Chapter 1
Immigrant Student Achievement and the Performance Disadvantage

Ozge Bilgili, Louis Volante, and Don Klinger

Introduction

Minors' migration is not a new phenomenon but the increasing share of children within the current migration flows induced mainly by conflict (International Organization for Migration, 2015) has led to the revival of discussions regarding the integration of foreign-born children in their new homes. Considering the likelihood of these young immigrants to settle permanently in destination countries, it is indispensable to revisit the various policy perspectives on their educational achievement and long-term sociocultural integration. Before going forward with the discussions on education policies though, we need to identify the size and characteristics of this diverse and growing population across the world. To be precise, we are interested in first-generation immigrants who are foreign-born students whose parents were also born in a country different than the country of residence, and second-generation immigrants who are born in the country of residence but whose at least one parent is foreign born. In our work, children with a migration background encompass also refugee and unaccompanied children as they are also entitled to educational rights in their country of residence.

O. Bilgili (✉)
Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands
e-mail: o.bilgili@uu.nl

L. Volante
Faculty of Education, Brock University, Hamilton, ON, Canada
e-mail: louis.volante@brocku.ca

D. Klinger
Waikato University, Hamilton, New Zealand
e-mail: don.klinger@waikato.ac.nz

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Table 1.1 International migrant stock as percentage of the total population (both sexes)

	Age categories			
Developed regions as area of destination	0–4	5–9	10–14	15–19
1990	1.6	3.0	4.4	5.7
1995	1.7	3.0	4.5	6.1
2000	2.1	3.4	4.8	6.6
2005	2.2	4.2	5.6	7.4
2010	2.2	4.3	6.0	8.0
2015	2.4	4.1	5.9	8.4

According to the United Nation's Population Division's estimates, over the years there has been an observable increase in the share of immigrant children as a percentage of the total population in developed regions of the world as the area of destination (UNPD, 2015). As Table 1.1 illustrates, the share of children aged 0–4 has increased from 1.6% in 1990 to 2.4% in 2015; children aged 5–9 has decreased slightly in 2015 compared to 2010 but remains above 4%; children aged 10–16 has increased from 4.4% to about 6% as of 2010; and finally children aged 15–19 have witnessed a significant increase within the past 25 years and reached 8.4% of the total population. In actual numbers, the total number of children as immigrant stock in developed regions of the world has been about 14 million in 2015, compared to less than 12 million in 1990. It is important to note that in comparison, the total number of non-adult immigrants is significantly higher in developing regions of the world (more than 23 million in 2015); however, in this book we focus primarily on destination countries in the Global North.

In addition to this brief overview that highlights the increase in the number of immigrant children who arrive to their new settlement countries as dependents with their families for various reasons, refugee children compose an equally important part of all immigrant children. In fact with the increase in the number of refugees in the past years, refugee children have also received increased attention. Currently, there are 21.3 million refugees, who were forced to flee from their homes because of wars, political conflicts, and violence (Edwards, 2016). More than half of these refugees (51%) are under 18 years old. Refugee children can be more vulnerable than other types of immigrants as their educational lives have been disrupted by the conflicts they have witnessed in their home country and also during the process of movement and settlement.

Another important issue among immigrant children is those who migrate alone, namely children asylum seekers applying for international protection. The number of unaccompanied minors has been on the rise since 2008, with an outstandingly sharp increase in 2014 when the number of unaccompanied children was greater than 23,000 in comparison with the steady numbers between 11,000 and 13,000 over the period 2008–2013 (Eurostat, 2016). Even more strikingly, in 2015 their numbers

reached almost 90,000 in the Member States of the European Union (EU; Eurostat, 2016).

Looking at the numbers of school aged immigrant children, we observe that they are a heterogeneous group with diverse backgrounds, legal status, and rights. It is also important to note that the share of immigrant children is very diverse across countries. While some countries like the traditional immigration countries (United States, Canada, Australia) have experienced immigration for decades, others are new immigration countries (Estonia, Italy, Portugal). For example, in countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, immigrant children make up about 10–14% of all students, compared to 5% in Italy (UNPD, 2015). Ireland and Spain have also become major destination countries in the past years and today about 8.5% of all students are first-generation immigrants (UNPD, 2015). In relatively old immigration countries shaped mainly by labor migration, the share of second-generation immigrants is higher. For example, in Switzerland 21% of 15-year-old students are second-generation and this share rises up to almost 30% in Luxembourg (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016). In fact, first- and second-generation immigrants in some major cities in Northern Europe now make up the majority of all pupils (Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki, & Vankova, 2015).

