hand, and school actors on the other hand.

3.2.2. The MEN website

Teachers have a large number of supports and documents at their disposal to ensure that children with a migrant background are received in the best possible conditions. First, there is the website of the MEN⁵, which offers a wide range of supporting documents such as:

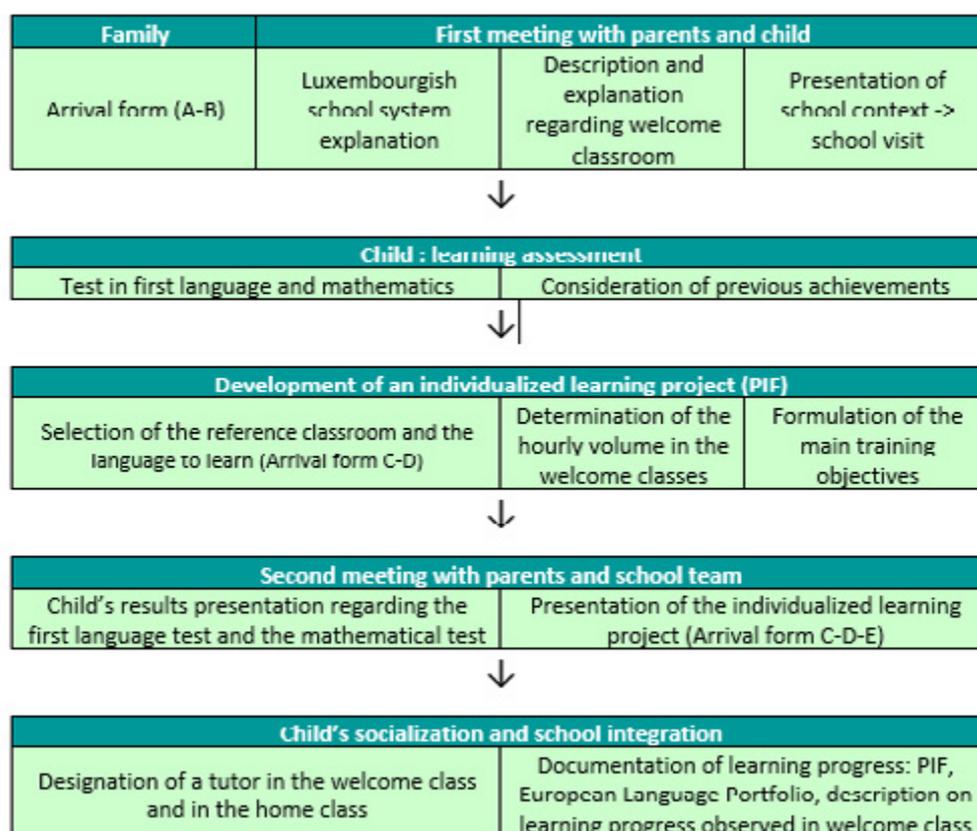
- Orientation towards secondary education: Different paths for different linguistic profiles (February 2019).
- Welcome and integrate. The pedagogical guide of the elementary school (September 2018).
- Welcome course: what is it all about? (September 2017).
- Residence Reebou: my multilingual village (September 2016).
- Intercultural mediators (August 2016).
- Information regarding the welcome of applicants for international protection (November 2015).
- Competency levels of welcome courses: cycles 2-4 (2013).
- Opening up to languages at school: towards multilingual and multicultural skills (2010)

The goal of this section is not to detail all of the content of these documents but to highlight some interesting aspects directly related to the welcoming and integration of elementary school migrant students in regular Luxembourgish schools from the two main documents: “Orientation towards secondary education: Different paths for different linguistic profiles” (February 2019) and “Welcome and integrate. The pedagogical guide of the elementary school” (September 2018). In these documents, we learn how primary pupils are welcomed

5. For more information, visit: <http://www.men.public.lu/fr/actualites/publications/themes-transversaux/scolarisation-eleves-etranagers/brochures-enseignants/index.html>

and oriented in the appropriate level of education. Four main phases constitute the welcome process in primary school (Figure 5): 1) First welcome; 2) Intensive language courses; 3) Learning assessment; and 4) Integration phase.

FIGURE 5. THE SCHOOL-FAMILY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PROCESS



Source: "Orientation towards secondary education: Different paths for different linguistic profiles" (February 2019).

1. First welcome. During the first meeting with parents and the pupil, the local authority explains how the school system works. The person in charge of the welcome class organises a visit throughout the school and the specific classroom that the child will attend, and asks parents to complete an arrival form. This document aims to gather a maximum amount of information regarding the pupil's previous school performance as well as his/her strengths, weaknesses and potential special needs. It also asks for information about the family context and the pupil's environment. In addition to their age and their past performance, the results obtained in maths and first language tests (taken after two observation weeks) are taken into consideration to correctly orientate the child towards the appropriate reference classroom. The teacher in charge of this reference classroom then prepares an individualised learning project (Projet individualisé de formation – PIF) on the basis of the

pupil's profile and needs. This project determines the choice of the language to learn, the number of hours that the pupil will attend his/her reference classroom and the individual learning objectives.

2. Intensive language courses. The pupil learns the school languages that are not mastered outside their reference classroom. These language courses aim to help the pupil to express themselves in a school context and to be able to follow instruction in German and/or French. However, at the beginning, courses are limited to one language since the goal is for the student to acquire sufficient skills to be able to communicate in everyday situations and then, gradually, participate in the current learning activities of their reference classroom. In this way, the weekly timetable of the pupil who benefits from a welcome course depends on their needs and the timetable of the reference classroom. The timetable of the reference classroom can also be adapted in order to free the student as much as possible for the lessons of the welcome course. The number of lessons attributed to intensive language learning also varies according to the speed with which the pupil progresses in his/her learning: as progress is made, the number of lessons is reduced and the participation in the reference classroom is increased or even becomes total.
3. Learning assessment. During a second meeting with parents, the pupil's results in language and maths tests, as well as the individualised learning project, are presented to them. The pupil's progress is also documented through different supports. The first one, already presented above, is *the individualised learning project* (PIF). This enables the school to periodically identify, define and assess the pupil's learning goals. The second one is *the European language portfolio* (PEL). This portfolio is the pupil's property and supports them in their language learning. The teacher determines the portfolio content on their own. It targets various objectives: 1) it helps pupils to reflect on languages and on their language learning; 2) it also helps pupils to better understand differences and richness of languages they do not know; and 3) it supports and values the pupil's personality and identity, their mother tongue as well as their cultural background. The third support is the progress report, which enables the student's results to be presented to their parents.
4. Integration phase. Once the pupil is able to follow the teaching, they attend part-time or full-time courses in their reference classroom. To reinforce the pupil's integration, a tutor is designated both in the reference classroom and in the welcome classroom. These two tutors collaborate in order to enhance the pupil's integration in their reference classroom. These are interesting ways to collaborate: 1) making the student familiar with the school: its rhythms, rituals, spaces, personnel, etc.; 2) motivating the pupil to quickly learn the keywords, the typical expressions used in school, the most frequent instructions, etc.; 3) encouraging the development of oral comprehension before reading comprehension; 4) working on the basic structures of languages; 5) working on the supports used in the reference classroom in the different contents: manuals, maps, files, etc.; 6) encouraging pupils to observe, identify landmarks, explain, describe, reformulate, justify, etc.

The document “Orientation towards secondary education: Different paths for different linguistic profiles” (February 2019) specifies that, alongside the regular Luxembourg school system, there is an international school offer, which includes English, German and French sections. The mission of these schools is to educate and teach students from diverse backgrounds. They are public and do not include registration fees. The school offer includes a 5-year cycle of European primary education and classes operate according to the same programmes, promotion criteria and timetables as other European schools. The curricula of the different language sections are identical. The child chooses a language 1 (first language level) from French, English, German, (and Portuguese only at EIDE) as well as a language 2 from French, English and German. The learning of Luxembourgish as an integration language is compulsory.

We also know that there is a private offer. Depending on the school attended, the degree differs: elementary Luxembourgish qualification, Luxembourgish technician qualification, the British diploma, the French baccalaureate, the European baccalaureate or the international baccalaureate.

3.2.3. SECAM

Thirdly, there is a service in the Ministry of National Education for teachers wherein professionals can find advice, support and information regarding migrant pupils’ schooling⁶. It is called SECAM (*Service de la scolarisation des enfants étrangers*) and it has been coordinating measures since 1998 to promote the reception and integration of newly-arrived pupils in schools. Four main activities are managed by SECAM:

- Pupil welcoming. If the students are between 12 and 24 years old (maximum), the school reception unit for new arrivals (*Cellule d’accueil scolaire des élèves nouveaux arrivants* - CASNA) welcomes and provides educational guidance for these young people. Alternatively, if the students are older, in this case, CASNA limits its intervention to giving information.
- Support for teachers. This includes information, a platform for the exchange of practical experience and provision of teaching materials.
- Intercultural mediation. This consists of giving information and providing oral and written translation by the intercultural mediators.
- Information and support given to parents (in their mother tongue).

Further, on the SECAM website, teachers can download a folder explaining in more detail the job and the role of intercultural mediators (SECAM, 2019). The brochure specifies that the intervention of intercultural mediators can be one-off or regular. For a one-off intervention, the

6. For more information, see <https://portal.education.lu/secam/M%C3%A9diateurs>.

mediator can contact the applicant in order to fix the issue addressed, the scheduling and the estimated duration together. Intervention happens more often in school or in an organisation that can use an intercultural mediator. The mediator can require minimum conditions to ensure the proper conduct of their intervention (for example, appropriate and quiet place). During the discussion, the mediator will ensure that all the actors have had an opportunity to express themselves. If this was not the case, they can then schedule another appointment. At the end of the intervention, the mediator and the applicant conduct a debriefing to highlight strengths and weaknesses for improving the quality of the intervention.

By contrast, a regular intervention (so-called permanent) is defined by the presence of a mediator in the classroom at constant intervals at the teacher's or another school actor's request. The intervention frequency is decided by SECAM, and before implementing this kind of intervention, a meeting between the mediator and teacher has to be planned in order to present the global situation and know the teacher's and the student's needs in order to specify the intervention process in the best way. On the one hand, the teacher has to prepare the material and the pedagogical content before each mediator intervention. On the other hand, the mediator has to: 1) send the student information, instructions and explanations given by the teacher; 2) send the teacher the student's questions and difficulties; and 3) make the link with the student's mother tongue if necessary.

4. National policies and legislation on parental involvement

4.1. Analysis of legal texts and main school-family communication support

4.1.1. *The law of 6 February 2009*

The main school legal text is the law of 6 February 2009 related to the organisation of fundamental education. The school law is relatively new and replaces the previous one, which dated from 1912 and made practically no mention of the official role of parents in Luxembourg schools. However, the 2009 law includes henceforth elements to institutionalise the school-family partnership. It determines the place of parents as the primary agents responsible for their child's education and recognises parents as partners in the school. In this sense, the school law specifies a number of elements related to the partnership with parents as well as the respective roles of each educational agent. In fact, parents appear in many places in the law. There are different articles (for example, related to school obligation, to school admission or to repetition of a year) in which the parents' responsibility, rights and obligation towards school are mentioned, but there are also some sections explicitly devoted to the family-school partnership. These sections are the following:

- **In Chapter 1** (entitled "General Framework"), in section 4 related to pedagogical organisation, we can read that the class holder has, among their tasks: 1) to periodically inform parents of their child's academic performance and progress; 2) to discuss with parents as soon as school difficulties arise; and 3) to organise regular information and consultation meetings with the pupils' parents.

- **In Chapter 2** (entitled “Pupils”), section 3 related to assessment, specifies that parents have to be regularly informed about their child’s progress. Section 4 related to support measures in case of learning difficulties describes that at least one inclusive school committee has to be set up in each district to define, either at the request of the parents or at the request of the teacher (only if parents agree), the attention to the targeted pupil. Once the child is under attention, parents are regularly informed and consulted regarding the attention process.

- **In Chapter 3** (entitled “Administrative and Management Structures”), section 3 related to management in schools announces that the president of the school committee represents their school in dealings with third parties and is therefore responsible for ensuring the relationship with parents. The next section is more particularly devoted to the partnership. Section 4 specifies that at the classroom level, the parents’ partners are the class teacher and the pedagogical team who provide the students with academic support. The project stipulates that parents and teachers must have regular individual exchanges about pupils, that the three languages of the country are to be used as needed and that classroom teachers must ensure that regular information and consultation meetings for parents are organised with regard to the objectives of the cycle, evaluation and classroom organisation. If there are obligations on the part of teachers, parents must also be accountable. Thus, the latter are required to respond to the summons of the class teacher, the chair of the school committee and the borough inspector. This article does not really bring anything new since the Grand-Ducal Regulation of 3 May 1989, by specifying the task of teachers, laid down, among the latter, the obligation to consult parents at the rate of one hour per fortnight and to inform parents at the beginning of the school year. Further in the text, one learns that every two years, in each school, the students’ parents convened in an assembly by the president of the school committee, or by the headmaster, elect at least two parents’ representatives who are not members of the staff involved in the school. Parents’ representatives and the school committee can meet to:
 - Discuss, amend or even complete the school organisation proposal and the school success plan developed by the school committee;
 - Notify of the activity report;
 - Organise joint meetings or events of school partners and;
 - Formulate, with the pupils, proposals on all issues related to the organisation of school life.

The article also states that parents have the opportunity to question the school committee on all aspects of the project and they must be consulted on organisational matters so that they can become full partners.

There is also parents' representation at communal and national levels. Regarding the communal level, the partnership between school authorities, school staff and parents is exercised through the communal school board, which is an advisory body to the communal council. There are two parents' representatives on this board. At national level, the partnership between school authorities, school staff and parents is carried out through the national school board. There also are two parents' representatives on this national board. In addition, there are also local associations of parents of primary and post-primary pupils as well as two federations bringing together these local associations. One federation brings together the local primary associations while the other does the same for local post-primary associations.

4.1.2. The Grand-Ducal Regulation of 23 March 2009

The teachers' task is defined in the Grand-Ducal Regulation of 23 March 2009, among which two main pieces of information deal with the theme of partnership with parents. On the one hand, the regulation specifies that the working hours to be provided in the interests of the pupils and the school include 40 hours of availability for the partnership with the pupils' parents. The text also adds that meetings and interviews with parents should be scheduled at times that take into account the constraints of working parents.

4.1.3. The MENJE website

The school-family partnership is a priority under the legislature of Minister of Education Claude Meisch⁷. Because the Minister promotes an open and participatory school, he wants to give more importance to parents. In this regard, on the MENJE website⁸, one can read that parental involvement is reinforced both at school level and at national level. At school level, the Minister's will is to develop a real culture of school-family partnership in all schools in the country. This is why each school has to define its own and personal cooperation and communication approach with parents. This approach is documented in the school development plan approved by teachers and the principal and validated by the Ministry. Schools can also invite parents to participate in the development of this school plan. At national level, there is a national parents' representation that aims to officialise the partnership between the educational sphere and the parents' community. The role of this representation is to be a spokesperson for parents and pupils/students as well as to be an advisor to the Minister. This board is comprised of six representatives from secondary education, four representatives from elementary education and two parents' representatives of pupils who attend a differentiated education centre or a special education institution. The three-year renewable mandate entitles the holder to up to 96 days of representation leave per year.

7. Minister Claude Meisch has been in office since the 2013 parliamentary elections. He has just started his second term.

8. Please visit <http://www.men.public.lu/fr/actualites/grands-dossiers/enseignement-fondamental/08-ecole-ouverte-participative/index.html>

Regarding the role of the regional directorate, it is explained that among the 15 regional directorate offices, some of them will become, in the medium term, contact points accessible to professionals and parents, making the services of the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth available for a region. The school's partners will find the right contacts more easily, and staff resources can be distributed as close as possible to local needs. The proximity between the various services will also encourage synergies and exchanges among professionals working with children.

Moreover, law project 7072, submitted on 19 October 2016, in the Chamber of Deputies, aims to create a mediation service comprised of three mediators in order to address the three main problems facing the national education system in Luxembourg, which are the following:

- The schooling of migrant children, who have to learn the school languages in addition to their mother tongue.
- Special educational needs, i.e. problems in basic school or high school faced by students with a disability or deficiency.
- The school dropout rate of students who, for many reasons, are no longer making progress in their school learning and leave school without any qualification.

It is planned for each mediator within the National Education Department to act as an “internal mediator” of the school system. They will take into account the individual situations of students whose school careers are at risk, to examine whether existing resources have been properly implemented or to detect any weaknesses in the system. They will be consulted when steps within the school community do not allow an adequate solution to be found to a student's situation.

Each mediator may be called upon, within their field of competence, by pupils, parents or professionals in the education sector to settle specific cases: when a school or secondary school has not operated in accordance with its mission or when the legislation has not been properly applied. The mediator will intervene to resolve the conflict and to make recommendations.

4.1.4. The intermediate and end-of-cycle reports: an assessment as well as a communication tool with parents

Since the 2016-2017 school year, a new way to assess pupils has been applied. Teachers regularly assess pupils using several methods: tests, analysis of pupils' work, observations, classroom assignments, etc. During the cycle, teachers directly inform parents about targeted learning objectives through individual talks (three times a year, at the end of each term). However, two main tools are used to reinforce this parental information: the intermediate report and the end-of-cycle report. In order to clearly explain the purpose of these reports, videos in several languages (Luxembourgish, French, German, Serbo-Croatian, English and

Portuguese), as well as an explanatory file, have been created by the MENJE (2016) to support parents in their child's assessment understanding.

Regarding the intermediate report, teachers write it at the end of each term (before Christmas holidays, before Easter holidays and before summer holidays). This report documents the pupils' learning progress, in a formative way, in regards to the end-of-cycle objectives, and it enhances the quality of parent-teacher communication during the individual talk for the following reasons:

- At the end of the term, pupils receive a grade for each content area (German, French, Luxembourgish and mathematics) and more precisely, for each field of competence inside these contents (e.g. in languages: written production, oral production, reading comprehension, oral comprehension). For the other content (e.g. sciences), teachers apply a grade for the discipline considered as a whole. Eight grades are possible: A+, A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D.
- Teachers also give an appreciation of pupils' involvement in each area of development and learning: from "rarely" to "often".
- The reports describe very clearly, in a very understandable way, the priority competences. Each parent is therefore able to see what level of performance and what kind of skills are expected during each term for a targeted cycle.
- Teachers assess cross-curricular competences (i.e. competences not directly related to a specific development and learning area) using a four-level scale (ranging from "poorly developed" to "well developed").
- For each area of development and learning, teachers and parents have the opportunity to include reflections, observations and perspectives (discussed during the individual talk) in the report.

Finally, at the end of each learning cycle, the pedagogical team assesses the child's learning situation in a certificate with the end-of-cycle report. The student's achievements are thus validated with a view to their transition to the next cycle.

