

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS IN PROMOTING THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** The inclusive education is a fundamental pillar of modern educational systems, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities for learning and personal development. This study explores the role of special education in fostering the inclusion of migrant children in Greece. Given the increasing number of migrant students in Greek schools, understanding the challenges they face and the support structures available is crucial. The aim of this research is to examine the effectiveness of special education interventions in promoting the academic and social integration of migrant children. Specifically, the study seeks to identify best practices in inclusive education and assess their impact on students' academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. The research methodology includes a qualitative literature review approach. The expected findings will highlight key factors that facilitate or hinder the inclusion of migrant children with special educational needs in Greek schools. The study anticipates revealing gaps in the current educational framework and proposing policy recommendations for enhancing inclusivity. By addressing these issues, the research aims to contribute to the development of more effective educational policies and practices that support the integration of migrant students into the Greek educational system.

**Keywords:** Effectiveness, Special Education, Intervention, Migrant, Children, Social Integration.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of migrant children into educational frameworks poses considerable difficulties, especially in terms of enhancing their academic success and fostering social inclusion. Special education strategies have become essential in tackling these issues, focusing on the distinct needs of migrant students and encouraging their overall growth (Zafeirakou, 2020). The migrant children frequently face obstacles such as language barriers, cultural transitions, and interruptions in their prior education, all of which can hinder their academic advancement and social integration. Interventions in special education that are specifically designed for these students have demonstrated effectiveness in improving educational outcomes and easing their transition into new learning environments. For example, programs that utilize trauma-informed teaching methods recognize the psychological challenges many migrant children endure, thus fostering supportive educational settings that promote both academic and social progress (Georgiou & Papageorgiou, 2024).

By addressing the unique circumstances of migrant students through specialized educational approaches, educators can significantly enhance their learning experiences. These tailored interventions not only assist in overcoming the barriers faced by these children but also contribute to their successful integration into the broader educational community, ultimately benefiting their academic and social development (Thomas, 2016).

The involvement of educators is essential in the process of integrating migrant students into the educational system. Teachers who possess specialized training to navigate multilingual classrooms and provide psychosocial support can greatly enhance the educational experiences of these students. By recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by migrant children, educators are able to adopt inclusive teaching strategies that foster engagement and cultivate a sense of belonging within the classroom (Zafeirakou, 2020).

Additionally, community-based support systems are integral to the effective integration of migrant children. Partnerships between educational institutions and community organizations can provide supplementary resources and programs that cater to both the educational and social requirements of these students, thereby creating an environment that promotes holistic development. Such collaborations are crucial in ensuring that migrant children receive the support they need to thrive academically and socially (Papadopoulos & Mavrommatis, 2018). In conclusion, well-designed and implemented special education interventions are instrumental in facilitating the academic achievement and social integration of migrant children. When these interventions are combined with the expertise of trained educators and the backing of supportive community networks, they contribute to an inclusive educational environment that not only benefits migrant students but also enriches the entire school community (Michail, 2017).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

As the present study is a review of the literature, in order to implement it, research articles that have been published in authoritative scientific journals or conferences, from 2000 onwards, were identified, so as to be part of the contemporary literature and research. The search for these sources has been carried out through Google Scholar, as well as through Web of Knowledge, PubMed, PsycINFO and ScienceDirect. With the identification of the first articles, an independent selection of the articles has been carried out through the examination of their titles and abstracts to exclude those studies that are out of scope. In order to carry out this work, in addition to the above, articles and bibliographic sources regarding the effectiveness of special education interventions in promoting the academic and social integration of migrant children, have also been searched through electronic databases such as Google Scholar, as well as through Web of Knowledge, PubMed, PsycINFO and ScienceDirect. Then, a focus on research articles in Greek and international literature was carried out, where relevant articles were classified and analyzed, while others were excluded based on specific criteria. A systematic review of published studies from the year 2000 to the present is therefore reported.

