




Editorial

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Framing the Special Issue: Migration and Education

The integration of immigrant students into education systems has long been addressed in the literature within an assimilationist framework—that is, as the one-sided adaptation of the student to the dominant culture and language system (Banks, 2006). However, contemporary educational sociology and pedagogical approaches emphasize that integration is a dynamic, bidirectional, and multidimensional process (Nayir, 2020). This special issue conceptualizes immigrant education not merely as a technical pedagogical issue but as an integrated framework oriented toward recognition and social justice.

The first layer of this integrated structure is formed by the Systemic and Relational Integration Theory. The meta-framework proposed by **Martínez-Villar and Alaminos-Fernández (2026)** extends Cummins's (2000) work on the relationship between language acquisition and academic achievement, arguing that language is not merely a tool for communication but also a mediator of identity and cognitive development. This approach contends that for integration to be successful, linguistic competence must operate in synergy with culturally responsive pedagogy, psychosocial support, and family involvement. Otherwise, the neglect of any one of these dimensions triggers mechanisms of institutional exclusion, which Bourdieu (1998) conceptualized as symbolic violence. Concurrently, the research conducted by **Tüccar and Ertem (2026)** reveals the barriers to language acquisition and how these barriers manifest in educational settings.

The second layer concerns discussions of Epistemic Justice and Decolonization of the Curriculum. **Nkosi and Mashaba (2026)** analyze how epistemic walls embedded within education systems marginalize indigenous and migrant knowledge. In parallel with Bourdieu's (1998) critique of the capacity of educational institutions to reproduce social hierarchies, the exclusion of indigenous knowledge systems from the curriculum constitutes not merely an academic obstacle for immigrant students but also a cultural rupture. In this context, the construction of a decolonized curriculum represents a pursuit of epistemic justice, entailing the recognition of the cultural capital that students bring not as a deficit but as an asset.

The third layer is shaped by Social Identity and Cultural Capital Theories. Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (2001), explains how immigrant students construct the us versus them distinction within educational settings and the effects of this distinction on their sense of belonging. **Irmak (2026)** demonstrates how the meanings students attach to academic competition are intertwined with their social identity construction—showing that



competition serves as motivation for some while constituting a barrier to inclusion for others. On the other hand, the perspective presented by **Huynh (2026)** on Cultural Resistance and Active Subjectivity adapts Bourdieu's (2018) Cultural Capital Theory to the resistance strategies of immigrant mothers, evidencing that the family is not a passive object but an active agent in the process of identity empowerment. **Hatipoğlu (2026)** further emphasizes that the us versus them perspective permeates every domain of the education system, including higher education, and highlights its detrimental nature.

Finally, the continuity of education in contexts of forced migration and crisis must be addressed within the framework of Ecological Systems Theory and Psychosocial Resilience. The ecological model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) examines child development at the intersection of school, family, and macro-social events (e.g., disasters, wars). Güneş and **Sarıdaş (2026)** utilize this model to analyze the academic and social vulnerability generated by forced migration following the 2023 earthquakes. As Ungar (2013) asserts, resilience is not merely an individual trait, but a consequence of the support mechanisms provided by the system. Accordingly, in times of crisis, school social work is defined as the most vital psychosocial safety net within the educational ecosystem.

Conclusion

This special issue on Migration and Education invites educational institutions and policymakers to embrace a radical paradigm shift—one that ceases to view immigrant students as a crisis to be managed or as foreigners whose deficits must be remedied. The collective voice of the research presented in this issue affirms that integration is not a technical assimilation operation but, at its core, an ethical social contract and a process of democratic renewal. Genuine transformation is possible not merely through the student's adaptation to the school, but through the school, the curriculum, and the system itself reconstructing themselves in a manner that embraces the multilingual and multicultural wealth that immigrant students bring, positioning them as constitutive agents.

At the heart of this integrated approach lies the reality that academic success must be built upon relational belonging and psychosocial well-being rather than grade point averages. Research demonstrates that no academic intervention will prove sustainable without first addressing the profound traumas created by crises and forced migration, as well as the strategies of invisibility operating within higher education. Schools must cease to be mere sites of instruction; they must transform into trust-based educational environments, where social workers, family resistance strategies, and the subjective voices of students are positioned at the center of the system. In this new architecture where psychosocial support is not a byproduct of the academic process but an unwavering prerequisite, the sustainability of integration is rendered indispensable.

On the other hand, the greatest challenge facing modern curricula is the principle of epistemic justice. Concepts such as epistemic walls and passive language resistance, as presented in the research, demonstrate that expecting immigrant students to leave their own worlds and

cultural knowledge systems at the school gate cognitively alienates them. The decolonization of the curriculum and the recognition of the cultural capital that students bring not as a deficit but as an asset will enable inclusion to transform from a symbolic gesture into a genuine restoration of rights. Pedagogically, it is impossible for a student whose own truths find no place in the curriculum to develop a full sense of belonging to the system presented to them.

The most powerful driving force in the transformation of the educational ecosystem, however, is the often-neglected active agents: immigrant families, and particularly mothers. The findings presented in this special issue demonstrate that the resistance and identity empowerment strategies developed by mothers against social stigmatization exert a far more profound impact than institutional integration policies. Positioning the family not as a stakeholder external to the system but as the primary architect of resilience and cultural continuity means weaving the strongest safety net for immigrant students' educational journeys. This home-school-community nexus will reanimate the transformative power of education in society.

In conclusion, the peaceful and just societies of the future will be built upon this integrated understanding, mutual recognition, and a sense of dignified partnership that we construct in today's classrooms. This collective endeavor lifts the veil of invisibility draped over immigrant students, offering both an academic compass and a conscientious roadmap toward the restoration of their rightful educational and social entitlements. Building an inclusive education is no longer merely a necessity for immigrant children; it is the most transformative step required to preserve humanity's dignity in coexistence and to prepare education systems for a more humane future.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding

Not applicable

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