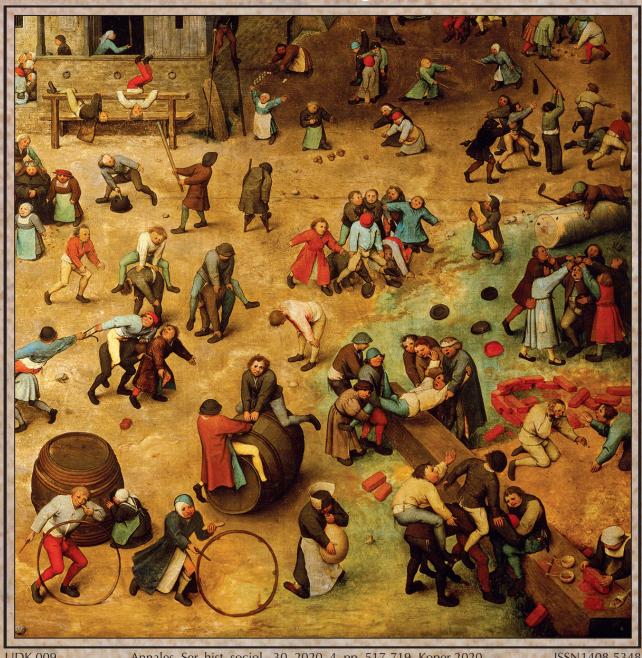# ANNALES

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THE PRINCIPLES OF CHILD-CENTRED MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY: CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE

Barbara GORNIK
Science and Research Centre Koper, Institute for Social Science, Garibaldijeva 1, 6000 Koper, Slovenia
e-mail: Barbara.gornik@zrs-kp.si

ABSTRACT

The article looks at a child-centred approach to the integration of migrant children and discusses the principles of such an approach in the practice of policy-making. It argues that any child-centred policy must aim at fulfilling the fundamental participatory rights of children, in particular the right to be heard and express their views as basic functioning legal principles and underlying assumptions. The article develops a framework for the child-centred integration policy as one that builds on the knowledge gained through the child-centred approach, focuses on the current well-being of children, supports the participation of children in a broader social context, ensures the involvement of children in policy development, is defined with policy flexibility and follows the principles of child-centred education.

Keywords: child-centred approach, migrant children, children participation, integration policy, migrant integration.

I PRINCIPI DELLA POLITICA DELL'INTEGRAZIONE DEI MIGRANTI INCENTRATA SUL BAMBINO: CONCLUSIONI EMERSE DALLA LETTERATURA

SINTESI

Nell'articolo si esamina un approccio all'integrazione di bambini migranti incentrato sul bambino e si discute dei principi di tale approccio nell'ambito della pratica del processo decisionale. Si sostiene che qualsiasi politica incentrata sul bambino debba essere volta all'adempimento dei diritti fondamentali di partecipazione dei bambini, in particolare il diritto di essere ascoltati e di poter esprimere le proprie opinioni come principi giuridici di funzionamento fondamentali e presupposti di fondo. L'articolo elabora un quadro per l'integrazione dei migranti incentrata sul bambino che si basa sulla conoscenza ricavata attraverso l'approccio incentrato sul bambino, si concentra sul benessere attuale dei bambini, sostiene la loro partecipazione in un contesto sociale più ampio, garantisce la partecipazione dei bambini nella formulazione delle politiche ed è definito con la flessibilità politica, e segue i principi dell'educazione incentrata sul bambino.

Parole chiave: approccio incentrato sul bambino, bambini migranti, integrazione dei migranti, politiche di integrazione, partecipazione dei bambini

INTRODUCTION[1]

Contemporary Europe is defined by a high level of cultural and ethnic diversity and the upcoming decades are not pointing towards its homogenisation; on the contrary, it is projected that Europe will become more culturally diversified than ever before. In 2018, there were approximately 6.9 million migrant children in the EU (Schumacher, Löschner & Sermi, 2019, 3), which equals roughly 7 per cent of all minors living in Member States. The share of migrants among the minor population in Europe is not negligible. When it comes to politics and democracy, the question of their representation is an important one. However, the reality is that in the political domain children often lack a voice. This holds even more true for migrant children, who are furthermore under-represented due to their immigrant status. Although migrant children do not form a homogenous group – they are diverse in terms of the length of stay, ethnic and cultural background, age, gender, socioeconomic and legal status – they have something in common: they are one of the main targets of migrant integration policy and thereby affected by measures that are supposed to facilitate their becoming members of the host society.