As exemplified, the share of first- and second-generation immigrant children shows great variance across countries. Moreover, the ways in which international migration is managed within countries has an effect on immigrant population composition. Put simply, whereas some countries tend to attract highly skilled immigrants through a point-system, others are more open to humanitarian and low-skilled migration flows. These flows have significant effect on the composition of school-aged immigrant groups and the share between first- and second-generation immigrant children. This book is an attempt to illustrate these differences among immigration countries and give a more in-depth understanding of the composition of immigrant children populations which lead to different needs and create various types of challenges and consequently solutions.

Immigrant Students' Education as a Factor and Indicator of Integration

Immigrant students' education can be viewed as a factor and indicator of integration. That is to say, on the one hand education is the path towards a better economic and social life in the future (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003; McCarthy & Vickers, 2012). Children who do well in school are more likely to improve their skills, attain better jobs, access a wider and more diverse network, and engage more actively in civic life. In this regard, education is a facilitator of integration in the wider society in the long run. On the other hand, educational achievement is an indicator of integration

Table 1.2 Measurements of educational outcomes

Schooling	Achievement	Educational objectives
Enrollment in pre-primary education	Grades	Educational attainment aspirations
Enrollment in primary education	National exam scores	Moral and civic development
Enrollment in secondary education	International assessment scores (e.g. PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS)	Artistic development
Enrollment in tertiary education		Physical development
Enrollment in higher education		
Grade repetition		
Drop-out rate		
Highest level of educational attainment		

for its own sake. Researchers assume that children who do well in school and pursue higher education are better integrated. Considering that school is the main public space where children socialize, interact with their peers, and get exposed to structures and social rules, it is understandable why educational achievement can be considered as an indicator of integration.

If students' achievement is so crucial in so many ways, the question is how to best measure educational outcomes. It would be too simplistic to answer this question with one answer only. On the contrary, measurement of educational achievement is a multi-dimensional notion and each dimension can reflect different aspects of students' success in school. There are multiple ways of measuring educational outcomes of immigrant students (see Table 1.2). Depending on the research question or the policy dimension we are interested in, the outcomes we focus on would differ. The initial step of identifying immigrant students' educational outcome relates to their enrolment to pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher education. This first step about access is illustrative of the equal chances that immigrant children have in comparison to their native peers. Educational attainment related questions can be posed only for those who are attending school. Within the school system, researchers focus on issues that relate to school attendance and attainment – namely, drop-out rates, grade repetition rate, and highest level of education that students achieve are the main indicators of educational outcomes.

Besides these indicators regarding schooling, the focus is also on the cognitive abilities, skills, and literacy in different subjects for those who are already enrolled in school. To assess these outcomes, researchers turn towards grades or results in national exams. Moreover, besides measurements that are available on a national level, international standardized tests are becoming more and more popular resources to assess children's achievement. International achievement test scores are frequently cited as a key measure of school outcomes, and as a result, can provide useful information on how well non-immigrant and immigrant populations are

achieving relative to their national and international counterparts. Popular international achievement tests include the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Among these examples, PISA, which is administered by the OECD, has become almost the standard evaluation upon which countries judge the relative success of their educational systems, also in relation to the performance of their immigrant population (Baird et al., 2011; Volante, 2016). PISA has even been likened to the "Olympics of education" in the popular media (see Petrelli & Winkler, 2008; Scardino, 2008) and continues to attract considerable attention around the world.

When thinking of different ways of measuring educational achievement, one also needs to revisit the objectives of education. What are the other types of skills that education is supposed to deliver? It is much more difficult to have objective assessment of these issues, but this does not undermine their importance. Some researchers for example focus on immigrant children's educational aspirations to have a better understanding of subjectivity in this domain (Khattab 2015; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2010). Others, especially those who are critical about the emphasis placed on hard skills by the international assessment tools, highlight the less measurable or even immeasurable educational objectives like physical, moral, civic, and artistic development (Volante, Klinger, Bilgili, & Siegel, 2017). The majority of existing research on educational achievement is biased in favor of the economic role of schools instead of indicators that allow researchers to assess the extent to which students are prepared to participate in democratic self-government, moral action, and a life of personal development, growth, and well-being.