[4.2. Description of official institutions related to the school-family relationship](#)

[4.2.1. Parents' Associations](#)

The Parents' Association is defined as a group of parents representing all the parents in a municipality (primary) or secondary school (post-primary). It aims to support parents' involvement in their children's education and to enhance their collaboration with their child's school/teacher. In other words, its main concern is to organise a permanent dialogue between all the school partners for the well-being of children (Union des Associations des Parents

d'Elèves de l'Enseignement Primaire de la ville de Luxembourg, UnAPEEP, 2019). According to UnAPEEP (2019), a parents' association aims to:

1. Represent parents' and pupils' interests in early, preschool and primary schools.
2. Promote an ongoing dialogue between parents on the one hand, and teachers, students and school authorities on the other hand.
3. Forward to the school authorities the suggestions of the parents regarding administration and organisation.
4. Improve safety around schools.
5. Make schools, in collaboration with teachers, a place to live and meet (organisation of activities to enhance parents' integration into school life).

For its part, the *Fédération des Associations de Parents d'Élèves du Luxembourg* (FAPEL) brings together the parents' associations of early, preschool and primary education, the parents' committees of post-primary education and any other parents' organisation with a purpose in line with the Federation, admitted by the General Assembly. Convinced of the major role that parents have to play in the education of their children, FAPEL informs, trains, assists and represents all parents. Since its creation, FAPEL is about the legal recognition of parents as official partners of the school (*Fédération des Associations de parents d'élèves du Luxembourg*, FAPEL, 2019).

4.2.2. An interesting initiative: The Parents' School

Over time, the Kannerschlass Foundation has been playing an increasing role among families. In the 1980s and 1990s, the foundation observed an increasing uncertainty and insecurity among parents about their educational work. It also noted an increase in parents' interest in education. Thus, in 2002, in the Commune of Sanem (location of the Kannerschlass Foundation), a first programme of the Parents' School (*l'Ecole des Parents*) was launched. The objectives of this programme are the following (*Ecole des parents J. Korczak*, 2017):

- Meet parents in groups (Parents' school is not an individual consulting service)
- Seek close collaboration with partners with an active role at the local level in order to target needs on the one hand and to invite and mobilise as many parents as possible on the other hand.
- Support parents regarding their knowledge development.
- Promote an exchange of views and experiences with parents and between parents.

In order to benefit from the offer of the Parents' School, other municipalities have expressed their intention to join the project. Thus, in 2017, the Parents' School organised 604 interventions including around 4,900 parents. As specific projects, we can mention, for example (Ecole des parents J. Korczak, 2017):

- The parents' home and café in Esch/Alzette: a place where parents have the opportunity to meet each other, to discuss together, to be involved in themed workshops and so on.
- The parents' corner: presence of a representative of Parents' school in the Maison-relais.⁹
- Supporting migrants' families: the parents' school supports newly-arrived families in their integration process together with the office for the reception and integration of foreigners (OLAI), the Red Cross, Caritas and the migrant welcome centres.

More specifically, the Parents' School is named Janusz Korczak, a Polish teacher well-known for his involvement towards children. The Parents' School offers a range of activities to parents to support them in their educational function. Since 2007, it has been organizing courses for future mothers and fathers in several maternity hospitals in Luxembourg. The final objective of the Parents' School is to provide an exchange in education and family relationships, to provide information and to facilitate family life. The Parents' School conveys values such as respect for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an education without violence and equality between fathers and mothers or between men and women. In addition, the work carried out by this organisation is designed not to judge or reprimand parents. Education is seen as an essential and interactive process between parents and children. Courses are offered by experts in the social, educational, medical or legal fields. In order to reach as many parents as possible, the Parents' School works in close collaboration with municipalities, parents' associations and other institutions (crèches, daycare centres, Maisons-relais, schools, etc.). In recent years, the project has been expanding in all regions of the country.

5. National meta-analysis: parental involvement in schools

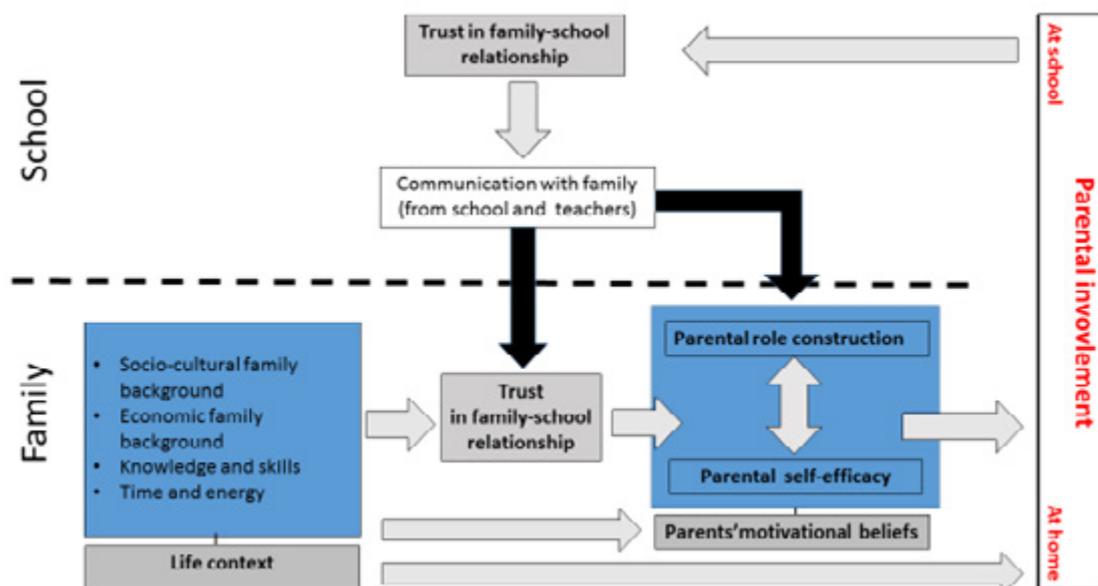
5.1. Our vision of the dynamic process of the school-family partnership

In the scientific literature, the concepts of parental involvement and family-school relationship are close and often used as synonyms (Adams, Forsyth & Mitchell, 2009). However, we

9. In Luxembourg, there are several types of facilities for children, from very young children to 12 years of age. Parents can freely choose the structure as long as places are available. The majority of structures, private or managed by municipalities, are subsidised by the State. The "Maison-relais" act on behalf of the municipalities and offer a childcare system, or even a canteen, for children attending Luxembourg's elementary school. This service is offered on school days and during holiday periods. The activity of a "maison relais" includes, at least, the following services: 1) opening of the service and the reception of children outside school hours (for example, before and after school, during school holidays); 2) preparing lunch and snacks; 3) organizing socio-educational activities and 4) supporting children during homework periods.

believe that restricting school-family relationship to the lone concept of parental involvement is simplistic and could lead to misunderstandings. We think, by contrast, that they are two distinct components of a dynamic that we could call “school-family process”. Thus, on the basis of the first level of the theoretical and empirical model suggested by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005, 2010), we have completed this model including the concept of school-family trust. We have also tried to make the model dynamic. Figure 6 presents our vision of the dynamic process of the school-family partnership and the reasons why parents decide to get involved in their children’s education.

FIGURE 6. THE SCHOOL-FAMILY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PROCESS



Source: own elaboration based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model (1995, 1997, 2005, 2010) and trust in family-school process (Adams et al., 2009).

The discussion is now going to expand on this model. More specifically, we are going to structure the text into two main sections. The first section will explore the factors and processes that take place on the school side (top part of Figure 6) whilst the second section will be devoted to the family side (bottom part of Figure 6).

5.1.1. Factors and processes that take place on the school side

To us, the two black arrows in the figure are essential and are the starting point of the cycle. As Adams et al. (2009) point out, “cooperative relationships between parents and schools are too important to leave their existence to chance or to place the responsibility for their development on parents. Relationship building with parents needs to be purposeful and planned” (p. 5). To these aspects, we will add that, as educational professionals, these relationships with families are clearly part of their tasks in order to clarify their expectations in terms of academic support

from families. The purpose of these solicitations is to help families strengthen their parental role in terms of support but also their sense of competence to assume this role.

It consequently means that teachers have to develop close and privileged relationships with their pupils' parents. Anderson and Minke (2007) highlight that teachers are one of the most significant levers for parents' decisions to engage in their child's school education. According to Visković and Višnjić Jevtić (2017), they have the responsibility to establish a satisfactory, reciprocal and cooperative relationship with parents. However, Epstein (2013) notes a significant gap between the knowledge and expertise held by these professionals. According to the author, it is important for pre-service teachers to develop the skills during their training that enable them to be effective in working with parents. We add that, for in-service teachers, the in-service training courses related to school-family relationship are also very important. Nowadays, families are being diversified very strongly in terms of structure, size, socioeconomic means and cultural, linguistic and academic background. To give a positive answer to these several profiles of parents, teachers have to learn to communicate with all families in a positive way but also in trust and mutual respect.

5.1.2. Factors and processes that take place on the family side

The model responds to the parental involvement process based on the parents' decision to be involved in their child's school education. However, it should be highlighted that, once parents have made the decision to participate, the model suggests that they will select a series of activities in which they get involved. In this regard, parental involvement includes a wide variety of parental attitudes, actions and behaviours that can support the child's academic success (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). Given this huge diversity of the study angles, there is great heterogeneity in the definition and conceptualisation of parental involvement (Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratliffe & Traynor, 2017). However, despite these differences, it is generally accepted that what parents do and implement to support their child can take place both in the family context (home-based parental involvement) and at school (school-based parental involvement) (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). According to Sheldon (2002), home-based parental involvement refers to: 1) interactions between parents and children directly related to schooling (parents' educational aspirations for their child or discussions about the school day); 2) all family activities related to school learning (formal and informal activities); and 3) the direct investment of parental resources in their child's school education (help and supervision during the homework period). Parental involvement at school is defined from the investments that parents make in the school context (for example, communicating with the child's teachers, volunteering in the child's school or participating in the activities organised by the school).

Going back to parental choice of being involved (or not), the model shows that parents would decide to get involved because: 1) they have developed an understanding of their parental role construction; 2) they have a positive self-efficacy about their capacity to support their child to succeed; and 3) they perceive the general opportunities and invitations to participate

from their child's teachers and/or their child's school. More specifically, this choice will be determined by three main aspects:

1. Parents' motivational beliefs: parental role construction and parental self-efficacy.
2. Parents' life context: the specific areas of knowledge and skills of parents, time and energy requirements that are influenced by other family and employment-related responsibilities, and socioeconomic and cultural background.
3. Trust in the family-school relationship.

Parents' motivational beliefs

Motivational beliefs include two main dimensions: parents' role construction and parents' self-efficacy. These two dimensions play an important role in the parents' decision to get involved in their child's school education (For the parental role construction, see: Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, 2005, 2010; Reed, Jones, Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000; and for the parental self-efficacy, see: Anderson, 2005; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Reiniger & Lopez, 2017; Sheldon, 2002).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) define parents' role construction as the beliefs that parents develop about what they could do and implement to support their child's school education. Parents' role construction of their role is therefore influenced by parents' beliefs about the child's development and education, as well as by beliefs about the support and involvement that they consider appropriate to provide in the family context or at school. The different parenting groups (family, school and workplace) will also have an influence on the parents' role construction. Parents would therefore be more inclined to invest in their child's school education if they consider this involvement as an integral part of their parental role. This construction is responsible for the kind of activities that parents will consider necessary, expected or conducive to their child's school education.

Regarding the parental self-efficacy, it includes parents' beliefs about their personal abilities to make a difference in their child's academic performance thanks to their involvement in their child's school education. That is, parents would be more likely to get involved in activities if they believe they can succeed. As a corollary, parents would decide to get involved in their child's school education if they believe they have the skills and knowledge to support their child in their various school tasks.

Parents' life context

In addition to the background variable (SSE, cultural and social origins), the model takes into consideration two other main dimensions to define the parents' life context: 1) knowledge and skills; and 2) time and energy. On one hand, parents' knowledge and skills construct refers to the perceptions that parents develop about the knowledge and skills they possess to get effectively involved in their child's school education. This dimension assumes that parents would be more likely to get involved in their child's school education when they believe that their knowledge and skills can effectively support their child in school content domains. On the other hand, the construct regarding parents' perceptions of time and energy refers to parents' perceptions of time needs, and more specifically, those related to their work occupation and other family needs, which can influence parents' opportunities to get involved in their child's education.

Trust in the family-school relationship

Trust is often specified as a psychological state that is created through social exchanges. More specifically, trust in school-family relationships refers to a reciprocal relationship in which parents and teachers trust each other to act consistently in the best interests of students (Bower, Bowen & Powers, 2011, p. 159).

Ensuring that parents become full internal partners in the school and that they leave their position as peripheral actors significantly changes the dynamics of schools by creating a social network where the roles of each actor are clearly identified. Epstein's work (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006) provides experimental evidence that changing representations and practices really helps teachers, parents and the community to work together to effectively support students during their school years. In this sense, it seems that a new way of thinking about the conceptualisation of a school according to an operational dynamic that requires each of the actors to adopt an active and internal position and roles in the school is clearly able to improve the functioning of this school institution. According to Adams et al. (2009), who explore more directly the relationship between trust and school performance, it seems that the trust that actors can show towards each other facilitates cooperative activities between the different parties involved, thus improving the productivity and effectiveness of the school. These authors demonstrate that the work that a teacher does in the classroom with his or her students and the conditions for their success depend not only on the work that has previously been done by colleagues with the same students, but also on parental involvement and financial support from the school community. Without being exhaustive, the authors explain to what extent cooperation is an essential factor for the effective functioning of the school organisation. This is the reason why we put this concept both on the school side and on the home side. For teachers, it represents an important condition that explains why they decide to consider parents as partners. For parents, the trust in school and in teachers can be explained by their own school experience and their life context but also according to the way their current child's teacher or their child's school interact with them.

5.2. Research results in Luxembourg

This section aims to present the main results of research related to the school-family relationship and parental involvement in Luxembourg. Unfortunately, we have found very little literature related to migration and school education¹⁰. Even if there is little research on migrant families' parental involvement, we can say, with Lopez, Schribner and Mahitivanichcha (2001), that migrants are a vulnerable group of the population regarding economic, health and work-related problems. These issues can explain why the pupils coming from these families have to cope, more often than other pupils, with lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates. It is the reason why we will also retain and analyse Luxembourgish research results, which take into consideration the link between low socioeconomic families' background and schooling.

Two distinct parts structure this section: on the one hand, the presentation of the results of research conducted by other university teams and, on the other hand, the presentation of our own research and the results ensuing from it.

5.2.1. Other Luxembourgish university research works related to migration, family-school relationship and parental involvement

The first research in educational sciences in Luxembourg: the MAGRIP ("Matière Grise Perdue") study¹¹

Background. The central question that researchers wanted to answer with MAGRIP was: "Does one learn for life in school?" It examined the extent to which schools helped students to successfully master their own lives. The MAGRIP study could thus make a significant contribution to understanding the effects of the Luxembourg school system in order to secure and improve the quality of today's school system.

Aims. According to Kerger (2011), this study aimed to study the social, academic, intellectual and personal elements that characterise children in 5th/6th grade in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and observe the connection between these first observed variables and other ones (for more details, see the section "Methods") collected at several times along the participants' life course.

Sample. A cohort of youths (N = 2,312), aged 11-12 years, was followed since 1968 for 40 years, until they were 51-52 years old.

Method. The researchers targeted different dimensions that can be grouped into four areas: 1) The characteristics of the social background (parents' occupation, number of children in the family, language index, family situation, housing, etc.); 2) Academic characteristics (academic advance/delay, teacher appreciation, academic performance in 5th and 6th grade,

10. The University of Luxembourg is quite young. In fact, it was created in 2003, so this short life could clearly explain why research was not really well developed in Luxembourg so far.

11. Reference: Brunner & Martin (Hrsg.) (2011).

guidance advice); 3) Cognitive characteristics (verbal intelligence and measured spatial intelligence); and 4) Personality characteristics (desire to do well, commitment to school work, discouragement, desired social category, etc.). The key question was how the information thus collected (“baseline characteristics”) could be linked to subsequent observations about the subjects’ academic progress.

Results. Three distinct phases have been determined to collect and analyse data: 1) this includes the first seven years of the study (N = 2,312); 2) a follow-up of a sub-sample of the population when subjects were aged between 27 and 29 years (N = 200) and 3) interviews were conducted (N = 745 persons) about educational pathways and professional careers up to the age of 52. Whatever the phase, the same goal governs data collection and statistical analysis: to better understand the unique and combined influence of the studied dimensions on school performance (for data collections realised at primary or secondary school) or on educational pathways and professional background (for data collection done when participants were adults). The main conclusion, regardless of when the data are collected, is that educational background is important to explain both school performance and professional position. It seems that the school system is unable to modify or compensate the educational differences of family background. The statistical analyses show that the Luxembourgish school system is characterised by a certain determinism from the very beginning of schooling. Brunner, Martin, Schalke & Berger (2011) show that the socioeconomic context as well as cognitive abilities have a significant impact on the academic and professional careers of MAGRIP research participants. Both the socioeconomic context and general cognitive performance have an almost equal influence on the academic and professional domains of the participants. This has also resulted in a high level of social reproduction. For men in particular, the direct influence of the socioeconomic environment appears to be very strong both on the level of education and on the professional situation.

[Multilingualism, families and schooling](#)

Background. As already described earlier in the document, Luxembourg is a trilingual country where residents communicate in Luxembourgish, French and German concurrently. Children therefore study these languages at primary school, and language teaching is valued by the Luxembourgish school system, which considers multilingualism as a resource. Given the huge heterogeneity of nationalities in the population, the number of languages really spoken by pupils goes over the three official languages. Multilingualism is therefore a very important research theme. When the keywords “multilingualism”, “family” and “schooling” are crossed in the “Education research” database, only one article appears: Gogonas and Kirsch (2018). This article considers the point of view of Greek families on their children’s multilingualism in Luxembourg. It seems that for Greek migrants, more than for other nationalities, it is important to maintain Greek language knowledge as a core value for their identity.

Aims. This article aims to investigate the language ideologies of Greek families in Luxembourg.

Sample. Three criteria were used to select families: 1) both parents are Greek; 2) the children attend Luxembourgish state schools; and 3) the presence on Luxembourg territory of these families is varied: well-integrated families versus newly-arrived families. Three families constitute the sample: an “established” family, living in Luxembourg for more than 9 years, and two “new” families (for approximatively 15 months in Luxembourg at the time of the study).

Method. The authors adopted a qualitative approach with a small sample. Methods of data collection included observation, informal conversations and interviews with parents and children over a period of 8 months.

Results. This study highlighted that Greek families adopted a positive behaviour regarding multilingualism in general and, specifically, regarding multilingualism at school. In fact, families consider it as an asset: “The Greek parents understand the role of languages for integrative and career purposes as well as for citizenship” (p. 435). Moreover, authors observed high parental school aspirations. For this reason, parents are involved in their children’s school education (for example: they help their child with schoolwork, they make arrangements for private tuition or they pay for summer schools abroad).