Some critics observe that children's opportunities to participate and represent their interests are frequently contingent on the goodwill of adults – e.g. on initiatives within a local community or NGO, the willingness of a school to establish a school council, an enlightened doctor willing to provide a child with information and listen to and respect his or her views. Children likewise rarely enjoy noteworthy democratic rights to influence policies, shape laws or elect representatives, mainly due to the contemporary political culture, which fails to recognise children as fully competent to exercise the levers of power for themselves. Without exception, migrant children likewise often do not have a say in the decisions made about them in various institutional settings, they are not sought or listened to, or they are afforded only minimal, tokenistic opportunities to participate and engage with adults, particularly in the political terrain. This situation does not arise out of a legal gap that would hinder the possibility of children's participation. Conversely, the international legal basis for the participation of children and young people was established back in 1990 with the well-known Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This article legally binds all State Parties to ensure that children have the right to express their own 'views freely *in all matters affecting* the child'.

John Wall (2011) in this respect convincingly argues that contemporary democracies will have to transform if children are to be adequately represented in the political domain. Starting from this observation, the article discusses how it would be possible to design a policy for the integration of migrant children that would allow them greater participation and representation in policy-making and in wider social context. It builds on a child-centred approach that recognises children as active participants within social interactions and as autonomous individuals, skilful communicators, right-holders and meaning-makers, who are able to speak for themselves (Clark & Moss, 2005; Fattore, Mason & Watson, 2007).

The article opens with a presentation of the theoretical framework drawn from Carol Lee Bacchi's approach to policy analysis – 'what is the problem represented to be?' (Bacchi, 2009). It subsequently presents a brief assessment of the EU migrant integration policy, which serves to highlight the existing gaps in the light of a child-centred approach. By examining its underlying assumptions, the section expands on how migrant integration is (not) conceptualised, how migrants are (not) subjectivised and categorised, what are the main problems (represented to be), what are its effects and what is left unproblematised. The article continues with developing a child-centred policy framework and discusses the basic principles that would have to form the foundation of a migrant integration policy if the policy-makers sought to pursue a child-centred approach. Its basic premise is that a child-centred migrant integration policy is a policy that problematises migrants' well-being and participation as a guiding principle and a main objective to be attained. In this view, a child-centred migrant integration policy is defined as a policy, which has children's well-being and participation as the main feature and principle of its *conceptualisation* (what it builds on), *operation* (how it is developed and how it functions) and well as its *orientation* (toward which objectives its intentions strive).

ANALYSING (CHILD-CENTRED) POLICY

The term policy generally refers to government decisions, specific proposals, programmes, theories or models that contain a field of activity to achieve the desired state of affairs and outcome. According to Guy Peters (2016, 4), 'public policy is the sum of government activities, whether acting directly or through agents, as it has an influence on the life of citizens'. For Sapru (2009, 4) policy denotes guidance for ac-

tion and may involve a declaration of goals, course of action, general purpose and authoritative decision. Similarly, Dye (2013, 3), Cochran et al. (2012, 2) and Birkland (2016, 9) expose the intention or objective as one of the essential elements of any policy because the latter is marked by an aim to impose change on an existing situation. For them, public policy is a set of actions that revolve around specific principles and measures that are needed to achieve the goal. As such, policy is essentially value-laden, highly normative and action-oriented, concentrating on what we as a (political) community should do rather than merely describing how we should be (see Moran, Rein & Goodin, 2010).