Performance Disadvantage Among Students with a Migration Background

Despite the multiple possibilities of measuring educational outcomes, the data sources that allow for international comparisons are relatively limited. In this section, we give two recent overviews based on European Labour Force Survey 2015 and PISA 2015 studies to illustrate the generally observed performance disadvantage among individuals with a migration background. First of all, performance disadvantage among individuals with a migration background is demonstrated by the highest level of educational attainment. For this claim, we rely on the European Labour Force Survey 2015 which illustrates that foreign-born population has consistently lower educational attainment than native-born population. As shown in Fig. 1.1, more than 30% of foreign-born population aged 25–54 in EU-28 countries have pre-primary, primary, or lower secondary education, compared to just about 20% in the native population. The figure also shows that the majority of the foreign population with a maximum of lower secondary education is third-country nationals. About half of the native-born population European member states have

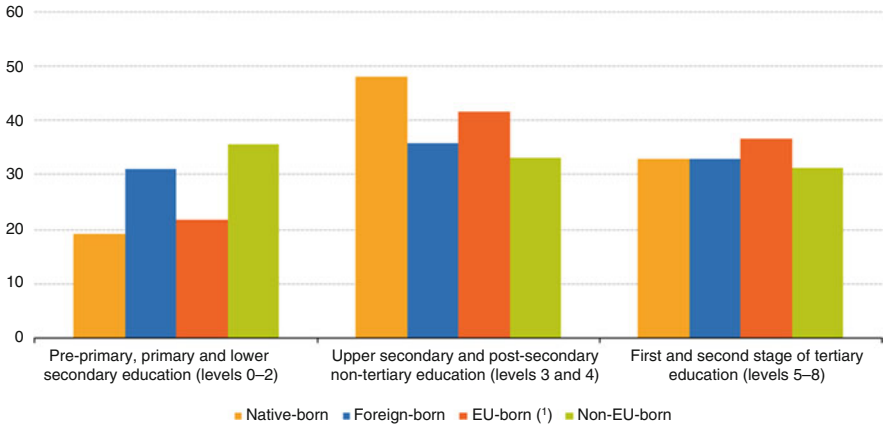


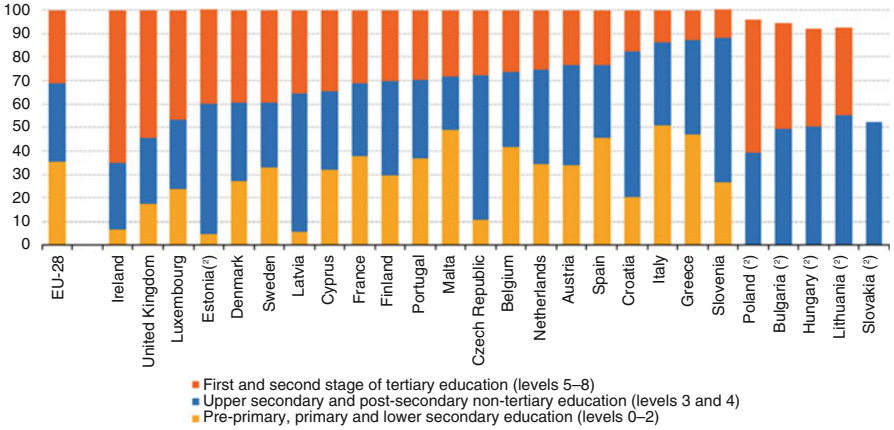
Fig. 1.1 Population (aged 25–54) by educational attainment level and groups of country of birth, EU-28, 2015 (Source: Eurostat 2015b)

upper secondary and postsecondary non-tertiary education compared to about 35% of the foreign-born population. Among this group, the share of other EU country born individuals is above average, and surpasses 40% compared to non-EU born individuals.

When we look at highest educational attainment within the most highly educated population, we observe that the differences vanish to a large extent. In fact, the share of those with first and second stage of tertiary education is almost the same among the native-born and foreign-born individuals. These results indicate that the biggest gap is observed within the low-educated population as the foreign-born population; especially third-country nationals are concentrated in lower levels of education compared to their native-born and other EU country born nationals.