5.2.2. LLLG¹² institute research works related to migration, family-school relationship and parental involvement

The place of the school in the Luxembourg society of tomorrow (2008)¹³

Background. The findings of the PISA study conducted by the OECD in 2000 form the basis of the “School of Tomorrow” research. PISA showed that the performance levels of 15-year-old Luxembourg students in all the areas assessed were significantly below the OECD average. Moreover, it seems that Luxembourg ranks among the lowest on the list with regard to the reduction of social inequalities by the education system.

Aims. The main objective of the “School of Tomorrow” research was to define scenarios for the possible development of the Luxembourg school. To support this prospective analysis, the research team conducted several types of analyses and data collection: 1) description of the current functioning of the Luxembourg system based on existing national and international databases; 2) identification of measures contributing to the efficiency and equity of foreign education systems; 3) consultation by focus group of representatives of national education stakeholders (leaders, teachers, parents, students, extracurricular organisations, etc.); and 4) questionnaire survey of families, teachers, school principals and members of the Inspection. For parents, the research had a three-fold objective. First, to give them the opportunity to express their views on the current and future functioning of the Luxembourg education

12. LLLG Institute = Institute for Lifelong Learning and Guidance.

13. Original title in French : La place de l’école dans la société luxembourgeoise de demain (2008). Reference: Martin, Dierendonck, Meyers & Noesen (2008).

system (Part 1). The research team then had to better understand the functioning of the family spheres by focusing on the educational practices implemented at home (Part 2). Finally, it was aimed at identifying the nature of the relationship between families and the school system (Part 3).

Sample. Information was collected from a sample of 150 randomly selected classes at three levels of schooling (5th primary, 1st secondary year and 3rd secondary year). Teachers, students and their parents were interviewed by questionnaire and via focus groups.

Method. The questionnaire survey as well as the focus groups were aimed at collecting data among families. The research goal was to improve the understanding of the educational process within the family and also of their relationship with the school. Information on these two axes is thus collected at the level of parents and children. Parallel questionnaires – built around common themes – will be proposed to both parents and children in order to cross-reference their views on common educational objects. In addition, teachers were also asked about their perceptions of family involvement in their child’s school education and school-family relationship. This data collection provided a dense body of data on the privileged educational strategies of Luxembourg families and the kind of relationship they most frequently maintain with the school. More precisely, focus groups collected parents’ representations about the current and future functioning of the Luxembourg education system and on families’ educational practices and their functioning including the following questions: 1) “What kind of adults are parents looking to educate?”; 2) “What educational methods do Luxembourg parents prefer?” and 3) “Is there now a specialisation of parental roles?”.

Results. For this book, we are going to focus our attention on the main results obtained through parents’ focus groups. We obtained interesting information regarding what parents thought about how the school worked and the relationship with school in general and with their child’s teachers in particular. Four distinct aspects of the school-family relationship underlie the ten scenarios proposed to parents: 1) The share of responsibility between parents and teachers at school; 2) The presence of parents in school activities; 3) School-family communication and exchanges; and 4) The level of parental information regarding how the school works and the school system. This part of the “School of Tomorrow” research aims to describe parental involvement within Luxembourg families and to identify the links that may exist between them and the school (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. THE MAIN RESULTS OBSERVED THROUGH PARENTS' FOCUS GROUPS

In terms of parents' beliefs, we note that:

- More than half of parents consider that the Luxembourg school is inefficient.
- 25% of parents reject the assumption of generalised educability by stating that some students are made for school and others are not.
- Repetition is considered effective by 60% of parents.
- For 8 out of 10 parents, it is normal for the teacher to organise learning on the basis of the pace of strong students.
- For almost half of the parents, numerical grades are an essential means of ensuring student discipline at school.
- 56% of parents agree that without the sanction of points and repetition, students would no longer be motivated to learn.

In terms of the importance given by parents to school, the figures show that:

- 33% of parents have minimum educational aspirations for their child that are higher than the secondary school diploma.
- 26% of children report that their parents do not really know what is going on at school.
- Family discussions about school are frequent or relatively frequent in three quarters of families. These discussions focus on homework, classroom learning, school grades and the importance of school for the child's future.
- Of the 20 to 30% of families that belong to a parents' association, only a quarter actively participate in the association's meetings.

In terms of school support, the study reveals that:

- 75% of parents are convinced that homework supervision is an integral part of their role.
- 20 to 25% of parents have difficulty supervising their child's school work.
- 25% of parents do not spend any time supervising homework, 50% of parents spend 15 to 30 minutes a day and 25% spend from one hour to two hours or more a day.
- While 84% of teachers surveyed expect parents to check whether the child has done his or her homework at home, homework is never or almost never checked in 6 out of 10 families.
- While 77% of teachers say that no parental help is necessary or desirable during the child's homework, 90% of parents provide occasional or daily help to their child. This assistance most often consists of explaining the material not understood (55 to 75% of cases), explaining what is expected of the child (35 to 40% of cases), reciting lessons (35 to 40% of cases) and doing the requested exercises with the child (25 to 50% of cases).
- 90% of students often or always have a quiet place to work at home.
- 25 to 35% of students have already taken private tuition.

Regarding the school and family relationship, we highlighted that:

- Overall, parents report that they are well informed. The topics that remain unclear are school curricula and possible directions in the education system, the school's pedagogical project and support services, the child's behaviour in school, how to improve parental involvement, and topics such as bullying between young people, violence in school and gender relations.
- Parents' information needs are real in terms of reacting to possible difficult situations (dropping out of school, death in the family, divorce, racketeering, drugs, etc.).
- Group parent meetings and individual interviews often remain the only means of establishing a link between the school and the family. In 37% of cases, teachers were not able to meet all the parents of students. The reasons given by teachers are either those parents are not interested in their child's schooling or that parents are not available at the times when meetings are scheduled. Parents justify their absence from meetings mainly for organisational reasons. Only 8% openly state that they are not interested in these contacts with their child's school.
- Except at parents' meetings, parents were rarely present in the classroom. The reasons remain to be discovered. Is it because they are not invited by teachers to participate in certain classroom activities or is it because they cannot be counted on? Regarding the second alternative, 43% of teachers surveyed said that they could rely fairly well or very much on the parents in their class to cooperate in organizing an activity in or out of school.

Source: Dierendonck, Poncellet & Martin (2006).

Collaborative research regarding the family-school relationship: the “Partners” research (2012)

Background. “Partners” is a collaborative research between researchers and education/school actors (schools, families and communities). The aim is to implement, in partners’ schools, concrete actions to improve communication and relationships between schools and families. This action-research conducts a collaborative project of intervention.

Aims. Several objectives are followed: 1) supporting the communication between school, families and the school community in order to facilitate the participation of parents in their child’s education; 2) supporting the improvement of the relationship between school, family and community with concrete actions; 3) coaching the pedagogical teams in their development and implementation of the targeted actions; 4) analysing the effects of the relationship between school, family and community on children’s school success and on emotional aspects and attitudes of pupils, parents, teachers and other partners; and 5) developing and publishing a booklet with tools and advice for teachers in Luxembourg.

Sample. Two groups have been formed: the experimental group (EG) including 4 schools and the control group (CG) including 11 primary schools (16 classes from the cycle 3.1).

Method. Two tools are used: 1) focus groups with teachers of the EG and questionnaires to the whole sample. The focus groups were designed to identify subjects and social representations attached through an open discussion. The questionnaires will be proposed to the three populations of our sample (EG and CG): students, their parents and their teachers at different moments in the research (January 2011, July 2011 and July 2012). These instruments have a double objective: 1) facilitating the EG/CG comparison in terms of family-school relationship ways of doing and 2) verifying whether actions had a positive impact on parental involvement. In summary, we wanted to collect data from parents, teachers, and students themselves to better understand which elements can support the child in their schooling at family, school or individual levels. We also want to test an intervention programme focused on families and the relationship they have with their child’s school. Each school had one meeting every two months. Thanks to these meetings, researchers, teachers and/or parents elaborated together action(s). These are implemented between two meetings.

Results. Below is the presentation of some of these actions (in italics) classified according to Epstein’s typology. Some scientific articles have been written in connection with this research¹⁴¹⁵¹⁶ as well as a doctoral dissertation¹⁷.

14. Poncelet, Pelt, Kerger, Dierendonck & Mancuso (2013).

15. Pelt & Poncelet (2012).

16. Pelt & Poncelet (2011).

17. Pelt (2013).

FIGURE 8. SOME EXAMPLES OF CONCRETE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN IN PARENTS' SCHOOLS

Parenting:

Combating violence:

- Each child created their own 'against violence' keychains.
- A vote in all schools elected the most representative, which became a logo on a sticker. The stickers were sold.

Pupils' right and duty:

- Pupils and teachers worked together on this topic.
- They produced a small fascicle, which was discussed in class.

Communicating:

Creation of a logo symbolizing school:

- Each class drew a logo, a vote elected the one which would represent the school.
- Each official document of the school now has the logo on it.
- T-Shirts were created with the logo on it.

School presentation:

- Folders are created each new school year to present to teachers and the school.
- Folders are given out at the first school meeting.
- School Newspaper: this newspaper has the logo on it and describes the activities done in the school during the semester.

Volunteering

- Each parent became a volunteer in one or more activities: many activities inviting parents were done during the two school years, such as cooking, landart, Halloween evening, etc.

Learning at home

- No activity was linked to this dimension.

Decision-making

Creation of folders about the parents' representatives election:

- Explanation of the representative role.
- Explanation of the importance of participating in the election.

Collaborating with the community

Creating a parents' community:

- Organisation of a friendship drink to allow parents to get to know each other.
- Inclusion of community information in the school newspaper.

Source: Poncelet & Pelt (2013).

[A survey regarding the students' school perseverance: the "FavAs" research \(2018\)](#)

Background. Nowadays, school dropout appears to be a real social issue. While in the first half of the 20th century, short schooling and lack of degrees did not negatively impact working life and were the norm, this is no longer the case today. Entering the labour market with a low level of education or with no qualifications is particularly difficult. Many researchers have clearly identified the origin of early school leaving within several major systems such as society, family, school and the student themselves. School dropout thus appears to be a multidimensional phenomenon where many factors interact. The combination of these different factors can, little by little, lead young people to invest themselves in their school curriculum in a strategic and effective way (students' school perseverance) or, on the contrary, to lose interest, disengage from school and leave it early after a long process of cumulative frustrations (school dropout). Combating early school leaving is now a major challenge for all education systems in developed countries. More precisely, in terms of the school-family

relationship, we simultaneously took into account school, family and individual influences to explain the students' school process. We consider the school as a "complex unit", which can be seen as a mediator of various influences, both internal to its own structure and external to it (for example, the family). A large number of studies have shown that the school-family relationship can be a key factor in students' schooling. More specifically, partnership between school, families and community would strengthen parental involvement in their child's school process, both at school and at home. This parental involvement could have a direct positive effect on young people's schooling.

Aims. The European research project Erasmus + *FavAs* aims to understand the process of school retention and student dropout in secondary schools. More precisely, we try to get a better understanding of how the socio-educational school context of the secondary schools targeted influence the students' school perseverance.

Sample. The research was conducted in three countries: France, Belgium and Luxembourg. Nineteen secondary schools (6 in France, 7 in Belgium and 6 in Luxembourg) involving students from grade 7 to 12 participated in the project. The students' sample is comprised of 4,067 subjects. For parents, the sample include 1,813 subjects. Regarding teachers, we have a sample of 569 professionals.

Method. Samples of parents, students and teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire in order to determine the risk and protective factors of early school leaving by examining the socio-educational environment influence inside each secondary school targeted. Through questionnaires, we questioned parents, teachers and also pupils on common themes where the literature showed the correlation with the process of school retention/dropout/students' school perseverance. Only one article on parental involvement and school-family relations is currently being written to date. The authors are Macià, Dierendonck & Poncelet. This article will be submitted for publication next September.

Results. The article is entitled: "Predictors of parental involvement in children's secondary education in three European countries". The study aims to test the first two levels of Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler and colleagues' model (2007, 2010). This model seeks to better understand why parents decide to get involved in their child's school education. More particularly, four kinds of parental involvement during secondary school has been predicted in the present work: 1) parents' supervision/helping during homework; 2) parents' participation in school activities; 3) parent-child communication about school and 4) parent-teacher communication. Data, collected among 1,320 parents of 12- to 20-year-old adolescents in three different samples in France, Belgium and Luxembourg, were used in the analysis. Observed variables (parents' beliefs) are related to several dimensions: previous school experience, parental self-efficacy to supervise and help homework, school physical environment, several dimensions of school climate, place given by the school to parents and confidence towards school are associated with parents' supervision/helping during homework, parent-child communication about school, parent-teacher communication and participation in school activities. We used

hierarchical regression analyses to test the link between these parents' beliefs and their involvement in their child's secondary school education. Two main results emerge from the analyses. First, besides classical age-related differences, we noted that parents' self-efficacy to supervise homework significantly predicted the four parental involvement variables even when controlling parents' socioeconomic status and educational level. Second, parents' perception regarding the place given to parents in the school and some dimensions of school climate are significantly associated with parental involvement (either at home or in school). This latter result may, however, vary depending on the national sample taken into consideration.

Action-research regarding the development of first mathematical competences: the "MathPlay" research (2018)

Background. The importance of mathematical skills in young children is currently widely emphasised because these skills are good indicators for later mathematical learning. Moreover, 'play based mathematics education' can bring together family and school cultures. The game is indeed universal. It is an important cultural interface tool. It is also important to say that parental involvement has a positive impact on the child's education. The scientific literature highlights significant and positive links between parental involvement in their children's education and attitudes or school achievement. However, there is very little preschool mathematics research involving parents. It seems that parents barely help their children in mathematical learning in preschool for several reasons. First, parents' previous experiences in a given matter plays an important role. In mathematics, parents have often developed a more negative feeling than in reading. Then, in mathematics, they report the use of situations or predefined materials (games, software, etc.) less often. Involving preschool pupils' parents in such mathematical games can probably make maths learning more understandable. In this way, parental competence to support children in mathematics can be reinforced.

Aims. This research project (designed and implemented in Luxembourg, Belgium, France and Switzerland), entitled "Developing preschool mathematics competencies: 'Play Based Mathematics Education' (PBME) setting in school and families", aims to develop early number competences (counting, conservation ability and magnitude comparison, (de)composition numbers) both in school and at home.

Sample. In Luxembourg, four classes constituted the control group (CG) (N = 49) and 11 classes were in the experimental group (EG) (N = 159). More precisely, there were 4 classes in the EG1 (N = 72) where the games were only played in school and there were 7 classes (N = 87) where games were played both in school and at home.

Method. Our play-based approach is based on selected and adapted traditional maths games, well known by families, in order to especially target the competences mentioned above. The research design includes one experimental group (EG) with two treatment conditions (X1 – games in school, X2 – games in school and at home) and one control group (CG). Pupils' numeracy competences were tested three times: before intervention (pretest), directly after intervention (posttest1) and 8 weeks after intervention (posttest2). In order to collect data

among families from EG2, we used three distinct tools: a questionnaire, a log-book and a final interview. *The questionnaire.* Before the intervention, a total of 275 parents (from all four countries) filled out a questionnaire to investigate their beliefs regarding 1) the preschool numeracy competences, and 2) parental involvement. Luxembourgish parents (N = 140) completed the same questionnaire after the intervention in order to measure the impact of the intervention on the dimensions observed by the questionnaire. *Logbook.* The purpose of the logbook is twofold. The first objective is to promote two-way communication between parents and teacher during the 8 weeks of the intervention in order to maximise exchanges on mathematical games, played either in school or at home. The second objective is to collect research data from families on how the games were played at home. To make this document easier to understand for parents, we used pictograms. *The final interview* was conducted, by telephone, at the end of the intervention, with volunteer parents. This interview was only organised for Luxembourgish parents. Some 38 families (out of 87 EG2 families) agreed to take part in the final interview. Key questions were written in relation to the following themes: 1) “games and math” aspects; 2) “school-family relationship” aspects (communication, parental role, parental self-efficacy and parental involvement); and 3) conclusions and perspectives.

Results. In this document, only Luxembourgish results will be outlined. To determine the effect of the intervention in the short term (at the end of the eight weeks of play) and in the medium term (around two months after the end of the intervention), repeated-measurement ANOVAs were conducted on the results observed in the pretest, posttest 1 and posttest 2 depending on the three experimental conditions: 1) control group (CG), 2) the experimental group offering only classroom games (EG1) and 3) the experimental group offering class and family games (EG2). We estimated the students’ competences, at all three times, from a two-parameter IRT (Item Response Theory) model (difficulty and discrimination) calculated using Conquest software. This kind of probabilistic modelling makes it possible to place the 34 items of the test (Cronbach’s alpha of 0.92) as well as the students tested on a common axis of difficulty/discrimination for some and competences for others. The results for the Luxembourg sample (N=140) show statistically significant effects for the pre-posttest comparison 1 between EG1 and CG ($F=5.157$, $p=0.026$) and for the pre-posttest comparison 1 between EG2 and CG ($F=5.453$, $p=0.021$). The magnitude of these effects, estimated from the d_{Morris} , is 0.26 in favour of EG1 and 0.24 in favour of EG2, again in comparison to CG students. In other words, the means of EG1 and EG2 are about one-quarter higher than the mean observed in the control group. The difference observed for the pre-posttest 1 comparison between EG1 and EG2 is not statistically significant ($F=0.029$, $p=0.865$). When posttest 2 is integrated into the repeated-measurement ANOVA, the difference observed between EG1 and CG is no longer statistically significant ($F=2.556$, $p=0.084$) while that observed between EG2 and CG remains ($F=3.996$, $p=0.021$). The analysis shows that in the first case, CG students progressed on average more than EG1 students between posttest1 and posttest 2, while EG2 students continued to progress on average more than CG students during the same period. These results are interesting for several reasons. First, they highlight that the use of mathematical games in the classroom produces positive and statistically significant effects in the short term (EG1 and EG2). They then invite us to conclude that there is no benefit in the family dimension of the intervention

(EG2) in the short term. However, two months after the end of the intervention, we note that on the one hand, the differences decrease between EG1 and CG and, on the other hand, they continue to intensify between EG2 and CG. We thus observe that GE2 children significantly outperform the control group in the immediate and delayed posttest. The data analysis is still ongoing. The next step of family data analysis is to evaluate the impact of family variables on the parents' decision to get involved in their child's school education. We have already started the analysis and the first two main outcomes are the following. First, we point out the positive and significant influence of parents' role construction on parental involvement in school through its two dimensions: participation in school activities and communication with school and teachers. It would seem that parents need to understand that parental involvement in school is part of their responsibilities before deciding to get involved. We also realise that these decisions to be present in school are not influenced by family background variables, SES and home language. Second, we note that there is a link between parental self-efficacy and the frequency with which parents offer informal mathematical activities. Moreover, this trend is reported to be most prevalent among non-Luxembourgish-speaking parents. These observations are both in favour of recommendations to schools and teachers to support parents, whatever their socioeconomic and cultural background, in building their educational role but also in strengthening their self-efficacy. Some scientific articles have already been written in connection with this research¹⁸¹⁹²⁰²¹²² and analyses are ongoing.

