Teaching the immigrant Child - the needs of Polish teachers, teaching children with experience of migration

In spite of the fact that the country has very low score for integration provided by Migrant Integration Policy Index, the number of immigrants in Poland increases (MIPEX). The increasing immigration has significant implications for schools. The number of students from immigrant’s families in Polish schools doubled in 2015/16 in relation to the school year 2012/13. Most of them are Polish Language Learners (and the number of PLL increase for times in 2015/16 in regards to 2012/13) and require special assistance from their teachers and schools to be able to achieve educational outcomes prescribed in national curriculum and also learning Polish. Polish current policy places migrant students in mainstream classes. This means that there are polish students and students who have little or no Polish in the same class. Polish language learners follow supplementary Polish language classes. Teachers increasingly encounter a diverse range of migrant students. It requires that every teacher has professional skills to be able to work with students who struggle with Polish and who has to achieve prescribed educational outcomes. Some teachers are specialists in Polish as a second language and know how supporting ELLs, but the most of Polish teachers do not. Specialized preparation for ELL students in pre-service programs for teachers at the university is very rare. This situation can create important challenges for teachers.

The teachers have a central role in migrant children’ educational success and integration. Many of them are not prepare good enough to work with students with migrant experience who are groups of special-needs (Tellez, Waxman, 2005; Belszyńska, 2010; Pamula-Behrens, Hennel-Brzozowska, 2016 in print). They need better training to work effectively with students with low proficiency of language (August, Shanahan, 2006, 2008; Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, Driscoll, 2005; Rafoni, 2007; Snow, Uccelli, 2008) and coming from different cultural backgrounds (Garcia 1996; Garcia, Menken, 2010; Zarate, Lévy, Kramsch, 2011). There are many research on English second language teachers or French second language teachers (Ballantyne, Sanderman, Levy, 2008; Lukas 2012; Samson, Collins, 2012; Tellez, Waxman, 2005) but in Poland research about Polish second language teachers is lacking. Polish education only from a few years is confronted with the problem of immigrant students.

The aim of our project is to understand the problems and needs of Polish teachers involve with teaching migrant students. We set out to ask teachers about their challenges with regard to educating immigrants students - Polish language learners. We analyze how they evaluate their knowledge and preparation for working with PLLs, what kind of support they need for their every day classroom face to PLLs needs and difficulties, and what are teacher’s needs in regards to professional development.

Our project is a qualitative research based on focus group to make a systematic and collaborative reflection focusing on practical issues of PL teachers needs in the perspective of their practice and professional development. Identified needs will help us better understand the challenges in actual teaching organization and process of migrant students in Polish schools, and will help us to find how we could empower teachers in their practice.