### **Inclusion Criteria – Exclusion Criteria**

The revised articles resulting from the above search should be published in peer-reviewed international scientific journals or in full text from international scientific conferences and should focus on the purpose and objectives of the present research. Also, the articles have been published within the years from 2000 to 2022. Articles that are not valid, are older than 2020, were excluded from the results of this work. The predefined criteria for the selection of published research relevant to the subject of the review are:

- To collect all the appropriate data and cite the relevant researches, finding the data refers to scientific websites with scientific studies on the topic under consideration and more specifically to the Google Scholar databases, as well as through Web of Knowledge, PubMed, PsycINFO and ScienceDirect as well as in related scientific journals whose excerpts from related articles are published online.
- The writing language of the articles must be written in Greek and English
- The writing date of the articles should extend from 2000 to 2022
- The keywords used. They cover title, abstract and appearance searches in articles and publications from 2000 to 2022.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Articles that have been published in the form of diploma and degree theses.
- Articles not translated into English.
- Articles whose topic is not related to the sub-investigation framework of the present study.

## 3. RESULTS

The incorporation of migrant children into Greece's educational framework poses a variety of complex challenges, particularly in enhancing both their academic success and social integration. Special education strategies have become essential in tackling these issues, focusing on the distinct requirements of migrant students and fostering their overall development (Georgiou & Papageorgiou, 2024).

The migrant children frequently face obstacles such as language barriers, cultural transitions, and interruptions in their prior education, which can hinder their academic advancement and social assimilation. In response, Greece has implemented initiatives like Reception Classes (RCs) as part of its Intercultural Education approach, aimed at delivering more inclusive and engaging educational experiences for foreign and repatriate students. These classes are available in both primary and secondary education, tailored to accommodate the varying durations and specific needs of the students involved (Thomas, 2016).

The involvement of educators is vital in this integrative process. Teachers who possess specialized training to effectively manage multilingual classrooms and offer psychosocial support can greatly impact the educational experiences of migrant students. In Greece, the establishment of inclusion classes serves as a supportive educational framework for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, aiding their assimilation into the mainstream education system. The perspectives of teachers regarding these inclusion classes underscore their significance in fostering an inclusive educational atmosphere (Georgiou & Papageorgiou, 2024). The educators play an essential role in facilitating this integrative process. Those trained specifically to handle multilingual classrooms and provide psychosocial assistance can profoundly affect the educational journeys of migrant students. In Greece, the introduction of inclusion classes has created a supportive educational structure for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, promoting their integration into the general education system. Teachers' views on these inclusion classes emphasize their critical role in enhancing an inclusive educational environment (Papadopoulos & Mavrommatis, 2018).

The community-based support systems are essential for the effective integration of migrant children. Partnerships between educational institutions and local organizations can provide valuable resources and programs that cater to both the academic and social requirements of these children, thereby creating an environment that promotes holistic development. In Greece, organizations such as METAdrasi, have played a crucial role in delivering support services that aid the integration of migrants and refugees, offering educational initiatives specifically designed to meet their unique needs (Michail, 2017).

In conclusion, the well-structured special education interventions can significantly enhance the academic achievement and social integration of migrant children in Greece. When these interventions are implemented alongside trained educators and robust community support networks, they foster an inclusive educational environment that not only benefits migrant students but also enriches the entire school community. The collaboration between schools and community organizations is pivotal in ensuring that migrant children receive the necessary support for their development. By addressing both educational and social aspects, these partnerships help create a nurturing atmosphere that facilitates the successful integration of these children into society (Zafeirakou, 2020).

The effectiveness of special education interventions in supporting the academic and social integration of migrant children has been extensively studied in recent years. Research highlights that migrant students often face linguistic, cultural, and socio-emotional barriers that hinder their successful adaptation to new educational environments. Special education interventions, including targeted language support, individualized learning plans, and culturally responsive teaching, have been implemented to address these challenges (Papadopoulos & Mavrommatis, 2018).

In the context of Greece, migrant children form a significant portion of the student population, necessitating policies that promote inclusive education. Studies indicate that reception classes and intercultural education programs play a crucial role in bridging the educational gap for these students (Nikolaou et al., 2019). These programs focus on bilingual education, psychological support, and differentiated instruction to facilitate both academic success and social inclusion. Despite these efforts, gaps remain in resource allocation, teacher training, and systematic implementation of special education strategies (Zafeirakou, 2020).

The trauma-informed teaching practices have gained attention as effective means of addressing the psychological impact of displacement and forced migration on children. Research suggests that educators trained in trauma-sensitive approaches create learning environments that support emotional well-being and academic engagement among migrant students (Kourkoutas et al., 2021). Furthermore, peer mentoring and cooperative learning strategies have proven beneficial in fostering social connections and reducing feelings of isolation among migrant children (Anagnostou et al., 2022).