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4

Foreign families in the education system. An empirical perspective

Introduction

Method and participants

This chapter presents the results of the empirical research conducted in the first phase of the project. This empirical research had the objective of analysing how schools conceptualise and develop approaches to the integration and involvement of foreign families, and to detect what their main weaknesses and needs are. Thus, to achieve this goal, a qualitative method approach was selected. Specifically, the research team decided to conduct focus groups with parents and teachers, considered as “collective conversations or group interviews” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p.309). The decision to go for this focus group technique (instead of other qualitative techniques) was argued as follows:

1. This technique is especially useful for studies of complex issues, such as beliefs and attitudes that underline behaviour. However, contrary to other qualitative techniques, such as interviews, in focus groups data regarding perceptions and opinions are enriched through group interaction because individual participation can be enhanced in a group setting (Carey, 1994).
2. As stated by Krueger (1988), focus groups allow us to collect “richness of data at reasonable cost” (p.177).

Therefore, the focus group technique was considered the most suitable for achieving the aforementioned project goal. Regarding the sample, the research team agreed to conduct 2 focus groups per country, one with migrant families and the other with professional staff, since homogeneity (in terms of prestige and status, such as social class, family characteristics, etc.) is considered to be useful because people are more likely to share information with others who are seen as similar (Krueger, 1988). Thus, as we wanted to know both points of view (from families and professionals), we decided to carry out 2 different focus groups in each country.

Regarding selection of group members, the research team agreed that each national team (that is, the partners of the project at national level) would select the most suitable participants for collecting personal experiences and beliefs related to the designated topic, establishing an

optimal group size of between 5 and 12 members per session. However, a common criterion for the 3 countries was established: for the focus group with teachers, at least one professional from each collaborating school would participate in the project (8 schools in total); for the focus group with families (in order to make contact with participants easier), just one collaborating school was involved, so all the group members of the parents' focus group came from the same school.

The following sections will describe more concretely the participants' selection and the data collection processes conducted in each country.

Catalonia (Spain)

The teachers' focus group was organised on Thursday 25 April 2019 (at 3 pm). Participants in this focus group were 11 head teachers and/or representatives of the school management team (one representative per school, and in some cases, 2 per school). This profile of educational professionals was chosen by the Catalan team because they are the ones who best know how the schools work (including the area of migrant families and school partnership). The criteria for school selection are the following:

- Schools set in Barcelona city.
- State and state-assisted private schools.
- Schools that had a percentage of migration between 10% and 40%.

Table 1 shows the profile of the schools involved in this research. The teachers' focus group lasted 2 hours and 30 minutes.

TABLE 1. PROFILE OF THE CATALAN SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH

School name	State/private (state-assisted)	Number of students	Percentage of migrant students
Escola Rambleta del Clot	State	425	34%
Escola Mare de Déu de Núria	State-assisted	341	11%
Escolàpies Sant Martí	State-assisted	535	8.3%
Escola Pau Casals - Horta	State	216	12%
Escola MD Montserrat	State	215	30.69%
Escola Taxonera	State	413	40%
Escola l'Heura	State	217	13.82%
Escola Casas	State-assisted	224	12.05%

Source: own elaboration.

The parents' focus group was also organised on Thursday 25 April 2019, but from 6 pm to 8 pm in order to facilitate their attendance (in compliance with parents' family-work balance). The school selected to involve families in this part of the research was the "Escola Rambleta del Clot". The representatives of this school management team contacted families that met the selection criteria, which were the following:

- Representatives of different nationalities (the most representative nationalities of the school).
- Similar number of mothers and fathers (thus contemplating the parity issue).
- Families with some communication skills in Spanish.

Of the families contacted, 7 agreed to participate in the study (Table 2). This focus group lasted 1 hour and 40 minutes.

TABLE 2. FOCUS GROUP WITH PARENTS: PARTICIPANTS' FEATURES

	Country of origin	Mother or Father
1	Maghreb (Morocco)	Father
2	Maghreb (Morocco)	Mother
3	Central America (El Salvador)	Mother
4	South America (Argentina)	Father
5	South America (Peru)	Father
6	Georgia	Mother
7	China	Mother

Source: own elaboration.

Brescia (Italy)

The teachers' focus group was organised on Wednesday 3 April 2019 and eleven teachers took part in it (see Table 3). They were teachers responsible for intercultural education in their school or a primary school teacher (in particular, colleagues of these reference points). The teachers' focus group lasted 1 hour and 56 minutes. The following are the criteria for school selection:

- Schools representing the whole territory of Brescia (the city and its province).
- State schools.

- Primary schools embodied in comprehensive institutes.
- Schools with a high percentage of foreign students.
- Schools with immigrant students coming from several countries.

TABLE 3. FOCUS GROUP WITH TEACHERS: PARTICIPANTS' FEATURES

	Sex	Status
1	Female	Representative teacher for migrant students (in Comprehensive Institutes of Adro)
2	Female	Reference point of the "Brescia city and hinterland" CIT (Intercultural Territorial Centre) ¹
3	Female	Primary school teacher (in Comprehensive Institutes Ovest 1 of Brescia)
4	Female	Reference point of the "Bassa bresciana" CIT
5	Female	Representative teacher for migrant students (in Comprehensive Institutes of Manerbio)
6	Male	Representative teacher for migrant students (in Comprehensive Institutes of Pontoglio)
7	Female	Representative teacher for migrant students (in Comprehensive Institutes of Vobarno)
8	Female	Reference point of the "Val Trompia" CIT
9	Female	Primary school teacher (in Comprehensive Institute Gardone Val Trompia)
10	Female	Reference point of the "Garda – Val Sabbia" CIT
11	Female	Representative teacher for migrant students (in Comprehensive Institutes of Darfo 1)

Source: own elaboration.

The parents' focus group was organised on Friday 26 April 2019. All migrant parents at the Adro school were asked to fill in a form asking them: their country of origin, their Italian level regarding listening comprehension and speaking skills (options: low, medium, high) and their potential availability to take part in the focus group (providing them with a list of possible dates). After that, according to this information, some of them were contacted and involved in the study (Table 4). The following are the selection criteria:

- Similar number of mothers and fathers (due to differing parental availability between mothers and fathers, the real group was imbalanced).

1. In the province of Brescia, we have 7 CITs (Intercultural Territorial Centre), two in the city of Brescia and 5 in the province. The CIT is a reference point for the inclusion of students with immigrant students in schools. CITs are centres created in 2004-2005 to support the schools of the territory in: documenting activities and collecting data, sharing and spreading good educational practices, optimizing human and economic resources, promoting networks. In each CIT there is a representative teacher with particular tasks: training school staff in intercultural education; supporting teachers, head teachers, school offices and public institutions in the welcoming and integration process; helping students during school choices; fostering the active participation of migrant families and relationships among all families.

- Parents with a high or medium level of spoken Italian knowledge.
- Representatives of different nationalities.

The parents' focus group lasted 2 hours and 3 minutes.

TABLE 4. FOCUS GROUP WITH PARENTS: PARTICIPANTS' FEATURES

	Country of origin	Mother or Father	Italian level	Present/Absent
1	Senegal	Father	High	Absent
2	Morocco	Mother	High	Present
3	Morocco	Mother	High	Absent
4	Serbia	Mother	Medium	Present
5	Bosnia	Mother	High	Present
6	Kosovo	Father	High	Present
7	Kosovo	Mother	High	Present
8	Albania	Mother	High	Present
9	Pakistan	Mother	High	Present

Source: own elaboration.

Luxembourg

The teachers' focus group was organised during lunchtime on Monday 13 May 2019. Six teachers, one specialised educator and the teacher of the welcome course took part in these exchanges. These teachers represent the different school levels of the Luxembourgish elementary school (from preschool to cycle 4, the last level in primary school in Luxembourg). Some of them were the qualification coordinators. The focus group lasted 50 minutes.

Regarding the parents' focus group, they were contacted by the teacher of the welcome course in the "Ecole fondamentale Niederkorn": she sent, via the children, an invitation to take part in the focus group. Ten parents completed the reply stub and agreed to be volunteers to exchange with other parents on the welcome and integration of migrant families. The parents' focus group was organised on Wednesday 19 June 2019. However, although ten parents had agreed to participate in the research, when the time came, only four parents were present at the meeting. When the teacher contacted the absent parents by phone, they replied either that they had forgotten or they were unable to attend. The four parents who attended the meeting come from four different countries: Portugal, Italy, Montenegro and Spain. In order to make the exchanges between parents easier, four intercultural mediators (from the Ministry) were contacted by the welcome teacher and were present at the meeting. They were supposed to offer a translation during the focus group. However, given the situation (four parents present

with four different nationalities), the moderator (that is, the member of the University team) decided, together with the intercultural mediators, to organise individual interviews. The parents were questioned, in an individual and more personal way, about the five dimensions of parental involvement. They spontaneously made this choice (taking interviews instead of focus groups) because there was no common language for the four participants.

Data collection and the 5 dimensions analysed

Both focus groups were conducted by a moderator (from the University) with the presence of an observer. A semi-structured grid of questions was given to each discussion group based on similar inputs shared among all three countries. All the questions addressed both to parents and to teachers referred to the five dimensions of the study, thus creating five discussion sections, which are the following:

1. Welcome of migrant families and their integration.
2. What migrant families know about the local education system.
3. Parent-school communication.
4. Parental involvement in the school setting.
5. Parental support at home and academic socialisation.

Parental involvement in the school setting, as well as parental support at home and academic socialisation, are the two broad dimensions of parental involvement analysed, as the literature suggests (Camacho-Thompson, Gillen-O'Neel, Gonzales & Fuligni, 2016; Wang, Deng & Yang, 2016). This multidimensionality of the concept is of great importance when studying migrant families and/or with a low socioeconomic background in order to avoid the misconception that migrant families are not involved in their children's education at all (as argued in the introduction to the book). But, why did the research team decide also to analyse the other three dimensions mentioned above (welcome and integration; knowledge and communication)?

When looking at migrant families, it is also essential to consider the challenges they must often face as a consequence of structuring new lives in a culture unknown to them: they must develop new understandings about the world, establish new social networks, learn the host language and learn new ways of functioning, e.g. regarding medical and educational services for their children (Pérez, Drake & Calabrese, 2005). This situation implies that nearly all minority migrant families face more barriers to involvement than native-born parents do (Pérez et al., 2005; Turney & Kao, 2009), including cultural, socioeconomic and language barriers. However, there is a fairly broad consensus that parental involvement stands in need of an effective family-school partnership, which could enhance parents' willingness to be involved in their children's education. Confidence and trust, respect and esteem, as well

as a sense of parents' belonging to school, are imperatives to establish a good relationship between the two agents and therefore to achieve high levels of parental involvement. In this regard, communication between families and schools, as well as the welcome by the school, is fundamental in creating such an atmosphere of understanding and respect (Garreta, 2015; Graham-Clay, 2005; Thompson & Mazer, 2012). However, at the practical level, some parents do not feel welcome at their child's school (Turney & Kao, 2009); many parents were unfamiliar with school policies, the host education system or with particular situations and events (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Williams & Sánchez, 2013); and communication with parents is particularly complicated due to families' lack of confidence in the language of the host society, thus becoming communication in the form of texts (newsletters, emails, etc.), arguably the prime means of communication between schools and parents, as an ineffective means of communication (Rah, Choi & Suong Thi, 2009). To summarise, welcoming/integration, knowledge and communication are three important factors influencing parental involvement in schools. This is why the research team decided to include these three dimensions in the study of parental involvement, along with school-based and home-based involvement.

Results of focus groups in Spain (Monica Macia. University of Lleida)

1. Welcome of migrant families and their integration

First weak point: how do we welcome the families?

In Catalonia, the welcome of newly-arrived students (and, by extension, the welcome of their families too) is inseparable from how the schools work, as every year new children arrive from different countries. However, this arrival of foreign students in the school occurs at the start of every academic year, but it also occurs at any other time of the year, leading to what schools call a rolling enrolment. In other words, there is a percentage of families that enrol their children in school when they come to Catalonia, meaning new students (and families) are joining the school throughout the whole of the school year. Faced with this situation, schools carry out different actions to welcome and include these students and their families into the education system, although each school has its own welcome protocol with regard to the families. The first step is usually the same in the majority of schools: the school administrator, normally accompanied by a member of the management team, takes care of formalising all the bureaucratic and administrative procedures with the families, who complete all the legal papers required for their children to join formal Catalan education. However, from this point on, every school operates differently. There are schools that, due to the high percentage of migrant students that they take in, have welcome classroom teachers and Social Integration Experts (SIE - [TIS in Catalan]), who are responsible for the whole relationship with the families: in the first instance, it is the welcome classroom teacher who has the initial contact with the families, talks to them and shows them the school. After this, the SIE interviews the families to find out how they are and what services they need, and to inform them of the different neighbourhood and community services.

“We have an SIE, the figure of the SIE, a social integration expert. So, evidently when they arrive, the first person who welcomes the family is the administrator. If I (the head teacher) am there, I also welcome them, but sometimes I'm not there. And it's the administrator who welcomes

them. Then, we ask for all their details, and so on. And then, what we always do, when they arrive, there's someone who's the welcome class teacher, who takes a look at the academic level and talks to the parents (...) the welcome person shows them all of the school, takes the child into the classroom, presents them to their classmates... And then the social integration expert takes a look at how the family is at that time, how they came here, if they've needed any service and... deals with the more social matters." (Teacher)

Other schools that do not have these professionals use the academic coordinators or the representatives of the management teams to carry out this 'information' task with the families.

"So the head teacher makes the initial contact. And then, with the academic coordinators, we give them a bit of a tour of the school and the initial contact. (Teacher)

The information that they provide and the time scale in which they do it is also different. Some schools use the initial contact with the families to show them the school and the teachers, so that before the student begins classes, the families already know the areas of the school, the classroom where their child will be and their classmates and teacher. According to some professionals, this previous knowledge increases the confidence of families in the school and means that the relationship begins between both educational agents on a favourable footing.

"From the first day, both the family and the child know who will be the reference point and she is the one who will welcome them on the first day. That grounds them a lot and gives them a lot of peace of mind. When they just see the classroom and the classmates and the teacher, you see the families relax." (Teacher)

There are schools that, with the same aim, conduct an individual interview between the family and the student's tutor after the initial family-school contact, but also before the child starts classes. Similarly, there are schools that split the information that they give the families into two different moments: on first contact, they just provide very basic information, and after a time, they conduct an interview with the families to talk about more complex issues, such as their family situation, the needs they have or the child's academic level.

"We pay a lot of attention to welcoming the family. So that they get to know the school, they get to know the people who will be looking after their child... (...) So that the family gets to know the space, the people, the tutor... and so that they know exactly who they can talk to. Afterwards, when they've got the hang of things and they have more trust in us, we go on to more specific issues regarding needs, contacting services, the children's academic level, etc. We do all of this, but not at the start. We give them space. We think that first they arrive, then they get used to it and feel calm and happy, and then we carry on." (Teacher)

To summarise, schools in Catalonia welcome newly-arrived families when they come to the school, but there is no general welcome protocol to guide professionals in what the best strategies are for ensuring harmony between family and school right from the very start. In fact, some representatives of management teams highlight this lack of general guidelines in welcoming families (something that does exist with regard to students) and they call for actions in this respect.

“I really think that we are more organised in terms of welcoming the children themselves, than in welcoming the families. I think we do a very good job welcoming the children, and it’s very well organised, more so than with the families. For example, of course, when you explain that you showed them the school, we don’t show new families the school (...). And when we talk about the education system, for example, you explain either queries or things to do with the secretary’s office, but we don’t have a protocol to say, OK, the family has these queries, I’ll show the family the school...” (Teacher)

Second weak point: what happens after the first days?

Until now, we have looked at how schools attend, inform and welcome families on first arriving at the school. However, a significant concern that a number of representatives of management teams have shown is the lack of continuity to carry on welcoming and integrating the families beyond the first few days. In other words, in many schools, actions are needed so that families steadily feel an increase in their sense of belonging to the educational community of which they are, theoretically, a part the moment they enrol their children in the school.

“I think that with the families, we finish the job quickly. We give them a lot of such-and-such. We give them all the information, but OK, then you adapt. Then, this is where our work is, where we should try to improve (...). Then, I think we have to set out guidelines, and this is where I agree with you, we’ve systematised everything to do with the student, but a great handicap is the family... we give them information, we talk to them in Chinese, we give them such-and-such, but in a rush. Then, very often, here is where we should ask for help. The great handicap is, now we have the family, we’ve given them all the information, now HOW DO WE CARE FOR THEM? I mean, accompanying is caring, isn’t it? An important fact is to say, well, how do we carry on caring for them?” (Teacher)

For their part, the families rate the first welcome they get from the schools positively, saying that in the majority of cases, they receive friendly and affectionate treatment from the professionals at the school. However, they also express the need for schools to improve monitoring and support for families throughout the school year (and not just the first time that they go to the school).

“It would be good if we knew we could count on some type of monitoring, support... the school is always open. They say the same thing all the time. If you have any issue, don’t hesitate to come and see us. If they can’t see you, they’ll give you an appointment for another day. But perhaps it would be good to have this possibility from day one. For newly-arrived families, especially, to feel a little bit more consistency. (Parent)

To this effect, the schools highlight the role of the tutor and/or educational psychology office as the key figures in carrying out this task of ongoing support and accompaniment. However, what actions can we take to achieve this care for families of foreign origin? Over the following pages, we will be proposing different strategies for improving the knowledge, communication and involvement of families at home and in the school, which will consequently help them make the families feel accompanied throughout their children’s schooling, and therefore, to feel integrated in the educational community. Despite this, and focusing on newly-arrived families, a very specific action that could be taken is to conduct an interview a short time after their arrival at the school (after a month or two), to find out how they are, what queries they

have, how they are experiencing settling into their new country and help them minimise all those doubts and insecurities that will surely have arisen.

“And now I thought, when the family comes, we welcome them and so on, but it’s never occurred to me after a month to call them in, sit down with them and say how are you? To say, after a month, a month and a half, I’ll call them in and we’ll sit down calmly, and we no longer have the bewilderment of the right of personal portrayal, the right to I don’t know what... and we sit down and say how are you? All well? What do you like most about the school? What don’t you fully understand yet? I don’t do it. But I think it could be a way of doing a monitoring protocol, that isn’t too difficult, evidently, but to say, after a month, call them in calmly, on a more one-to-one basis.” (Teacher)

Third weak point: how do we improve the relationship between newly-arrived families and the rest of the educational community?

As we explained in the previous section, a significant weakness with regard to the welcome and integration of newly-arrived families is the lack of support actions for these families by the professionals beyond the first few days of arriving at the school. However, to foster the feeling among these families of belonging to the educational community, alongside these actions of a more individual nature, we need to promote knowledge and relations between the different families and integrate the new newly-arrived family in the educational community (in the broadest sense of the term). To this effect, some foreign families say that there is often this lack of integration of newly-arrived families in the class group as there is no strategy to facilitate this knowledge and relationship.

