

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
FAIR AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
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ISSUES PAPER – SESSION E

This section discusses how education can be a key tool of social advancement for groups at risk. It covers factors that influence migrants and minorities' underperformance in education (such as disadvantaged socio-economic status) and measures to reduce their negative impact on students' outcomes.

Our conclusions and recommendations are:

Respond to diversity and provide for the successful inclusion of migrants and minorities within mainstream education

Evidence

- Success in both education and employment varies widely between immigrant and minority groups and between different countries.
- Minority groups are, in many cases, less likely than others to participate in early childhood education and care, more likely to be in special education and more likely to drop out or end up in low status tracks and streams.
- For some “visible minority” groups, labour market discrimination is sometimes extensive. This limits employment prospects and reduces the incentives to obtain qualifications.
- In most countries, in the PISA assessments, immigrant students of first and second generation tend to perform less well in mathematics, science and reading than their native counterparts, while second-generation students tend to outperform first-generation students. In the PISA assessment, much but not all of this is explained by social background factors.

Policy recommendations

- Early childhood education and care is helpful for disadvantaged children and provides a strong environment in which to learn a second language. Special measures may encourage participation by the children of immigrants.
- Where immigrant and minority groups are disproportionately streamed into special education institutions attention needs to be given to a) the risk of cultural bias in the diagnosis and b) whether separate schooling is in the best interests of the students involved.
- Newly arrived immigrant children often need special language training, but funding mechanisms and the approach selected to deliver this training should not encourage the isolation of such children from mainstream classes after an initial period of at most one year.
- Particularly in countries where immigration has risen sharply, teachers need professional development to deal with new demands on matters such as second language learning, a multicultural curriculum and teaching for tolerance and antiracism.

Points for discussion:

1) To what extent can the school performance of migrants and minorities be explained by factors such as socio-economic status, knowledge of language, immigration policy, etc. What are the main challenges in making effective provision for migrants and minorities in the education system?

2) Integration - improvement of immigrants' chances to succeed in the host society, requires simultaneous efforts in many areas such as education, labour market, housing etc. Can education be part of a wider policy that aims to improve immigrants' integration? How can these policies be linked and coordinated?