The specific country profiles in the book analyze these statistics in greater detail to give a better meaning to these performance gaps. To set the basis for this discussion, Fig. 1.2 also illustrates the cross-country variation with regards to highest educational attainment among the foreign-born population. For example, new countries of immigration like Italy and Greece have a large foreign-born population with pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education, whereas countries like the United Kingdom and Luxembourg – countries with larger EU-born immigrants – have significantly more highly skilled immigrants with at least first and second stage of tertiary education. Such variations are crucial for having a broad understanding of the challenges that countries may face when dealing with the educational outcomes of their immigrant population.

In addition to highest level of educational attainment, as discussed earlier subject-related performance results (e.g. math, science, and reading) are indicative of school-aged children's educational outcomes. In fact these results are more important to



Note: ranked on decreasing share of 'First and second stage of tertiary education (levels 5–8)' attainment level.
(1)Germany: data not available; Romania: low reliability or confidential.
(2)Low reliability for data on pre-primary, primary and/or lower secondary education.

Fig. 1.2 Educational attainment level of non-EU-born population (aged 25–54), 2015 (Source: Eurostat 2015a)

understand where the difficulties are and on what issues policies should focus more precisely. To give a cross-country example regarding educational performance of children with a migration background, we turn to the newest data available by PISA 2015 regarding science literacy among 15-year-old children. Since its first implementation in 2000, PISA results have regularly shown that in most countries, both first- and second-generation immigrant students tend to perform worse than students without an immigrant background.

When controlling for socioeconomic background of parents, these differences diminish to a large extent, and in some countries like Canada the differences are even reversed and immigrant children perform better than their native peers (OECD, 2016). However, in a majority of the cases immigrant children still perform worse than their native peers. These differences seem to be particularly large when we look at Denmark, Germany, and Sweden.

Because student achievement is highly correlated with the different resources and circumstances related to both the families and immigrant communities, the performance gap is best understood when we compare students with a migration background and their native peers with a similar socioeconomic background. In most countries the performance difference between students with a migration background and their native peers remains significant even after controlling for socioeconomic status (SES) (OECD, 2016). These differences disappear after accounting for SES only in a few countries, including Israel, Singapore, and the United States. Such results indicate that in most cases, socioeconomic disadvantage cannot fully account for immigrant students' poorer performance and we need to consider the role of the

social and education policies, attitudes towards immigrants, and the education systems in destination countries to better understand the student achievement gap.

Performance Disadvantage Across Various Educational Systems and Policy Contexts

When discussing immigrant students' integration, the educational achievement gap between foreign-born and non-immigrant students within and across various countries has been widely studied (Schnepf, 2007). Various factors such as SES, gender, and country of origin are frequently examined (see Acosta & Hsein-Yuan, 2014; Areepattamannil & Berinderjeet, 2013; Cummins, 2012; Dronkers & Kornder, 2014, 2015; Hachfeld, Anders, Schroeder, Stanat, & Kunter, 2010; Jungbauer-Gas & Gross, 2011; Marx & Stanat, 2012; Murat & Frederic, 2015; OECD, 2013a; Shapira, 2012; Simms, 2012). Research has generally shown that most variation on educational performance occurs at the individual level (Dronkers & de Heus, 2013) but educational systems have an additional and differential effect on immigrant groups (Dronkers, Van Der Velden, & Dunne, 2012). Governments are seeking to develop and implement the most effective policies to successfully manage diversity and integrate immigrant students so they can contribute to the economic prosperity and social fabric of their society. However, while policies can often help narrow the achievement gap, they may also have unintended consequences and in some cases increase the achievement gap it if they are not designed or implemented properly.