“I see in my son’s year that families come and you have no idea that they’re there or not... they’re not even in the Whatsapp group because, of course, you turn up in the morning, you leave your kid, and then you pick them up. And there’s no way to get to know each other. There’s no way to establish a tie with a family. And how to bridge the gap with them, how to get to know the family... how you give them information... there have been families who didn’t even know for nine months that there was a Whatsapp group, or what people talked about, or what was decided... and it wasn’t a language issue.” (Parent)

Similarly, the professionals in some schools also express the wish to improve the integration of the newly-arrived family in the educational community, fostering knowledge and inter-relation between the different families. In fact, they see it as a key weak point on which we need to act if we want to improve this welcome and integration of newly-arrived families.

“In our school, a weak point is that we should perhaps do more so that that family relates with other families in the school. Because they arrive, we welcome them academically, a more administrative welcome, papers and so on... and then we do the social welcome. But I think that we forget a very important one: how that family enters the school’s educational community. So I think that that’s a weak point that we have and that we should work on and that right now I think we’re not doing well enough.” (Teacher)

However, the fact that schools see this need does not mean that they are not doing anything about it. In a lot of schools, the tutor presents the new family to other families of the same

cultural origin so that these can help them with school matters (and, if appropriate, social matters too). However, they recognise that in most cases, they are spontaneous actions that depend on the tutor, when it should be a protocol strategy in every school.

“When the tutor welcomes the new family, and they have parents from the same culture and with the same language in their group, we do try to introduce them to each other. See, this family is, I don’t know, Georgian, and they can tell you. We do that. But it depends a bit on the tutor, we don’t have it as an established thing.” (Teacher)

However, we also find schools where this problem of families knowing each other does not exist, as most of them come from the same neighbourhood or urban area, and therefore, they already know each other, which greatly aids the integration of the newly-arrived family in the school and the educational community. Despite this, schools where this circumstance does not arise need to carry out actions to improve this integration of the newly-arrived family in the educational community. To this effect, families and professionals set out two proposed actions to achieve this: working with national families and looking for a reference father or mother that the newly-arrived family can talk to. The professionals explain that, very often, it is taken as read that everyone wants to integrate. In other words, the families that are already part of the educational community and who have to welcome another family arriving want to do so. However, given the diversity of characters, ideologies and ways of being of the families, this is not always the case. Consequently, schools need to work so that the families as a whole are very aware that the school’s wish is to work closely with everyone, and that to achieve this, good understanding and relations between all the members of the educational community is needed. What is needed, therefore, is to foster intercultural skills in all the families; in other words, try to get families to have an open and welcoming attitude, to value the diversity of cultures in the school and to be interested in getting to know and enriching themselves from others, without hermetically sealing themselves in their own values and culture. For their part, families suggest that newly-arrived families have a reference figure in the class who they can trust and talk to.

“I think it’s important that before coming in, these new families have some link, even if it’s just by sight, of introduction, with an experienced family that knows the year their child will be going into (...) And perhaps that, give like a welcome.” (Parent)

2. What migrant families know about the local education system

First weak point: how far do foreign families know the school and our education system?

On open doors days, when families visit the school, in group meetings at the start of the year, in individual interviews... all of these are moments when the professionals in the school tell the families (in general) what the school timetable is, how it is organised and how it works, the pedagogies and methodologies that they use, the materials that the students have to bring to the classroom, and a whole long list of information. However, despite every school devoting space and time to informing the families (again, all the families in general), the professionals are aware of the little knowledge that foreign families have of the school and our education system. This is also stated by the parents. Therefore, the conclusion is clear: one-

way communication (from the school to the family) does not work. In the first place, it does not work because very often the message is not decoded correctly by the recipient. In other words, despite the schools informing families about essential aspects of how the school works, the foreign parents scarcely know the Catalan language and, occasionally, are even illiterate in their own language, which greatly hinders the correct decoding and understanding of the message. Secondly, one-way communication is not entirely effective as there is information that needs to be given with greater assiduity and continuity to boost the families' knowledge of some essential aspects of their children's education, such as the educational plan or the children's progress in the classroom. Therefore, in this weak point, we embrace two types of problem related to the families' lack of knowledge of the school: the lack of common codes between families and schools so that the information that the teachers give reaches its recipients (the parents), and the non-existence or lack of continuity of some information by schools.

With regard to the first block of messages (the ones that the schools give but that families do not decode correctly), we find information about the general running of the school and about the pedagogical and methodological system that is used. One of the families speaks with concern about the lack of information that some families have about how the school works.

"Something that attracted my attention, about the school... is that... I saw how diverse in origins my child's class was. Because we were from very many different countries. And I saw several parents who didn't understand how the school worked. Even already having experience, it was difficult to know, I found it difficult to know how it worked on the first day." (Parent)

To improve this, the proposal is to have a specific meeting at the start of the school year with the foreign families where they are told, using codes that the families can understand, how the school works and the basic information that they need to know.

"Maybe have meetings a bit, at the start of classes, of the year, bring the families together by origin and have a meeting where they are told what the first day of class is like, in the infants, and in primary, what the education system is like... this is very important." (Parent)

However, the issue that most concerns parents and professionals is the lack of knowledge that families have of the pedagogical system and the methodological innovations that many schools in Catalonia are introducing. According to both educational agents, there is a big cultural distance between the pedagogical systems of the countries of origin of foreign families (especially those coming from China, South America and Morocco, where a more memory-based and traditional type of education still prevails), and our education systems, immersed in continuous processes of methodological innovation. This distance, evidently, hinders these families' understanding of what their children are doing and learning in the classroom, and they consequently ask for specific actions by the schools. One of the professionals expresses it as follows:

"For example, if you want to do something more innovative, 'the thing is, the children are playing'. 'No, the children aren't playing.' Then you explain it to them, and there are a lot of

families, the South Americans, or the Arabs, or the Chinese, who... they have to swot. And that's when it gets complicated. Now that we're trying to innovate, and so on... with many South American, Arab, Chinese families, that's hard. It's hard because they come from another... they're at another time. Neither better, nor worse. They're at another time. And understanding that is difficult." (Teacher)

For their part, the families focus their discourse not so much on the families' difficulty in understanding, but on the need for schools to extend information moments beyond the initial meetings. In other words, as we have said, families are aware of the cultural distance between the two pedagogical systems (that of the country of origin and the Catalan one), and they ask to be informed and trained, in a deeper and more ongoing way, in the new methodologies that are being rolled out in schools in Catalonia.

"Perhaps what's needed is for them to tell us more how the new pedagogical model works. Because we all come from a very different educational model. One where you had to set homework, where the first thing you learnt was to add up, then to subtract, multiply... and now everything's much more holistic. To understand that, and to know how to act as mentor in this type of methodology, is a learning curve for us. Because of course, now working on project-based knowledge spirals is very good. But maybe we need, for peace of mind and not to be pressuring the children, our children, about... now you can't add up. We need someone to tell us how it works, I mean, to mentor us, give us this learning, because it's like... learning and unlearning. And of course, I think it's a failing by the school, listening to them, it's a failing by the school, because there's so much commitment to this model, that they're not giving this learning for the parents." (Parent)

With regard to the second block of messages (the ones that the schools should be enhancing because they are scarce), the families especially mention the lack of information about how the assessment system works in these new pedagogies and the lack of knowledge of how students' learning is monitored as they do not know what the children do in the classroom. In both cases, they are requests expressed by immigrant families as a group, which, as can be inferred, are the consequence of, or related to, the roll-out of methodological innovations. In other words, the fact that the schools are rolling out new methodologies, where learning is holistic and textbooks are not used, means that the families do not know how their children are assessed, what they are learning at school and how they as parents can help them at home, as they do not see the typical school textbook with the homework they have to do. With regard to assessment, one of the families stated the following:

"For example, in matters of assessment, I didn't hear any talk about how assessment was done. I learnt when I received the first report, which was with letters... but the truth is that we didn't receive it. In this aspect, we're learning as we go along." (Parent)

However, if assessment is an issue that concerns them, and they ask for more information in this regard, the families especially focus their complaints on a lack of information about the students' learning. In other words, the principal request made by families is for schools to keep them much more informed about what their children do in the classroom and about their progress in the class group.

“I don’t know, there should be a class meeting, for example, where all the parents come, and they talk about things that happen, or the progress there is. We don’t know how the children’s development is going. Once a year, or halfway through the year, we know (with the report card), but we don’t know if the children have learnt anything, or they’ve done this, or they’ve done that, because they don’t bring homework home, and we don’t know what they’ve done in the day, or what they looked at in class, or what the project they did was about... Nothing, it’s zero. Zero communications. I don’t hear a thing.” (Parent)

In addition, the families establish a direct relationship between this lack of knowledge and the impossibility of helping their children at home with their school learning, something they perceive as a significant distancing between the family and the school. In other words, the lack of knowledge about what the students are doing in the classroom has a negative influence on the families’ involvement at home, as by not knowing what the children are working on, it is very difficult for them to reinforce the learning at home, a task they feel to be fundamental and essential to be able to help their children make good progress in their education. In fact, among immigrant families as a group, this concern at not being able to help their children at home is a burning issue for which a response needs to be given.

“We don’t find out what the children’s basis is. We don’t know what situation they’re in, what they learnt, what they didn’t learn, what they find difficult... that communication is non-existent. It doesn’t exist. We find out about the term because we read the reports, which are extremely long, and are in Catalan, obviously. But that’s where you find out what they studied. But how can you mentor your child? The term’s over. And what do I help them with? And how” (Parent)

“That’s what’s needed. You have to say it beforehand so you can work with them (...) If it’s finished, what do you do? You have to say it beforehand so I can work with them. And see what they need.” (Parent)

Consequently, the families propose that schools should send regular information about what the students are working on in class and what they will be doing on the following school days. In other words, the school should share the teaching schedule with them, and subsequently involve them in their children’s academic learning.

“It would be quite important for the teachers to have a programme. They’ve got their schedule, for the term, for the year... they’ve already done it, because everything is set out. It would be brilliant if they told us what topics they’ll be doing monthly, perhaps, or weekly. Some idea, at least.” (Parent)

This is a proposal, in fact, that many professionals in schools agree with. To this effect, there are schools in Catalonia that already undertake actions to mitigate this lack of information for families as a consequence of the non-use of text books and the ousting in the classrooms of memory-based learning. The most common strategy is to hold various meetings with the families in the class group throughout the school year to inform them what is being done in the classroom and how the group is progressing in the learning that they are doing.

“That meeting is: what have we done? What are we doing? And what are we going to do? That’s the agenda (...) Then, this meeting is tutor-class. And they sit in a circle. And we tell them, well,

what we said in the first meeting, well we're here, we've done this, the class group is evolving well... there's such-and-such a dynamic, they find this a little bit hard, but they're brilliant at that... And we give a bit of feedback. Because we thought, you see the parents at the start, and then you don't see them again." (Teacher)

Second weak point: do we know them?

As has been set out so far, the schools need to work to increase the families' knowledge of the Catalan education system, the school and what is done in the school. However, there is another significant gap in terms of knowledge, and in this case, it relates to the teachers as a group: the need for teachers in every school to be aware of and to know the education systems of other countries, and the cultural and social ways of doing things in other parts of the world. This knowledge is essential for fostering the intercultural skill of the professionals in a school; a necessary and indispensable skill for better understanding the behaviour and thoughts of these families, and to have an open attitude and dialogue with them.

"They have very, very, very dictatorial ways of doing things. That's that and you don't move because if you do... and that's all clear. What do they want? What don't they want? We also have to understand that. All of that really grabs my attention and how we need to know a lot about it ourselves. Who do we want to integrate? And if we don't know who we have to integrate? And how?" (Teacher)

Therefore, teacher training in this sense is needed. Training (either initial or continuous) that highlights the most important cultural and educational traits of the countries with a high percentage of migration to Catalonia, such as Morocco, Pakistan and China, as knowing, understanding and valuing their customs and ways of doing things might help a lot towards improving the understanding and relationship between school and immigrant families.

"I think we also need to foster the mutual knowledge of cultures, the most basic traits. Like the Chinese, for example, knowing a little because they have so many problems with gender and name, or things like that. Having a basic knowledge of their language and their culture, and their system. Because otherwise..." (Teacher)

"When they came, I thought, wow, South Americans are coming, how easy, because it's the same language. But no, we're very different! Very, very different! And then, I think we have to get to know each other. There's a bit of mistrust, from them towards us. Because I think they don't understand us. And we don't either. We don't either." (Teacher)

3. Parent-school communication

First weak point: the Catalan language... how to overcome the language barrier?

The official language of Catalan schools is Catalan. This means that all teaching, and the official communications that the school makes (whether it is with the families or between professionals or with the rest of the educational community), are also in this language. This is the great drawback in family-school communication. Very often, the immigrant families

do not know this language, as when they come to Catalonia, the first language they learn is Spanish (which differs quite a lot from Catalan). This is the best of all cases, as there are also families that have almost zero knowledge of either language (they do not learn either Catalan or Spanish), which further hinders family-school communication much more. In light of this situation, professionals and families are aware that the language barrier is a very high wall that must, in some way, be overcome if we wish to improve the information and understanding between both educational agents, although it is the immigrant parents, especially, who show great concern for this issue, as by not knowing the language, they do not receive the information sent to them by the school.

“We saw there were a lot of people who didn’t understand everything they had to do, from the basic information. Because everything that’s information comes only in Catalan (...) Our question is, what about the children, with all the instructions they take home in their backpack, they’re in Catalan... and you don’t know. You don’t know when there are assemblies, you don’t know what you’ve got to take, you don’t know if there’s a school trip tomorrow...” (Parent)

The lack of information, therefore, is the first consequence of the language barrier. The second is the repercussion that this lack of information has on the families’ involvement in the school. As many families do not understand Catalan, and in the majority of schools, all the information is in this language (except for the individual interviews, where the teachers use Spanish to ensure communication), many families no longer go to the school when there are group meetings or when there are activities in which families can take part.

“The interview in Spanish, yes. Everything else in Catalan. That’s why sometimes we don’t take part. Then they complain because you don’t go. I don’t go because I don’t understand a thing! I do go to the interview because it’s my child and it’s in Spanish, but everything in Catalan and we don’t understand anything. It’s a big problem for us. We don’t understand what they’re saying, how the school works. Only in Catalan.” (Parent)

Finally, the third consequence is the distancing that occurs between the two worlds (family and school), as many immigrant families see this insistence of schools on the Catalan language as a lack of willingness by teachers as a group to integrate foreign families.

“I understand it’s the official language, but it’s also seeing a bit what the reality of the school is. I mean, if in the end you want cohesion, participation and to create an educational community, and for the parents to get involved, there at least have to be various ways of getting the information across.” (Parent)

To reverse this situation, the families propose that all school communications should be made in two languages, whether this is Catalan and Spanish, Catalan and English, or Catalan and any other majority language of the families in the school.

“And the marks, they’re only in Catalan too. I don’t know, perhaps in two languages. I don’t know what two... whether Spanish, or English... I don’t know. But, of course, it would be fantastic. That would help a lot, whether it’s on a digital platform, or email, or on paper, or whatever. But two languages, at least.” (Parent)

It should be said, however, that despite the families' criticism of the use of Catalan as the only communication code between family and school, they also value the effort made by some teachers beyond the institutional rules. According to the families, many professionals use the times when the students enter and leave to explain to the families, in Spanish or English, the information that they will be getting by email or circular to ensure that the message reaches its recipient and so aid this communication between the foreign family and the school.

"The teachers, with the little time they have at the end of the day, try to explain to you in Spanish, in English... but they're personal resources. Individual resources each one has, to try to have some closeness with the families. But, what if you don't have it?" (Parent)

However, we need to be very aware that this resource is simply an individual option of each particular teacher, and therefore, effective communication between family and school should not have to depend on this teacher goodwill. In addition, schools use interpreters or cultural mediators on very few occasions, as the economic cuts that the country suffered over the last decade have very greatly reduced public expenditure on this type of resource, so they are seen as a resource that schools can only request for very occasional issues and in very specific cases.

Second weak point: do we use the best communication channels to inform and communicate with foreign families?

Schools use a great variety of communication channels to inform and communicate with families (in general). For one-way communication (from the school to the families), most widely used are group meetings at the start of the school year, circulars, emails and digital platforms. For two-way communication (i.e. the reciprocal exchange of messages), the most frequent means of communication are individual interviews (which are normally done once a year, as this is the legally required minimum), the school diary and informal contacts on entering and leaving the school.

We began the analysis with group meetings at the start of the school year. Generally speaking, the management teams say that there is little attendance by families (and less still by immigrant families) at these informative meetings, which are done as compulsory at the start of every academic year in every school in Catalonia. There is one very clear reason for this: many families do not attend the meeting because they do not understand what they are being told. Firstly, and as principal barrier, is language. Secondly, we find the use of often too technical and complex language, which causes even families who have a basic knowledge of Catalan to find many difficulties in decoding the message. To reverse this situation, schools are now rolling out a number of strategies that appear to improve, slightly, parental attendance at the meetings, but they still do not reach the subject of our study: foreign families. The actions that schools are carrying out include, in the first place, the use of mobile apps that help give families a voice, so that these meetings are a little more participative and interactive.

"We used an app with the mobile that we then said we'd hold an interactive meeting. Because we want to communicate, and if there is only our communication, and your participation doesn't exist, we're not communicating, we're holding court. So, with the mobile, we went in and

there on the whiteboard were words. And we told them, you write words. And we gave them examples. Like dining room. And then we explained all the words that came up. And with that, we said, the same, when we prepared the speech. But it was a bit, we're listening to what you want to know from us." (Teacher)

There are also schools that, with this aim of carrying out more participative actions, do very experiential meetings, where the parents experience first-hand the same as their children do in the classroom. A third proposal is to include the children's participation in these group meetings. For example, there are schools that screen a video where the children of the families attending explain the general school rules or what they expect of the academic year that has just started. However, as we have said, despite these small changes in the group meetings, the families continue not to participate. So, what should schools do? According to the management teams, something needs to be done about it. Among the actions or measures that they propose are the following: give very clear and specific information; limit meetings to 45 minutes; it is essential to provide a welcome service for the children; hold meetings by year or class group rather than by cycle; and do meetings in the afternoon, just when the children are coming out of class.

The circulars (messages written in paper format) are the second communication channel that schools use to send information to all the families, in this case constantly. In the opinion of the professionals, this does not work either.

"The matter of circulars. They don't look at them much. We sent one out on Monday, and today a mother came and asked me everything that was on the paper. And you think, good grief, we sent it out on Monday. Today's Wednesday." (Teacher)

According to the professionals, the fact that these circulars are often very long and complex means that families with language limitations do not read them. Therefore, the circulars need to be short and direct. However, this adaptation of circulars to more visual and simpler formats appears, in many cases, not to work either.