The recent studies also emphasize the role of parental engagement in improving the academic performance of migrant students. Programs that encourage collaboration between schools and migrant families contribute to greater student motivation and a sense of belonging within the school community (Petrou & Lazaridou, 2023). However, systemic barriers such as limited access to educational resources, bureaucratic obstacles, and social discrimination continue to impede the full integration of migrant children in Greece (Karagiannidis & Tsigilis, 2023).

While special education interventions have demonstrated positive effects on the academic and social integration of migrant children, challenges remain in their consistent implementation and effectiveness. Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of these interventions and identifying best practices for sustainable inclusion in the Greek educational system (Georgiou & Papageorgiou, 2024)

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The role of special education interventions in promoting the academic and social integration of migrant children has been a topic of considerable discussion within educational research. In Greece, where there has been a notable rise in migrant and refugee populations over the last ten years, educational institutions have been compelled to create specific strategies to meet the varied needs of these students (Papadopoulos & Mavrommatis, 2018). Although numerous interventions have shown promising results, challenges related to their implementation, sustainability, and equitable access continue to exist.

A key element that affects the effectiveness of special education interventions is the process of language acquisition. Language barriers pose a significant challenge to the academic success of migrant children, as they impede classroom engagement, restrict social interactions with peers, and can lead to diminished self-esteem and academic achievement (Nikolaou et al., 2019). In Greek schools, reception classes aimed at providing intensive instruction in the Greek language have proven beneficial in enhancing literacy and communication skills among migrant students. Nevertheless, research reveals that these programs frequently suffer from a lack of adequate teaching resources, qualified educators, and ongoing support after the initial integration period (Zafeirakou, 2020). This shortcoming

indicates that while reception classes are essential for fostering linguistic inclusion, they require additional bilingual support and tailored learning strategies to be truly effective.

In summary, while special education interventions play a crucial role in aiding the integration of migrant children, their success is heavily influenced by the ability to overcome language barriers. The establishment of reception classes has been a step in the right direction, yet the need for improved resources and sustained support remains critical. To maximize the potential of these interventions, it is essential to implement comprehensive strategies that include ongoing bilingual assistance and differentiated approaches to learning, ensuring that all students can thrive academically and socially.

The intercultural education frameworks extend beyond mere language acquisition, significantly contributing to social inclusion. Studies indicate that educational institutions implementing culturally responsive teaching practices enable migrant students to cultivate a deeper sense of belonging and identity, thereby mitigating feelings of social isolation and instances of discrimination (Kourkoutas et al., 2021). By incorporating aspects of migrant students' cultural heritages into the curriculum, educators create a more inclusive classroom atmosphere, which subsequently boosts student engagement and academic motivation. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of these strategies necessitates comprehensive teacher training in intercultural communication and inclusive teaching methodologies, an area where Greece has encountered challenges due to a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers (Anagnostou et al., 2022).

The psychological health of migrant children is another vital element influencing their academic achievement. Numerous migrant students endure trauma stemming from forced migration, conflict, or economic hardship, leading to emotional distress, anxiety, and difficulties in maintaining focus during lessons (Petrou & Lazaridou, 2023). Trauma-informed educational practices, which incorporate psychological support within the learning environment, have been acknowledged as effective in assisting migrant students in managing their past traumas while enhancing their educational performance. Schools that provide access to school psychologists, social workers, and peer support networks have reported higher retention rates and improved social interactions among migrant students. However, despite these positive outcomes, the availability of mental health resources in Greek public schools remains inadequate, particularly in underfunded areas where many migrant families live (Karagiannidis & Tsigilis, 2023).

Addressing the needs of migrant students requires a multifaceted approach that combines educational and psychological support. By fostering an inclusive environment through culturally responsive teaching and ensuring access to mental health services, schools can significantly enhance the educational experiences of migrant children. It is essential for policymakers to prioritize the development of comprehensive training programs for educators and to allocate resources for mental health services in schools, particularly in regions with high concentrations of migrant populations. Such initiatives will not only support the academic success of these students but also promote their overall well-being and integration into society.