Drawing from Carol Lee Bacchi's (2009) approach to policy analysis – 'what is the problem represented to be?' – policy provides a normative framework of how the addressed 'problem'[2] is understood and conceptualised. By proposing actions, policy not only defines the ways in which the 'problem/s' in the society are to be approached in order to be fixed and governed, but it also formulates the problem and gives it normative framing. In other words, by analysing the measures and mechanisms put forward as a response and solution to a particular 'problem', we can develop a specific understanding of a problem addressed by policy; the content and direction of solutions explain the '*rationales for the proposal, deep-seated presuppositions underpinning the proposed change, possible silences in the understanding of what needs to change, and the effects that are likely to accompany this particular understanding of the "problem"'* (Bacchi, 2009, x). Hence, once we identify the underpinning conceptual premises, assumptions and presuppositions, we are also able to define how a particular problem is represented and legitimised through the measures contained in policies. This approach is focused on how policy implies '*problem-questioning*' rather than '*problem-solving*', says Bacchi (2009, xvii); it is an approach that questions taken-for-granted assumptions that lodge in government policies and policy proposals by interrogating (problematising) the problem representations it uncovers within them (Bacchi, 2009, xv).

While problems tackled by policy are traditionally approached through addressing a range of social conditions and treated as exogenous 'social problems' – that is, as if they exist outside of the policy-making process – Bacchi argues that it is actually policy that gives '*shape* to "problems"; it does not address them' (Bacchi, 2009, x). Bacchi's proposition, to overcome treating policy problems as something that exists outside policy, does not imply that there is not a full range of structural conditions that call for analytical

attention. Nevertheless, her approach directs attention to the ways in which particular representations of 'problems' play a central role in how we are governed; the ways in which issues are problematised – how they are thought about as 'problems' – are essential to governing processes. In effect, we are governed through problematisations rather than through policies, says Bacchi, and thereby offers a solid gateway and basis of our attempt to develop an argument regarding what a child-centred migrant integration policy could look like.

The overarching premise in this respect is that a child-centred migrant integration policy is a policy that uses the concept of child-centredness as its cognitive frame, conceptual base and guiding principle. First, a child-centred policy recognises children as *children* and not as future adults. This means it places emphasis on *current* development, well-being and welfare, and aspects that are important to them as *children* and that it considers their needs *in situ* (Hennum, 2014, 441). Second, a child-centred policy is a policy that builds on the knowledge that is gained from children in line with a child-centred approach; a child-centred approach to policy-making in this sense necessarily involves representing children's voices faithfully, by building understanding from an interactive and reflexive interaction that is not limited to spoken words but involves a variety of methods (Clark, 2006). Third, a child-centred policy essentially recognises children as active participants and right-holders – it is a policy that intrinsically maintains children's political status, safeguards their participation and involvement in policy development, and focuses on solutions that further support and facilitate the participation and agency of children.

The role of policy-makers is therefore to work together with children and enable a joint discovery of insights through appropriate methods tailored to the needs of particular children, contexts and the specifics of the problem addressed in a given policy. As such, a child-centred policy supports the creation of new meanings; here, great emphasis is placed on children's perspectives on a given problem, while children are placed in the centre of defining solutions and responses in a given context. A child-centred policy thus accepts children's voices as integral to policy development and is in line with recent debates that have moved away from the conventional line of simply protecting them, and come closer to giving more recognition to some form of 'children's citizenship', and in particular to ways of allowing children to 'participate' and to have a say in their treatment (e.g. Stasiulis, 2002; Ben-Arieh & Boyer, 2005; Lister, 2009).

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2   The term 'problem' as used by Carol Lee Bachhi (2009, xi) in her approach to policy analysis does not refer to something that is difficult to deal with but to the kind of change implied in a particular policy proposal.

Nevertheless, a child-centred approach to policy cannot be understood as a standpoint defending that children have the right to do whatever they like. Rather such an approach evolves around achieving a balance between the fact that children are ascribed participation rights on the one hand, while, on the other hand, they are more or less dependent on their caregivers to fulfil their rights (Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes, 2011, 5). Moreover, it is about acknowledging that due to the temporal dimension of childhood, children's interests and well-being encompass both the present situation and future development (Frønes, 2007) and that it is futile to separate children's interests from those of their parents, and separate children from the rest of society (Guggenheim, 2009; Archard, 2004).

This points to the fact that taking a child-centred approach to integration policy does not mean that other (adult) social actors from the policy field are bypassed or circumvented. On the contrary, taking a child-centred approach to policy inevitably contains a task to make children's views meet those of policy architects. Important here is that the shifting of children from being passive objects to being policy-makers requires a reconceptualisation of their participation, as Fattore, Mason and Watson (2009) believe; if we accept that children should be involved in a meaningful way in contributing to policy and the content of indicators, that implies that policy and indicator development mechanisms have to alter to allow for effective and deliberative dialogue that understands children as important contributors to policy formation.