"I've gone to another stage of circulars. We use photos... we use the colour green, which is the corporate colour, if you like, instead of bold, green... we make them dynamic. But we haven't really got that far with it." (Teacher)

Therefore, perhaps schools need to consider whether this communication channel is the most suitable for fostering and improving communication between teachers and foreign families. In this vein, in fact, we find some of the statements of the management teams, who say that there are other much more effective channels for achieving this one-way information between the school and foreign families. These channels are information posters at the entrance to the school or in places where families can see them and, especially, word of mouth at informal contact times on entering and leaving school.

"What works best for us are posters. Large posters, with lots of colours, and different, they have to be very different from each other so that they see clearly that they've changed. On the notice

boards, where we have one on each door, and at the entrance doors to the nursery school. There where the parents go in, there's a large poster, DIN-A3, huge. With attractive drawings." (Teacher)

"What we decided, because of the nature of the environment we're in, you practically do a tutorial every day, because the tutors are on the door, they're always there." (Teacher)

Finally, we need to discuss the digital communication channels. A significant number of schools in Catalonia have already started transforming their communication and they send information notes to the families via digital platforms. However, this is not a channel that families adopt enthusiastically from the start. In fact, several families say that with the use of these new communication channels, the lack of information they suffer is even greater than before. In other words, we have to add a new barrier to the language barriers mentioned earlier: the technology barrier.

"And, and then, I think it was since last year or this year, Tocap, which is an information app. I don't know how it works for them, but for me it's hopeless. Since there's been the app, I haven't got a clue what's going on. It's thanks to the other families that I find out." (Parent)

Yet, why are the digital communication channels not entirely efficient? There are basically two reasons that the families give. On the one hand, we find that there may be families that do not have internet access on their mobile or computer (if they have one), and therefore, accessing the digital app is an added effort they very often do not do. Secondly, we find the lack of technological skills that some families have.

"And as well as the problems, the technology problems... What do I do if I don't know how to use an app? I don't know how to download an app on the mobile. Because that can happen. Why does it have to be taken for granted that I'm someone who's up to speed with technology or who has these technological skills? Perhaps I don't." (Parent)

Therefore, some action is needed in this way: to provide access by the families to the digital resources and how to help them use these new platforms, either with some training or with a more frequent control of the problems that arise and the queries they have. Another option that many schools use to overcome the above barriers is to combine digital channels with other traditional forms of communication, so that a message is never sent in just one way. This is a way of working that foreign families appreciate and rate positively.

4. Parental involvement in the school setting

First weak point: to what extent do foreign families participate in the school according to the professionals?

With regard to the participation of foreign families in the school, the discourses of the professionals and the families are quite different. In other words, management teams and parents have a different vision and perception of how and why families participate (or not) in the school institution. First, we analyse the discourses of the professionals. According to them, the participation of foreign families in the school is generally very low. Immigrant families

participate little when they are called to group meetings at the start of the school year (as we have explained in detail in the previous section referring to family-school communication), or when they are invited to participate in activities and training courses (such as Catalan courses for immigrants).

“This year, we’ve had a project, on Mondays and Wednesdays, for newly-arrived families, where we’ve done a sort of classes in Catalan that weren’t classes. They were, for example, like when the Sant Jordi note comes out. And we explained it to them and said, let’s read the note. Today your child will take this note home, and this means this. And when it’s Sant Jordi, here we celebrate it like this. But the number of people coming has been very low.” (Teacher)

By contrast, the professionals perceive that these families participate a lot in activities that do not require their physical presence in the school. In other words, activities where the teachers ask the families to participate in the school from home. One example would be when the teachers invite all the families to create a handicraft with their children (at home) to decorate the school.

“What we do every term is the activity that we call unifying. What we do is get the parents to participate in decorating the school. The reason and the aim for this activity is that if the parent hasn’t been in person (to the school), but they’ve worked on something that is hanging up and the child sees that the family has participated. And we do that systematically every term. And people participate, and on a grand scale. So it’s a way of participating that doesn’t need their presence. But it’s there.” (Teacher)

However, we should be very aware that the participation of foreign families in the school is not homogeneous; instead, these families need to be seen as a heterogeneous group with their own characteristics and specificities that, according to the management teams, depend a lot on their country of origin. We could say, then, that according to the professionals, one variable that determines the participation of foreign families in the school is their origin, as there are countries that have education systems with more participative dynamics than others, which evidently influences how these families rate and behave in the school in the host country. To foster this family participation, the management teams highlight two figures that could serve as a catalyst for starting improvement strategies in this area. The first figure is that of the teacher-tutor. According to the professionals, the teacher is the person who is in most contact with the families and is, consequently, their reference figure in the school. Therefore, they are the person who could more directly motivate, incentivise and invite families to participate in the activities that are proposed. The second figure is that of another family in the same cultural community. In other words, the professionals share the idea that, very often, what is needed is for someone from a community to come in to win over other families from the same culture to participate in the school.

Second weak point: does participation depend only on the families or also on the invitations by the teacher to participate?

As we mentioned before, the discourses of the families and the professionals are quite different in this area of the family-school relationship. Until now, we have looked at the point of view of the management teams, but what do the families say? According to them, it is true that

there are immigrant families that do not participate much (or at all) in the school, but they also say that there are many other families that do participate and that would even like to do so more, and more often. In this sense, the families explain that the invitations to participate often depend on each individual teacher; in other words, while there are teachers that foster participation by the families in the classroom, inviting them to come in and participate in different activities throughout the school year, there are also teachers that are more closed to this type of participation, completely cancelling out the possibility of families participating in their children's classroom. A consequence of this different level of openness and invitation by the professionals is that the perception that parents have of the school and the actions it carries out to involve families is also different. Consequently, on the one hand, we have families who perceive that the schools in their countries of origin foster the relationship and involvement of families more than the schools in Catalonia do.

"Those of us from outside, perhaps we come with other customs, in South America there's a bit more integration, the parents are normally involved in their child's development, we even integrate in some things to stimulate them. And... here there's a lack of integration, because here it's a bit more, the school and us, separate. And we (in my country), the tie is closer." (Parent)

By contrast, other families have a completely opposite vision.

"Curiously, I don't have that sensation. I think it's more open here. It's true that in my country, the families also participate a lot in the areas you said. National celebrations... but I think that families come to school for that. But then I see that there I couldn't do what I do now, go to the classroom, go with them three times a year, or have breakfast together, and they explain the methodology to me, let me see how it goes in the classroom..." (Parent)

To summarise, the participation of foreign families in the classroom depends not only on the families but also on the teachers and the school. However, as we mentioned earlier, the families are aware that there are certain barriers that hinder the involvement of foreign families in the school. These barriers are the language and the difficulty of balancing family and work life.

"We don't come because of the language issue and also because of time, because we have to work. That's why I normally only come to the meeting with the teacher." (Parent)

So what can schools do to overcome the barriers? With regard to the language, the answer needs to be sought in the family-school communication section. By contrast, in terms of work-family balance, the families propose a diversification in timetables of family participation activities so that parents who work have the option of being able to attend some of these activities.

"Perhaps they could combine and think, OK, this same activity, we could do it every 6 months for the families that come in the afternoon, and others that can manage it in the morning. Because otherwise, it's also true that if they always do it at the same time, it's normally always the same families that participate." (Parent)

5. Parental support at home and academic socialisation

First weak point: what barriers do families who want to be involved in their children's education at home find?

The first idea that needs to be highlighted in terms of the involvement of foreign families at home is the existence of two different groups of families. According to the professionals, there is a first group of foreign families that get very much involved in their children's education at home, have high educational expectations and see education as a means of social promotion. By contrast, there is another group of families that do not get involved at home as they see education as secondary, insofar as their main concern is meeting other more basic needs in the Maslow Pyramid. As regards the first group (families who have a high level of involvement in their children's education at home), the professionals quote three cultures that, as a general rule, have a high level of involvement at home (being aware that within each cultural origin, there are families with different sociocultural levels and different migratory experiences that influence their parental involvement). First of all, there are the Muslim families.

"The Muslims we have in the school, really, are hard-working. And they work at home too. Of the ones we have at school, we have some very good students. Muslims are very good." (Teacher)

The families from the East, for their part, are also involved a lot in their children's education at home.

"The families from the East get involved much more. The families from Georgia, and the Russians... they do get involved in doing the homework and that." (Teacher)

Finally, we find the Chinese families, who also get involved in some school subjects that they consider to be essential.

"For example, the Chinese are very good at mathematics, calculus... because besides the help from their parents, they place a lot of importance on that." (Teacher)

However, all of these families that have the willingness and desire to cooperate with the school to improve their children's education at home come up against two significant barriers. The first and most important is language. Both management teams and families recognise that, very often, the great handicap that these families find when helping their children with educational tasks is their lack of knowledge of the Catalan language, which leads to a feeling of frustration and inability.

"For us, the biggest problem of all is language. Because we, the family, don't know much language, so we cannot help the children. That's why they have to do everything there, at school. We can't help." (Parent)

The second barrier, in this case explained by immigrant families, is the lack of information they have about what their children are doing in the classroom. This point, already analysed

in detail in the section on 'knowledge of the school and the education system', reappears here as a major drawback for families that want to help and get involved in their children's education at home.

"I'd like them to put in the diary, for example, this month we're going to start sums. And I work with my child at home so that when they come to school, they understand. The thing is we don't know anything. Where they are, what they're doing, well, nothing. I work with him at home, but I don't if I do it... something that they've already done... I don't know." (Parent)

Similarly, the families also say that they would like the teachers to guide and advise them more on how they can help their children at home to support what they are doing in school, as very often they want to but do not know how to. In this sense, a proposal put forward by some schools is to organise a workshop, outside the school timetable but on school premises, where the families can help their children with educational tasks with the advice and support of a monitor.

"I promise you, if you offer the families some time in the afternoon, outside school hours, a space in the school, where to say, we offer a space where you have the help of someone who's there for you, to give you a hand, a complete success. First, because you extend school time, and therefore, the children are looked after. And second, because you're giving them extra support so they can understand, or do homework... that would be, it would be sure to be a success." (Teacher)

Second weak point: so... why are there families that do not get involved at all?

In the previous section, we spoke of the families that get involved in their children's education, despite the barriers that they may find to do this, such as the language or a lack of knowledge. However, as we have said, there is also a significant number of foreign families that do not get involved at all at home as their living conditions force them to prioritise other needs, such as the fact of working long days to be able to feed their family. In this sense, the management teams have, over the years, observed that two family situations occur. The first is where the children take the house keys to school hanging on a cord around their neck and when they leave school, they go home alone where they might be until the night, when their parents get home after a long working day. The second situation is that of the children who, once the school day ends, start another working day in their parents' shop or bar, helping them above all in terms of language.

"Many have bazaars or shops like that, where the children help their parents sell. Because they speak the language... And when they leave school, they work in the shop. And many are home alone. They carry the keys around their neck, and when they leave the school, home alone." (Teacher)

In light of this situation, schools already steer these families towards social services or other similar institutions that help and advise them, but it is difficult for them to propose strategies to reverse this situation as many variables come into play that the schools cannot control.

Results of focus groups in Italy (Paolo Barabanti, Mariagrazia Santagati. Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)²

1. Welcome of migrant families and their integration

The first welcome moment is usually before pupil's coming and before their placement in a class. Currently, every school has an established hosting protocol ("welcome guidelines") in which there is a clearly detailed list of specific tasks for each role involved in this process, such as: school office, teachers, head teacher and representative teacher for migrant students.

The school office is responsible for collecting newcomers' documents (for example: passport, immunisation records, previous school reports) and general information (for instance: family life story or supposed Italian language level).

The teacher responsible for migrant students usually has an interview with the new student's family to explain general school rules and to collect useful information about the child's family. This is a very important moment not only to have data about the child but also, as a teacher stated, to welcome the new family and to build a first link.

"During this moment we risk following strict guidelines and asking established questions, but we often forget that this is not only a formal interview but especially a human meeting in which we are facing people with different life stories, probably sorrowful stories. We need to have, at first, a certain degree of sensitivity." (Teacher)

After this, the teacher responsible for migrant students, sometimes with the help of other colleagues, has to administer at least two placement tests (Italian as a foreign language test and logical-mathematics test). The purpose of these tests is to check if the new arrival has a certain standard of knowledge of Italian and logic skills.

On the basis of all this information, the head teacher has to place the pupil in a particular class. This is a delicate and critical issue because:

"Class placement is never easy. It is not enough to know how old the new pupil is and how much he/she knows about Italian. It is not enough to verify if there are classmates of the same ethnic group and if in the class there are already many students and many migrant students. You need to have competent and responsible teachers in it and maybe, if you are lucky, with the possibility of having an extra teacher who can sometimes individually help him/her." (Teacher)

After the assignment to a class (by the school principal), the pupil begins to be officially part of that class and to follow activities and lessons together with their new classmates. Especially during the first period, the newcomer student is required to take part in an Italian literacy project thanks to which he/she has the chance to learn the basics of the language in order to

2. The chapter has been written in collaboration by the authors; only for the scientific attribution, Paolo Barabanti has written paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 and Mariagrazia Santagati has written paragraphs 4 and 5.

express primary needs, to stay in class and to understand what is happening around them. All students in the same class are involved in this project because they are encouraged to learn a few words in the pupil's mother tongue simply to find ways to being in relationship.

In all this process, language is one of the major obstacles³. To reduce this problem, especially during the first interview between family and teacher responsible for migrant students, it is important to benefit from cultural mediators. As the teachers said, the role of the cultural mediators is crucial, in particular during the first reception. However, it is hard to ask for this every time the school needs it because of a lack of financial resources or the geographical distance, which prevents them from reaching the school easily⁴.

“The mediator is essential. All protocols show that their presence is fundamental but schools have to deal with scarce resources and with the trouble of physically reaching the school.” (Teacher)

Sometimes schools try to contain this matter by looking for “informal mediators”: directly asking other parents (especially mothers) of the same ethnic group to help teachers facilitate communication; in rare cases, they ask this of other students speaking the same language.

In addition to the language, the cultural gap can also be a serious obstacle for a positive relationship. Presently, respondents declared that, during the interview and first approach with migrant families, teachers have to pay attention to the different ways that each parent, belonging to a different culture, uses to communicate.

“We need attention to different ways to interview migrant families according to their ethnicity. Actually, we realised that each cultural background has its own approach. This means that teachers must know this in order to change their way of asking questions. There are cultures in which questions have to be direct, getting this straight; but in other cases long preambles are necessary if we want to have the information we need. Also on these points, in my opinion they are anthropological points, which are important but the school often sets them aside because it has so much business to do or simply because it doesn't know these different ways and how important they are.” (Teacher)

Teachers also reported that, on many occasions, there is an informal peer-to-peer network among foreign families (mothers, in particular), belonging to a similar culture and language, who basically welcome the new family before the school does. This mutual help community is considered really significant and a point to take advantage of and to improve on, also during the interview in school. Currently, these mothers usually reassure newcomers providing them with practical information, such as: school tools and materials the pupil will need, school timetable, break time and lunchtime.

3. See: Lagomarsino & Torre, 2009.

4. As a lot of research has shown, language is one of the main problems and a difficulty and a barrier for family-school communication (Cotesta et al., 2009).

“Mums used to get organised here on their own. In my opinion, it is a great help because they have already experienced that before and they can help each other deal with this “trauma”. I find it a successful way: they can speak the same language so that they can talk and communicate without any problems; in addition, they can calm worried parents.” (Teacher)

We will now focus on parents’ opinions in the same area. Also for them, language is one of the main issues, probably the most difficult one to face. Recalling their experience, they and their pupils felt welcomed and supported by the different figures at school: the school office was kindly available for online registration (if there were difficulties with the language or ICT use), they had the possibility to meet the school principal in case of need and teachers were friendly, too.

“The school reaches out to us in many cases, you just need to be bold enough to ask. And if you, or your child, have a problem, teachers ... the headmaster ... everyone tries to solve it. [...] The school office is open every day at particular times and they are kind, too.” (Mother)

The introduction of children into school is less problematic when it is in pre-primary school because this is a gradual and progressive one, not like in primary school where pupils have immediately to attend school activities all day. For parents, the biggest problem is with their first child in an Italian school, because they have to cope with the language issue and with the lack of knowledge in general of the Italian school system and, especially, of the local one. With the second child, there is much less to worry about. For pupils, if they have just moved to Italy (if they are not second-generation migrant students or they have not attended pre-primary school in Italy), language is also the major problem.

“During the first days here, my children were struggling and I really felt bad because they didn’t speak Italian and I didn’t, either.” (Mother)

In case of need, it has been useful for children to have a classmate who is able to speak the same language and for parents to ask for some help to another mother speaking Italian. But, for respondents, this is a weak point of the school because the school itself should always have a person able to translate during communication, meetings and interviews.

“If a parent and their child aren’t able to speak Italian, they have to be accompanied to school by another mum or a child who can talk in Italian. In my opinion, Italian school, as in Germany for instance, should have translators. That’s what this school still lacks nowadays.” (Mother)

To summarise what has emerged in this first section:

- Existence of welcome guidelines (not always updated) widespread in Brescia schools.
- Experience in interviewing the new pupil’s family by teachers.
- Protocol to assign the student to a class.

- Importance of informal networks and of cultural mediators.
- Role of peers and of the administrative staff for online registrations.

In light of that, teachers and parents have detected the following *weak points*:

- Lack of recourses for intercultural mediators to manage and overcome the language obstacle.
- Useful documents for newcoming families are not updated and are only translated into a few foreign languages. These documents should be bilingual and always upgraded with new regulations.
- If the teacher responsible for migrant students is absent and the secretaries in the school office are busy, there is a risk of wasting time and of skipping some important steps by different school figures.

Here now some *suggestions* emerging from section 1:

- Draft criteria for updated and shared welcome guidelines.
- Improve informal peer-to-peer networks (among Italian and migrant groups of parents).
- Update school documents and translate them into several languages, possibly sharing them with all schools.

2. What migrant families know about the local education system

According to teachers' opinions, migrant parents do not know the Italian school system at all, especially because there are many differences between the Italian school system and the one in their country of origin. The crucial point is the lack of knowledge regarding the general functioning of Italian schools and the organisation of the local school system, such as: educational levels, school timetable, general rules, meal times, homework, authority, bureaucracy and hygiene standards.

As mentioned in other research (Favaro, 1990; Favaro & Genovese, 1996), teachers are also a bit unsettled by this gap caused by differences in educational and care practices. Respondents believe that this is not due to indifference or a lack of care by migrant parents, simply to a different way of life and of interacting with the school world. The following are two examples by way of two quotations: one about homework and one about school trips.

“In many cultures, only the school takes charge of school stuff and it is not the family's job to deal with some school issues, such as the one about homework.” (Teacher)

“What’s the point of the school trip? Is it a sort of pleasant outing or a different way to learn and to teach to the class? Sometimes, migrant parents think that the school trip is a picnic or a trip and therefore they aren’t inclined to enter their child in order to save some money.” (Teacher)

Contrary to common opinion, for migrant families it is very important to make a good first impression. Often, their child wears an elegant dress for the first day or get to school with a starter school kit (thanks to information received by the informal peer-to-peer networks).