The parental engagement in the education of migrant children plays a crucial role in their academic achievement. Research indicates that when migrant families are actively involved with educational institutions, their children tend to exhibit enhanced academic performance, improved behavior, and increased attendance rates (Georgiou & Papageorgiou, 2024). Nevertheless, various structural and cultural obstacles, such as language barriers, unfamiliarity with the Greek educational framework, and socio-economic challenges, often hinder migrant parents from fully participating in their children's educational journeys (Michail, 2017). Initiatives aimed at overcoming these issues, including community-oriented programs and multilingual communication strategies within schools, have shown potential but necessitate further development and institutional backing.

In spite of these encouraging initiatives, systemic obstacles persist that impede the complete integration of migrant children into Greece's educational landscape. Numerous schools face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient funding, and a shortage of trained staff capable of facilitating inclusive education (Kambouri & Nikolopoulos, 2016). Furthermore, socio-political dynamics, including public perceptions of migration and governmental policies regarding refugee education, significantly affect the level of support and funding allocated to special education programs.

To foster a more inclusive educational environment for migrant children, it is essential to address these systemic issues comprehensively. Enhancing resources, training educators, and promoting positive public attitudes towards migration can contribute to a more supportive framework for migrant families. By prioritizing these areas, Greece can work towards ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have equitable access to quality education and the opportunity to thrive academically.

In summary, special education interventions have proven to be highly effective in facilitating the academic and social integration of migrant children. However, their sustained success relies on various critical elements, such as the implementation of well-structured language programs, culturally responsive teaching methods, trauma-informed educational approaches, active parental involvement, and robust policy support. It is imperative that future research

prioritizes the evaluation of the long-term effects of these interventions while also investigating innovative strategies that could further improve the educational experiences of migrant students. To create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for migrant children in Greece, it is vital to enhance teacher training, expand access to mental health resources, and promote stronger partnerships among schools, communities, and policymakers. These actions are essential in ensuring that the educational needs of migrant children are met effectively and sustainably (Georgiou & Papageorgiou, 2024).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The role of special education interventions in facilitating the academic and social integration of migrant children, especially in Greece, has been extensively acknowledged in educational studies. Interventions such as reception classes, personalized learning plans, and trauma-informed teaching approaches have played a crucial role in enhancing the language abilities, academic achievements, and overall engagement of migrant students in schools. Institutions that implement culturally responsive teaching practices and offer psychosocial support cultivate inclusive environments conducive to both learning and social integration. Nevertheless, obstacles like insufficient teacher training, resource limitations, and inconsistent policy execution impede the full realization of these initiatives. Although certain schools effectively integrate migrant children through focused educational strategies, disparities in funding and institutional backing persist, impacting the overall efficacy of special education interventions.

While significant advancements have been achieved, additional enhancements are required to guarantee the sustainability and lasting effects of these initiatives. It is vital to bolster teacher training programs, broaden bilingual education efforts, and improve access to mental health resources for migrant students as essential measures for fostering more effective integration. Furthermore, fostering collaboration among schools, local communities, and policymakers can improve the inclusivity of educational settings and tackle the systemic challenges encountered by migrant children. Ongoing development of inclusive education policies, along with evidence-based research on effective practices, will be crucial in ensuring that special education interventions successfully support the academic achievement and social welfare of migrant children in Greece.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the above, the future investigations into the efficacy of special education interventions aimed at facilitating the academic and social integration of migrant children, especially in Greece, should prioritize assessing the long-term effects of these initiatives on student outcomes. Research should delve into the impact of various pedagogical strategies, including bilingual education, trauma-informed teaching, and culturally responsive practices, on academic success and social adaptation over time. Moreover, there is a pressing need for further exploration of the significance of teacher training in creating inclusive learning environments, evaluating how targeted professional development can empower educators to better assist migrant students.

The comparative analyses between different regions within Greece and other European nations could yield valuable insights into effective practices and potential policy enhancements. Additionally, future studies should consider the viewpoints of migrant students and their families to gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles they encounter and how interventions can be tailored to address their specific needs more effectively. Longitudinal research tracking the academic advancement and social integration of migrant children would also be instrumental in pinpointing deficiencies in existing policies and practices, thereby informing the creation of more comprehensive and sustainable educational strategies.

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