Research supports the previous claim, as evidenced by the variety of outcomes that result from various integration policies around the world (Driessen & Merry, 2011; Lahaie, 2008; Makarova & Herzog, 2011; Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012; Shpaizman & Kogut, 2010; Veerman, 2015). It is clear that some countries have done a better job of facilitating a "smoother" transition for immigrants, which is reflected in their enhanced student achievement (Bilgili, Huddleston, & Joki, 2015; OECD, 2013b; Schleicher, 2006). The *Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015* (MIPEX 2015) assesses countries' supportiveness and openness by focusing on four policy dimensions (Huddleston et al., 2015). The first dimension refers to access to education of all children including undocumented children, the extent to which immigrant students' prior educational background is professionally assessed, and whether children receive additional support to access education. The second dimension refers to identifying the targeted needs of immigrant students, their teachers, and parents in a holistic manner. The third dimension is about seizing opportunities and skills that immigrant students bring to the classroom and supporting knowledge exchange on immigrant languages and cultures. The final dimension focuses on intercultural education and countries' commitment to appreciation of cultural diversity and monitoring of curriculum to ensure that all children learn how to live and learn together in a diverse society. MIPEX 2015 results indicate that most education systems are slow in responding to the specific needs

of immigrant students and fail to adequately respond to changes in immigrant student populations in schools.

There are still big steps to take in order to improve immigrant students' achievement and existing research gives us some indication in terms of what qualities are important to support immigrant students (Bilgili et al., 2015). Besides the few examples we give in this introduction, each national country profile will discuss countries' respective success and failure stories to contribute to the debate on what policies matter the most for immigrant student achievement. The quality of the general education system matters significantly for immigrant students. For example, educational attainment is higher in countries with a lower student–teacher ratio in primary education, higher government expenditure on education, and more years of compulsory education. Immigrant students often face double disadvantage and have to overcome both social and cultural barriers. Their parents often possess fewer social and economic resources and weaker proficiency in the language of instruction. Because of these reasons, their educational achievement is especially dependent on the quality of teaching. A shortage of qualified teachers and staff significantly diminishes immigrant students' opportunities to use the education system as a means of social mobility.

The level of early tracking in school systems is also found to be relevant in some contexts. In differentiated school systems, students are placed in specific school types based on their abilities at a relatively young age. More comprehensive school systems delay this age of tracking and offer more comprehensive school types. Most studies suggest that a high level of differentiation in the school system has a negative effect on the educational achievement of pupils, especially with an immigrant background and low-educated parents. Surprisingly though, a few empirical studies find that this argument does not always hold. A moderate level of differentiation in the school system can have the most positive outcome on immigrant students' academic abilities, while immigrant students may not actually benefit from less differentiated school systems (See Bilgili et al., 2015).

The school's "social background" also affects the learning climate and peer-group influences on immigrant students' education. Immigrant students tend to perform worse in schools where most pupils come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Previous studies have shown that in schools where there is a higher share of immigrants and parents with lower educational attainment, the math and reading literacy of children in general are significantly lower. In short it can be concluded that socioeconomic school segregation has a significant negative effect on the scholastic achievement of children. Despite the conclusions drawn from existing studies, it is crucial to indicate that experimentation and robust evaluations are usually missing in relation to immigrant education. This makes it difficult to make a systematic link between targeted education policies and immigrant students' educational outcomes. It only is possible to assess the impact of policies on school success through robust evaluations and long-term monitoring. The national profiles in this book will also discuss the state of the art in their country context and highlight the most important steps that need to be taken to better make the link between educational outcomes and policies. The contributing authors will also point to gaps

in the existing literature that may have precluded more fine-grained analyses that are necessary when contemplating diverse policy options for immigrant student groups.

Organization of This Book

The chief objective of the book is to promote greater understanding of the relationship between immigrant student achievement and educational policies across a range of educational and cultural contexts. Collectively, this edited volume provides the reader with a diverse cross-section of nations and policy approaches to addressing the performance disadvantage. This book provides national profiles from scholars in ten countries (England, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, Republic of Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). The educational jurisdictions represented in this edited volume were selected because they represent a range of Western nations engaged in large-scale reform efforts geared at enhancing their immigrant students' achievement.

Each national profile provides a brief overview of the evolution of the cultural composition of the countries' respective school-aged student population; explains the trajectory of achievement results of non-immigrant and immigrant student groups in relation to both national and international large-scale assessment measures; and discusses the effectiveness of policy responses that have been adopted to close the achievement gap between non-immigrant and immigrant student populations. The conclusion provides an analysis of cross-cultural approaches designed to address the performance disadvantage of immigrant students and proposes future areas of inquiry stemming from the profiles. The cross-cultural analyses attempt to isolate education policies that have been more or less effective in improving the achievement of immigrant student groups. Future areas of inquiry stemming from the limitations of the available literature are also discussed.

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