As mentioned above, there is not only a language problem. Indeed, the lack of knowledge is also caused by the absence of a common understanding of what school aspects are for and how they work.

“The school bag, justifying absences, signing school notices ... it is hard to get through to them because it is not part of their culture! There are some challenges not only regarding the language. The first step to take, according to me, is for us to shed light on and to understand their silence and their misunderstandings.” (Teacher)

There are some successful examples of best practices. For instance, a teacher spoke of the experience of a meeting for foreign parents (nearly all mothers) in October or November in which some teachers and the principal explained school matters. As migrant parental involvement is a long process, the school staff was unable to reach all migrant families in the first year. However, year by year, teachers were able to meet more and more families. In addition, a teacher said that another good way to promote both involvement and participation is to create opportunities for informal conversations.

Even though the presence and the support of teachers are significant strategies to plan a successful meeting, it is not necessarily enough. Interviewees currently highlighted the important role of the cultural mediator, that is a member of the immigrant culture of origin who has the task of facilitating communication between immigrant families and the school (Santagati, 2004; Mantovani, 2011).

“To plan and to organise this sort of meeting, there is a need for the synergic help of both teachers and school mediators. But this kind of activity should be guided and prepared because sometimes school mediators can give a different interpretation of what the teacher would like to explain to families.” (Teacher)

During these meetings, and in general when teachers have to interview migrant families, it is not possible to take some school issues for granted; similarly, it is necessary to give the reasons for certain rules, customs and habits. One teacher interviewed spoke of the need to have a meeting with all the teachers working in her school in order to clarify what the most important issues to present to families are and what the main elements of the common school mission are.

“First of all, we should clear things up, I mean, all teachers working together at the same school. If we want to be clear with families, we should build our own identity ... I mean, we should arrange what the most important and significant issues for our school are. At the moment, we

sometimes assume that our visions are shared and in common, but plenty of times it isn't so ... and they are not." (Teacher)

According to parents' opinions, the main task they need to deal with is to be made aware of school rules, habits and customs, as they are not often made explicit and clear. For instance, the ones about the school timetable, what pupils need for Physical Education lessons, the meaning of school trips, teacher-parent interviews and how meal times work. They are aware that they can ask teachers if necessary and, vice versa, if teachers need to communicate something missing or something wrong they tend to write a message in the pupil's diary to inform the family. This cooperation partially solves the problem with ease because the language matter is still present.

"They are good teachers! When I first came to Italy, I didn't understand the rules and they used to write in my son's diary. For instance: if my son didn't have school materials or shoes for Physical Education lesson or he missed something for activities ... they wrote a note in the diary." (Mother)

"I can speak and understand Italian now ... but at the very beginning it was really hard and I felt better if I had someone with me in case I needed the language. [...] When my daughter came home from school, she tried to explain certain issues to me, in Italian. I didn't understand at all! I used to say yes to her but I didn't understand. I didn't understand what she was telling me and what she was explaining to me." (Mother)

On the one hand, when they first moved to Italy, they were amazed by some opportunities offered by the school, such as the chance to attend pre-primary school, not having to bring money to buy lunch and a number of projects during the school day. However, by contrast, they currently disagree with no after-school programmes, an excessive number of hours at school with the consequence of not having much free time for sports, rest and amusement, useless homework, permissive rules, and a few projects in maths and foreign languages.

"When they are home from school, my children have to do lots of stuff: studying for tomorrow's lessons or doing homework, sometimes having sport, having dinner and then going to bed ... and the day is already over. At weekends, I would like to go on a trip but it's rarely possible." (Mother)

To summarise what has emerged in this second section:

- National school systems are different, but the crucial point is the local school system organisation, for instance: general school rules, homework, documents and bureaucracy, hygiene standards.
- It might seem that migrant families are not involved in their children's school life, but they are interested and show willingness to make a good impression.
- Teachers need and ask for the cultural mediator to plan meetings for migrant families, even if this is not a sufficient condition to solve the lack of information.

In light of that, teachers and parents have detected the following *weak points*:

- School rules are not very clear but both teachers and parents need to know them and what the most significant ones are.
- There is no time to gather information: it is only possible for women who do not work.
- Migrant parents still continue to give credit to school as one of the most important ways of improving their children's life (sense of accomplishment): they trust the school, feeling a real sense of gratitude.
- Negative evaluation of Italian schools in certain emerging aspects: no respect for adults, too many subjects, no investment in foreign languages or maths.

Here now some suggestions emerging from section 2:

- Produce a short document about the school system (such as timetables, meetings and school subjects) in some of the main languages.
- Provide meetings with migrant families and cultural mediators to introduce the school and its rules.
- Provide teachers with specific training to learn how the education systems of other countries work.

3. Parent-school communication

On the basis of the questions in this section, the respondents, both teachers and parents, generally tend to provide similar answers compared to what they gave for the previous ones. Evidently, they highlighted once again the language issue. Here, the help of the cultural mediator is crucial, even if teachers stressed the fact that, even if their presence is significant, they do not solve all the problems. Furthermore, there could be the risk for teachers of delegating too much to the mediator and of getting less involved in the communication process with migrant families.

"The cultural mediator is essential. But, ultimately, the relationship with the parents or class management ... this is mainly my business and not their business." (Teacher)

"When possible, we usually delegate immediately to the cultural mediator. If the migrant family has a problem we, as teachers, usually don't try to write to them or to call them ... we ask the cultural mediator straightaway." (Teacher)

When it is not possible to request their intervention, parents, and especially mothers, feel they are in trouble and usually seek help from other mothers or their partner: sometimes the wife phones her husband for a simultaneous translation about what the teacher is telling her.

If parents need to communicate with teachers or ask for a personal interview, they know they can just write it in the pupil's diary. At the same time, they are aware of how the school sends communications to parents: if it is a personal one, the school staff writes that in the diary; if it is a group one, it is published on the electronic school register. In addition, the school office, and sometimes the head teacher too, is available in case of need.

In order to facilitate parent-school communication and to be able to access the electronic school register, the parents interviewed suggest introducing both Italian and basic ICT courses.

In light of this, teachers and parents have detected a number of *weak points*:

- Regarding the communication aspect, teachers used to delegate too much to cultural mediators even if the teacher should remain the key role.
- At the same time, there is scarce presence of mediators.
- Parents prefer informal communications.
- Parents see the need to Italian and ICT trainings for migrant families.

Here now some suggestions emerging from section 3:

- Besides the digital school register, attention to provide written news in the pupils' diary.
- Responsible use of cultural mediators.

4. Parental involvement in the school setting

Parental involvement in the school setting consists of participation in school assemblies, attending teacher-parent interviews, getting the pupil's report card, and a willingness to become a parents' representative for the Class Council or/and School Council.

One of the first considerations shared by teachers is the fact that there is a common opinion on a difficulty in involving families in "school life" and, besides that, low attendance of parents

in school activities. This matter does not only concern migrant families, but also Italian ones, especially if they are weak and disadvantaged families⁵.

“We are struggling to involve all parents. During assemblies there are few people and it’s hard to find representatives for them. There is a general crisis and a sort of abandonment.” (Teacher)

Teachers also point out that for migrant families, it is very difficult to take part in school meetings, especially in school assemblies: the language is particularly formal and both teachers and Italian parents talk too fast to make it possible for let migrant parents to understand. They prefer peer-to-peer interviews in which teachers usually talk slowly and have a much easier language. Furthermore, for individual interviews, the time is flexible (hours are agreed): this allows participation by working parents as well.

“We asked migrant parents the reason for their lack of participation in school assemblies. These families, from all ethnic groups, gave us a similar justification: we, as teachers, when we have to present something in these assemblies, talk really fast and we have a special vocabulary, which is very hard for them to understand. [...] In individual interviews, by contrast, we have the possibility to slow down the speech and to make the conversation easy as well.” (Teacher)

“These migrant parents normally take part constantly and diligently in individual interviews but they are mostly absent, for instance, during assemblies at the beginning of the school year or when they have to elect their representatives for the Class Council.” (Teacher)

The parents interviewed said that they were available for volunteering at school (for instance: washing pupils’ T-shirts after sports day) or for paying a small amount of money to fund some school projects, but they do not feel ready, and can also feel themselves inadequate, to be a parents’ representative. At present, they consider the task too hard for them: they have difficulties in writing properly in Italian or in speaking fluently and, moreover, being a representative involves time and effort. They consider themselves inappropriate in comparison to other parents who are, for instance, lawyers or simply Italian native speakers.

“In my pupil’s class, there is a lawyer as parents’ representative. I will never write as a lawyer, even if I studied here in Italy.” (Mother)

“Even if my Italian were perfect, I would not accept this role. It’s too challenging and demanding.” (Mother)

Formal school meetings are not the best way to “catch” migrant parents. Teachers felt a gap of interest also with an attempt to involve cultural mediators during these assemblies.

5. However, research (Mantovani & Gasperoni, 2018) shows that even if there are fewer chances for a family with a low socioeconomic and cultural status, in the same disadvantaged conditions, native parents take part more frequently in these school activities.

“We planned these assemblies with the help of cultural mediators. We organised them for migrant families. There was a specific assembly for Arabic families, for example, with an Arabic cultural mediator. Despite this strong effort, there were very few families present.” (Teacher)

At present, according to teachers, a better initial way is to create opportunities to enter into dialogue, to look at each other face-to-face. As mentioned for previous areas, families are more likely to take part in informal events.

“Some years ago we did many activities, at no cost for the school, such as the tea-time with mothers, trying to involve all the ethnic communities. [...] On these occasions, there was time to talk, to share ideas, to simply look into each other’s eyes. [...] Not many projects in the diary ... just the ones to establish a dialogue.” (Teacher)

“A good relationship is a good way to build trust and confidence. Then, there is the opportunity to pass along information and, I’m sure, people will come and ask what they need to know.” (Teacher)

Projects about parental involvement in the school setting are widespread in the whole of the province of Brescia, especially for informal events, but because of the lack of resources, there is no opportunity to provide them any guarantee of continuity.

“Cultural and folk projects could be an element able to attract people and to make a connection. [...] You can’t possibly see this action doing the trick! There has been no direct impact. We should repeat them year after year and, maybe after three years, we could have seen some outcomes.” (Teacher)

To summarise what has emerged in this third section:

- General difficulty in involving families in “school life”.
- Difficulty of taking part in school meetings (the language is too formal and there is rapid verbal interaction).
- Better to have a peer-to-peer interview in which teachers talk slowly and the language is much easier.
- Participation in individual interviews (when they are informed and the time is flexible).
- Migrant parents are available for volunteering.

In light of that, teachers and parents have detected the following *weak points*:

- The main problem is still the language.
- There are no migrant parents as parents’ representatives.

- In general, schools try to design different strategies to improve these meetings. However, some of these actions have not been successful.

Here now some suggestions emerging from section 4:

- Migrant families' active participation in informal school moments, such as: end of school parties and intercultural projects.
- Encourage migrant parents to become representatives on the Class Council and School Council.
- Attention to plan case-by-case interviews with migrant families (here, the language is easier and less formal – it is also a good opportunity for them to be welcomed and listened to).
- Consider these families not only as a problem to face but, especially, as a resource.

5. Parental support at home and academic socialisation

Sociological research has highlighted that supervising children's learning activities by parents and, more generally, parental involvement in school matters have a strong association with students' achievement (Oliver, 2016). Particularly, when vulnerable immigrant families are not able to integrate school lessons with help with homework, it seems there is a more direct connection with the underachievement of their children (Casacchia, Natale, Paterno & Terzera, 2008; Gilardoni, 2008; Dalla Zuanna, Farina & Strozza, 2009). Therefore, parental support at home could be a significant way for pupils' success. This is the topic of this fifth, and final, session.

As pointed out in the analysis of the second section ("What migrant families know about the local education system"), one of the main problems for parents is to understand the purpose of school homework, and for teachers to make themselves understood about this.

Even if parents are curious about their children and they would like to maintain communication with them about school activities (this is another positive factor linked to high achievement: Castro et al., 2015), the lack of Italian language knowledge still continues to be a real difficulty. Accordingly, parents have trouble helping their children with homework.

"If I am a mum who can't speak Italian, I will never be able to help my child with homework. My child needs to get by without me. And this is a significant issue for plenty of migrant parents."
(Mother)

"Now my daughter is senior here at primary school and I am not able to help her anymore."
(Mother)

According to migrant parents, the best way to resolve the issue is to attend Italian courses. However, interviewees said that these courses are not suitable for their needs as they only offer a basic Italian language programme. So, to tackle this problem, parents usually seek some help for homework from other mothers from the same ethnic group or neighbours or their own child's classmates. Teachers also reported good experiences of non-profit collaboration and other educational associations to help pupils with their homework.

"Many times I've asked my neighbour to help my child and tell him how to do his homework."
(Mother)

"My daughter was helped by Italian children who used to come to my house: they studied together, they did homework together. And currently this is the same with my son. I hope, one day, they will be able to do the same with other children." (Mother)

To summarise what has emerged in this final section:

- There are two main problems for parents when helping students with school support at home: understanding the meaning of homework and the lack of Italian language.
- Parents try to get help from informal groups of mothers, neighbours and classmates.
- Non-profit collaboration and other educational associations.

In light of that, teachers and parents have detected the following *weak points*:

- Weakness of after-school activities in school.
- Italian school courses only for a basic level of the language.

Here now some suggestions emerging from section 5:

- Provide networks among schools at no profit and other educational associations to help pupils with their homework.
- Implement programmes for Italian literacy for migrant parents (especially for women).
- Strengthen courses and programmes to help migrant parents in some competences, such as Italian, ICT and English.
- Create chances to encourage parents to participate in this kind of course.

Results of focus groups in Luxembourg (Sylvie Kerger, Christophe Dierendonck, Débora Poncelet. University of Luxembourg)

1. Welcome of migrant families and their integration

Present situation

The teachers say that there is a procedure for migrant families. The families register with the municipality, which assigns the children to a class (home class/reference class). The children also attend a welcome class where they only participate in a specific language course about 7 hours a week. In the context of this welcome class, the students are tested and they have to change home class again if their school level does not correspond to their real competences. Regarding the integration of the migrant pupil in the home class, where they follow the teaching with the other students, there is no common procedure. Every teacher deals individually with the situation.

“I actually deal with it from an academic point of view. If there is someone new, I take the student and do tests with them. So, I will see if they are well oriented. We have special tests for French for languages also in preschool. We also do tests in mathematics to see their level in mathematics.” (Teacher of the welcome class).

At the beginning of the year, information sessions are organised in preschool, but it is complicated for those who arrive during the year.

In preschool (Cycle 1 (C1) in Luxembourg), contact with parents seems easier because parents bring the students to their classroom and can directly (in real life) interact with the teacher. Preschool teachers also regularly organise themed meetings on Saturday mornings, in collaboration with the parents' school (“Eltereschoul” Association). They can nip problems in the bud, confidence is built, and parents interact and help each other.

“In C1 it's a little bit different..., we have a more familiar approach, we see people every day in school, whereas children in primary school enter the school building without their parents.” (Teacher in preschool)

Generally speaking, teachers evaluate the relationship with the families as poor and they note that there is no difference between migrant families and Luxembourgish families. The socio-cultural environment in which the school is located is rather disadvantaged and, according to the teachers, explains the difficulties of partnering with the pupils' families irrespective of the ethnical background.

For their part, the parents say that they were well-received and well-integrated. Registration was very quick.

“I've always been treated well; I've never had any problems.” (Portuguese parent)

They particularly appreciate the teacher of the welcome course because this teacher speaks the language of the family, which aids effective communication. The parents specify that the children receive an appropriate education in schools in Differdange. At the beginning, parents explain that it was very difficult because there were a lot of languages to learn (Luxembourgish, German and French).

“The mediation courses facilitate the start of the school year.” (Spanish parent)

In general, parents say that the educational staff is friendly. They organise translators and mediators and the parents receive information when they have questions.

What does not work well?

As weak points, teachers mentioned communication problems with the municipality. When a new student arrives in school, teachers are often not informed in advance or too late (sometimes only 1 or 2 days before the arrival in school).

“So often we, as teachers, have no information that a child is arriving in our class. So, we have often had the case that these children are suddenly there at 8 o’clock. In the morning, they are in the yard without any notice. That is the least favourable case that we can imagine.” (Teacher in primary school)

Another point presented by preschool teachers is that parents often mix school topics with extra-curricular topics during informal exchanges in the morning. Teachers also complain that parents are not proactive enough in seeking information for themselves about administrative procedures.

“I say clearly, I am a teacher during school hours, outside we can have an appointment to talk about school subjects, but for extracurricular things, we don’t know where to draw a line. It is not possible to take them by the hand and go with them everywhere.” (Teacher in preschool)

One of the most important problems is the migrant family’s language. Several teachers cannot speak these languages. However, one teacher observes that parents do not necessarily make the effort to learn one of the country’s languages (Luxembourgish, German or French). Some parents have lived in the country for many years and continue to speak only their language. The preschool teacher comes from the Portuguese community. Her parents made the choice to learn Luxembourgish to be better integrated. She cannot understand why migrant parents do not act the way her parents did.

“After a few years perhaps, parents start to speak a little bit of French, but often they stay in their mother tongue. They don’t make enough effort.” (Teacher of the welcome class)

The teacher of the welcome class specifies that she remains a reference person in the school for migrant families even when the students are no longer in her class. Probably because of

the fact that she speaks the language of the families and she was the first Luxembourgish teacher with whom the migrant parents interacted.

“If they have a problem, they usually come to see me instead of seeing their teacher. It’s something I’ve noticed for years that this is how it works.” (Teacher of the welcome class)

Another point is that teachers feel that students’ school education can sometimes be secondary for the parents and that their work and family come first.

“I don’t mean that they’re not interested in school, but it isn’t essential. It is mainly their family, their work, their holidays and... after that there is still the school.” (Teacher of the welcome class)

Parents only report that their children sometimes had bad experiences with few teachers.

New ideas

According to teachers, to improve the situation of the incoming students, the municipality could inform the school committee as soon as possible that a new student is coming. The teachers place the student in the most appropriate class at their school level after consulting the teacher of the welcome class who tested the student on their school arrival. So, the student will not be put in the wrong class at the beginning and would not be obliged to change class again after two weeks. For integration reasons, it would be important for children to be put into the real reference class as soon as they arrive in the school.

“We as a school committee and coordinators have already often asked the municipality to communicate this information earlier, so that the school committee and the coordinators can place the children directly in the right class. The municipality doesn’t know the specificities of the classes etc. and we as coordinators and committee would like to decide on this subject.” (Teacher in primary school and level coordinator)

The parents recommend raising awareness among teachers to have more patience and an alternative approach with migrant families. According to the families’, teachers should also pay more attention to the difficulties that students may have in different fields (dysgraphia, dyslexia, psychological, etc.) and also for the students, there should be more welcome courses to focus even more on language. This way, students would be more supported in learning the languages intensively. The implementation of additional classes would be a good idea, so that this work does not have to be done by just one teacher.

2. What migrant families know about the local education system

Present situation

The teachers see it as their mission to inform parents about the school system. In the last two years of primary school, many meetings are planned for the orientation of students. At the beginning of the year, the schools organise an open day.

In preschool, communication is easier because teachers have the possibility of talking to parents every day, when they bring their children to the classroom or come to pick up their child at the end of the day.

*"I'm in the hallway every morning. I'm looking for a lot of communication with the parents."
(Teacher in preschool)*

*"In primary school, it is much more formal... often we see the family members only once or twice a year."
(Teacher in primary school)*

The parents say that they have little information about the school system. However, they are convinced that the school helps students in their studies and to find their way.

"I know the most important things, but not too much." (Spanish parent)

"Before we arrived in Luxembourg, we didn't have any knowledge." (Italian parent)

"There are differences with my homeland." (Montenegrin parent)

"Here there are more extracurricular activities and more investments in languages." (Portuguese parent)

What does not work well?

Teachers regret that parents do not call on their own and do not seek enough communication with them.

"Even if I speak their language, they don't call me... they really don't care." (Teacher of the welcome course)

According to teachers, they do not ask questions, except at the end of primary school, when they do not agree with the children's orientation to secondary school (this is not only the case for migrant families).

"We repeat the message on the orientation over and over again and often it's only at the end of the year, when it's not as the parents have planned, when the questions arise." (Teacher in primary school)

Moving to parents' discourses, they express that parents have little knowledge of the school system and they wish to be better informed.

"I don't have any information. I know that students have to get the notes of the school level (socle) to pass but they didn't tell me how it works." (Portuguese parent)

One parent remarked that high school orientation takes place too early and that, often, migrant students have no chance of attending a good class when they are orientated to secondary school. According to this parent, there are sometimes too many prejudices in Luxembourgish schools.

New ideas

Teachers suggest the idea of having a person, inside the school, who is able to speak the parents' language. This person could explain the school system to them, briefly present the school team, and give explanations on how everything works and what the steps to take are.

“What could be interesting is someone who speaks the mother tongue of the parents. This person could go into schools, introduce the team and the system in the language parents understand.” (Teacher in preschool).

The school could also provide a brochure for the parents, in their mother tongue, with all the useful information by cycle. Another option would be the development of a school website and communication by email (or via an app).

The parents want to receive more information about the transition to secondary school.

“There are many abbreviations and it is difficult to understand when you don't know the language.” (Montenegrin parent)

They suggested organising seminars to inform the parents about the system, with mediators to translate.

“The school could offer a seminar or information session, where a mediator would provide parents with detailed information on the Luxembourgish school system, with questions and answers.” (Montenegrin parent)

3. Parent-school communication

Present situation

Teachers communicate with gestures and many images. In preschool, teachers and parents make small talk before the class begins. In primary school, teachers try to communicate orally if they see the parents because they realise that oral communication is more efficient than written communication. However, they also communicate by writing (paper, classic journals, etc.) or by phone. Teachers think that communication by writing is probably as important as oral communication for parents because parents can use a dictionary to translate the message and they can keep a record to read again if they want to.

The topics discussed are about school organisation, school trips, items to bring to school, child development or information meetings.

“And if we give information orally, it’s good to always have a written support so that they can still read the information, otherwise there is too much information all at once.” (Teacher in preschool)

Parents talk more often to the teacher of the welcome class if they want to talk in their mother tongue. This teacher conveys this to the other teachers.

According to the parents, communication between school and families is already very good. The parents mention that they receive information messages in the students’ agenda, by letter, orally through the students or by phone. So, they are kept informed about special activities or other requests. There are also parents who say that they only talk to the teacher in the context of assessment.

What does not work well?

Teachers state that at the end of primary school, the relationship with parents is much less personal; there are many parents and students in the yard in the morning. Parents only come to talk with the teachers if there is a problem, they do not come to talk without precise concern. Teachers think that parents see them as “bad people”.

Teachers also cite that sometimes communication is difficult because teachers convey other values and notice important cultural differences in relation to children’s education. The teachers mention that they live in two different worlds. So, from time to time teachers organise a campaign on different subjects that they think would be important for the children’s education, such as awareness of video games and TV.

“Last time, a mother had her birthday and they celebrated during the week. If I were her, I would celebrate on Friday or Saturday, but they celebrate the same day, during the week and the child already tells me the day before: ‘Tomorrow I will be a little bit tired. I think we have a celebration.’ What do you want me to tell them? It’s their private thing.” (Teacher in preschool)

New ideas

Teachers suggest that the human side of the relationship should be developed.

I would be interested in the more collegial side of the relationship, in exchanging a little bit more. Not a top-down relationship. (Teacher in preschool)

But you shouldn’t be like friends, you still have to keep a certain distance. (Teacher of the welcome class)

Parents express that teachers should give parents the possibility of communicating by SMS or email. One parent suggests engaging mediators more frequently to translate messages. Perhaps this translation could be organised digitally, so that the mediators do not have to travel.

4. Parental involvement in the school setting

Present situation

Looking first at teachers' discourses, it is found that teachers invite, for example, the parents to contribute to a school bicycle competition that they are organising in school for the students at the end of primary school. This activity takes place in the morning and there are only very few parents who come. They are more likely to participate in school events (end of year party, Easter party, etc.), where they are quite open.

"On parties, we have good experiences because people are still quite open and they talk, but we don't talk about school things." (Teacher in primary school)

The parents, for their part, appreciate the activities organised by teachers because they think it is important to participate in their children's school lives.

What does not work well?

The teachers explain that parents do not participate much in activities, because often the activities are organised during school hours while many parents work, and in the evening many women work. One teacher also regrets that many parents do not even answer the invitation when they are asked if they are going to participate or not. There is no difference between migrant families and Luxembourgish ones.

The teachers also complain that they have few applications for parents' representatives. Two parents' representatives are elected every two years but the other parents do not consult them very often.

"We have a school newspaper where we always try to present the parents' representatives with their photo... it appears 2-3 times a year with student productions etc..... most of the parents don't even know the name or don't even know that there are parents' representatives..." (Teacher in primary school)

"A few years ago, we even had a parents' association that unfortunately no longer exists." (Teacher in primary school)

The parents say that they do not often participate in activities because of their working schedule and the language difficulty. They only participate in information or review meetings once a term or in conversations.

"I don't talk much to the teachers, I don't talk to the teachers every day, but I have no reason to complain." (Portuguese parent)

New ideas

One parent sees that politicians have a role to play.

"Schools and politicians must find appropriate ways to free parents from their professional obligations if they want to participate in school activities." (Montenegrin parent)

Another parent suggested that teachers could organise more common activities with the parents and the children.

5. Parental support at home and academic socialisation

Present situation

Teachers do not see a difference between migrant families and Luxembourgish families in the way they support their children at home.

Parents say that they are involved in their children's school education. They review assignments, motivate their children to read and help them do their homework if they have time, they contact family members to help if they are not available to support the child in their school matter.

What does not work well?

According to the parents, there are large cultural and social differences, for example for what is accepted in terms of education. The time spent on screens, punctuality (arriving late in the morning), keeping to appointments, going to bed late for children. These things are hard to explain to parents.

New ideas

Teachers suggest the organisation of parents' workshops on educational topics whilst parents suggest that remedial courses with teachers outside the classroom hours should be organised for children, even if they have to pay for it, because it is often impossible as a parent to help their children with their homework because of the language.

"I try to help him with his homework, but I need the help of Google translator. It is not easy. We had a teacher to help at home with the languages, but now she is continuing her studies... Mathematics I can deal with... it is especially difficult to help in German and to speak Luxembourgish... I hope that we will find another teacher in September to help him at home."
(Portuguese parent)

Another suggestion made by the parents' group is to translate the homework written in the child's journal into the mother tongue to facilitate the help of the parents.

6. Next steps...

After the national meeting in Luxembourg, the team developed further ideas. We describe these new ideas below:

- The municipality should inform the school when a new student arrives. The student should be tested in order to determine the right home class right from the start.

- The school could start a collaboration with the service of the municipality (Equal Opportunities Service), which could support the school. Parents could go to ask questions related to their integration and administration problems so that they do not ask the teacher these questions.
- Another idea is the development of a website in several languages with explanations of the school system (primary school and transition to secondary school, school agenda, etc.).
- At ministry level, a mediation unit could be implemented for parents: parents could ask for a translation service, like a hotline. This service is presently only available for teachers. Parents could also be better informed about the language courses for adults offered by the municipality and by the embassies.
- The school could organise workshops on educational topics for parents (as presently occurs in preschool) and engage mediators to translate.
- An intercultural festival could be organised, where parents prepare meals from different countries, with different stands specific to each country.
- The parents could be invited into the classrooms as storytellers. Parents could tell stories in their mother tongue or talk about their country or profession.
- As school parties seem to be more attractive to parents than other school activities, an INFO-Stand could be organised in cooperation with the mediators, who can translate, to give explanations and to distribute documents or convey certain information about the school system.

Conclusions

This chapter presents a general picture of migrant families' involvement in their children's education, mapping its trends and weaknesses, and providing key insights for the enhancement of parental involvement in schools. Across all countries, the most frequently cited idea is that language was the core barrier to parental involvement. In the 3 contexts analysed (Spain, Italy and Luxembourg) parents have difficulty helping their children with homework because of their scant language ability in the host language, and, in fact, families are concerned about this situation.

Moreover, when looking at parental involvement in the school setting, the picture is quite similar. In Spain, participants of the focus groups expressed that there is little participation by migrant families (especially regarding general meetings, educational activities and specific courses) but otherwise they do participate 'from a distance', when no presence in the school is required. Language and working timetables are, according to migrant families, the main reasons for their low rates of involvement in the school setting. Similarly, migrant families

from Italy said that they are available for volunteering at school but, by contrast, they do not feel ready or prepared to be a representative of parents or to attend school meetings and assemblies, again because of the language. In Luxembourg, migrant families participate in school parties and events but they are not parents' representatives either, explaining that they do not often participate in some activities in school because of their lack of confidence in the host society language and work difficulties.

These results are supported by previous studies at national (see, for example, Ricucci & Premazzi, 2014 for Italy; or Sánchez & García, 2009 for Spain) and international level (Crozier & Davies, 2007; García Coll, Akiba, Palacios, Bailey, Silver, DiMartino, & Chin, 2002; Turney & Kao, 2009) suggesting that the parents' scant competence in the host society language prevents families from helping children with homework and from participating in school-related activities, reducing families' involvement to 'silence'. Further, our analysis of parental involvement in the school setting also suggests the importance given by migrant families to education since they participate in those activities which do not require a high level of language understanding, such as parties, volunteering in some school activities or decorating the school walls. Moreover, many parents from the focus groups expressed that they frequently support their children at home and are interested in their children's education, as previous national studies reported, especially from Italy (Dierendonck, Poncelet & Martin, 2006 for Luxembourg; Istat, 2016; Maggioni & Vincenti, 2007; and Monteduro, 2018, for Italy). Thus, it could be suggested, as other international studies indicate (García Coll et al., 2002; Crozier & Davies, 2007; LaRocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011), that migrant parents also want the best for their children and have high aspirations for them.

When looking at the other dimensions of the parent-teacher partnership (welcoming, knowledge and communication), language also emerges as a key factor influencing those areas of action in the 3 countries, although the resources they use to overcome this deficiency are different.

In Luxembourg, many schools use translators and intercultural mediators in the first interview with migrant families to provide them with an efficient and fruitful welcome, but these human resources are also used in many other situations to improve family-school communication (for example, in personal interviews, in school meetings, etc.). In fact, intercultural mediators were used in the focus group conducted with parents so as to achieve efficient communication and understanding between families and the researchers. So, in Luxembourg, translators and intercultural mediators are figures that help reduce the language drawback, although some families suggested that schools should engage mediators more frequently to translate messages sent by the school. In Italy and Spain, by contrast, the situation is quite different. There is also the figure of the intercultural mediator, but it is hard to ask for them every time the school needs their help (their presence being thus occasional and limited) because of a lack of financial resources, as other Italian researches have pointed out (Lagomarsino & Torre, 2009).

By contrast, Italian and Spanish schools frequently use ‘informal mediators’ for enhancing the schools’ communication with some linguistically unskilled families; that is, schools use other families who speak the same language as those parents who do not understand the host language at all. However, family-school communication remains an important challenge. In fact, many studies conducted in Spain (Garreta, 2009; Leiva, 2011; Santos Guerra & De la Rosa, 2016) and in Italy (Azzolini, 2014; Daher, Gamuzza & Leonova, 2016; Istat, 2016) point to the existence of many language and communication difficulties in parent-teacher communication because of the migrant families’ scant competence in the host society language.

Apart from the language barrier, our data also reported on other important weaknesses. Regarding the families’ welcome, we should look first at the welcome protocol of each country. In Luxembourg, most certainly because its immigration flow started in the 20th century (contrary to what happened in Spain and Italy, when the immigration movement began in the 1970s and became important in the 1990s), there is a planned and clear procedure for welcoming and integrating migrant families in schools. In Italy, there are also some ‘welcome guidelines’, but they are not always uploaded and the documents that schools send to migrant families are only translated into a few foreign languages. Finally, in Spain, there is a lack of planning regarding the welcome of migrant families. In other words, although all the schools welcome migrant families in a good way, and make great efforts to provide a welcoming environment to them, each school proceeds in a different way since there is no common strategy suggesting and helping schools in this important commitment. Despite these differences, families from the 3 countries reported that they feel welcomed and supported in the school, seeing the educational staff as friendly, respectful and open to help them.

Finally, regarding family-school communication and thus, also families’ knowledge, three key ideas must be highlighted. The first one is that families and teachers from the 3 countries expressed the lack of knowledge that many migrant families have towards the general functioning of the school and their organisation (education levels, the school timetables, the general rules, the evaluation system, the hygiene standards, how they can participate and why, among others). These results are aligned with previous national studies (see Santagati, 2013 for Italy; Carrasco, Pàmies & Bertran, 2009; Santos Guerra & De la Rosa, 2016; Santos Rego, Lorenzo & Priegue, 2011, for Spain), suggesting that families need to be better informed about how the school works and other school-related issues. Some international research also supports this idea (Crozier & Davies, 2007; William & Sánchez, 2013).

The second idea emerging from our data is the importance of teacher training to improve family-school communication and families’ knowledge of school-related issues. In Italy and Spain, participants expressed that there is a cultural gap between many families and teachers, so teachers should know the cultural codes of families in order to change their way of asking questions and talking with families in personal interviews, school meetings or any other contact with parents. Similarly, it is also important for teachers to conduct specific training in order to learn about the functioning and the main characteristics of other education systems, so as to better understand migrant families’ attitudes and behaviours. In Luxembourg, families

also suggest the need for teacher training, although in this case pointing to the attitudes (rather than knowledge): that is, families request that teachers should have more patience and an alternative approach to migrant families. To summarise, there is a need, shared by the three countries, to improve the intercultural competence of teachers (understood as the set of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to live in a culturally diverse society). A kind of training that not only is going to improve family-school communication and parents' knowledge, but also to reduce teachers' prejudices and the negative perceptions towards migrant families that many teachers still hold (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Levine-Rasky, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009), as suggested in the introduction of this book.

Finally, the third important issue is related to the need for informal networks. In Luxembourg, the teacher of the welcome class remains a reference person for migrant families even when students are no longer in the welcome class. In fact, parents greatly appreciate that this teacher speaks their language and facilitates effective communication with them. However, when this figure does not exist (or does not speak the mother tongues of all migrant families), it must also be important for migrant families to have a reference person they can ask questions and talk about school-related issues that are not sufficiently clear. In this regard, in Italian schools there are informal 'peer-to-peer' networks among foreign families who welcome the newly-arrived family (even before the school welcomes them) and provide them with practical information regarding the school and the education system. However, data shows that these networks need to be fostered and improved, trying to create also networks between Italian and migrant groups of parents in order to enhance relations among families. By contrast, in Spain both families and teachers express a lack of actions to integrate newly-arrived families in the educational community, especially regarding relations among families. Thus, there is a suggestion also to create this informal 'peer-to-peer' network in order to create a cohesive educational community and, at the same time, to improve migrant families' knowledge and communication with the school setting.

These results, along with the meta-analysis on parental involvement conducted in the three countries (section five of chapters 1, 2 and 3), have allowed us to have a broader knowledge of the topic and, therefore, to have a wider and more detailed picture of the family-school partnership, which has helped to improve the practical interventions proposed for the second phase of the project. In this regard, it should be highlighted that the following interventions are not only based on the results of the six focus groups, but are also underpinned by extensive previous research at national level (in Spain, Italy and Luxembourg). Further, in the discussion of our data included in this conclusion section we have also compared the results from our empirical research with other international research (not only those conducted in the three aforementioned countries), highlighting therefore some commonalities in the welcome, integration and involvement of migrant families beyond the contexts studied. Thus, it is plausible that the proposed 'innovative actions' to improve migrant families' involvement and relationship with schools could also serve to improve the family-school partnership in other contexts and countries. The 9 'innovative actions' proposed, which will be implemented

in 24 schools during the second phase of the project (2019-2020 academic year), in order to test, re-design and evaluate it (conducting a kind of action research), are the following:

Welcoming of migrant families and their integration

1. Sharing the information materials used in the welcoming of migrant families between the national schools (so as to homogenise this part of the process of the families' integration into the school system).
2. Linking parents inside schools (if we do not find parents inside schools, look for respected people outside the school).
3. Giving migrant families only the main information on the first day that they arrive in the school. Then, 2 or 4 weeks later, conducting another meeting in order to provide further information to families as well as to know how their integration is going, what their doubts and needs are, etc.

Knowledge regarding the education system and family-school communication

4. Using pictures with translations: the idea is to create a list of images that, combined with keywords, schools can use to communicate with migrants who do not speak the host language.
5. Improving teachers' intercultural competence (that is, teachers' knowledge regarding migrant cultural and language codes, as well as teachers' attitudes and skills on working with a foreign population). Specifically, it is proposed to use school experts from foreign countries to help teachers understand how their school system works, what the main traits of their culture are, and how teachers could communicate and relate better with migrant families.

Parental involvement in the school setting

6. Enhancing activities including parents (and specially, aimed at fostering migrant families' involvement). The idea is to promote school and classroom activities in which parents can participate, as well as to work on how to involve migrant families in these activities (how we inform them of these activities, how we engage them, etc.).
7. Giving responsibilities to parents regarding events organisation.

Parental involvement at home

8. Linking parents at classroom level. That is, providing some references at classroom level for migrant families, who they can contact when having problems with the understanding of their children's homework or other home-related issues.

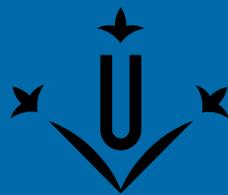
9. Looking for neighbours or other educational associations that can help pupils with their homework.

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