Concurrent with this, Skivenes (2011, 171) conceptualises the child-centred approach to policy as a distinctive perspective, which entails: (1) children's legal protection and participation rights in organisational procedures; (2) recognition of children as individuals with particular interests and needs in interactions with adults; and (3) the use of the individual child's viewpoint as a way of interpreting what the world means to children. Moreover, Newbigging and Thomas (2011) highlight the importance of models of good care for migrant children and outline six elements for the organisational delivery of good care: (1) organisational commitment to promoting well-being, (2) multi-agency partnerships, (3) local strategies developed according to specific needs assessments, (4) engaging with and involving migrants in the development of services, (5) workforce development, and (6) monitoring and review.

To include migrant children in policy development is therefore a demanding, but not impossible, task. One of the biggest challenges, for instance, is how to translate subjective children's views into policies that tend to deal with objective measures and indicators of integration. In other words, how does one incorporate the complexity that lies beyond the quantitative figures (e.g. school success, early school dropout and language proficiency) that is grounded in less measurable variables such as happiness, belonging and feeling good? Any attempt to translate qualitative research into quantitative measures inevitably results in the loss of the subjective dimension of an individual, whose definitions as such are not fixed but rather changing through the life-course and according to time spent in the host society. This brings us to the conclusion that from the standpoint of our attempt to examine possibilities and develop a child-centred migrant integration policy, it is likely that adjustability, flexibility and contextuality will appear as essential features of such an approach.

A VERY BRIEF ASSESSMENT OF EU MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY

Drawing from Bacchi, to understand a migrant integration policy as child-centred we must see first how this particular social field is governed. We need to examine the representations that are implied through methods and policy responses to migrant children integration. We need to interrogate the kinds of 'problems' that are presumed to exist in relation to migrant integration and how these are thought about. What is more, we need to assess the representations of problems to see what they include and what they leave out. In line with this argument, the existing EU policy for the integration of migrant children has to be evaluated from the perspective of whether it recognises children as *children*, builds on knowledge obtained in line with a child-centred approach and guarantees the participation of migrant children in policy development. In this way, we gain insight into the knowledge that informs governing practices.

Already a quick overview of key documents of the EU migrant integration policy indicates that this field is dominantly problematised and governed through state-centric logic, which is profoundly marked by market economy dimensions. For example, the *European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals* considers legal migration to be a way to maximise '*the use of the labour force and improve the productivity of the EU economy*' (EC, 2011, 2), while integration is understood as something that underlies migrants' contribution to economic growth and social cohesion (EC, 2011, 2). Immigration to the EU is moreover seen as a way of responding to demographic changes, including the ageing population, longer life expectancies and a declining working-age population. Also, across different European states migration policy

is designed in line with the principles of long-term macroeconomic utility, following the demand of the labour or capital market. The need to integrate migrants into host societies hence emerges as pragmatism – Europe needs migrants to respond to the needs of market capitalism, but '*if the full benefits from migration are to be realised, Europe needs to find a way to cope with its diverse and multicultural societies through more effective integration of migrants*.' (EC, 2011, 2). In other words, '*the cost of non-integration will turn out to be higher than the cost of investment in integration policies*' (EC, 2016, 4).

Perhaps one of the most obvious reasons for claiming that EU integration policy suffers from a deficit in its child-centred approach is that policy-making procedures in the field of migrant integration do not include consultation with children; migrant children do not enjoy significant democratic rights to influence integration policy and shape laws. The EU bodies involved in policy decisions and the legal framework include the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of Ministers, and the European Parliament (see Jalušič, Bajt & Lebowitz, 2019). This is a decision-making machinery that typically functions in the adult domain. Likewise, the networks, such as Eurydice and SIRIUS, which act as main advisors on migrant education at the European Commission level, do not directly involve children as advisors. So, although the EU executive and legislative institutions are devoted to respecting children's rights, they do not use migrants' viewpoints as a way of interpreting what migration and integration means to children.

Moreover, the concept of migrant integration – which is in the context of EU policy defined as '*a two-way process based on reciprocity of rights and obligations of third-country nationals and host societies*' (EC, 2011, 2) – builds on the common-sense assumption that the subjects appearing on each side of this 'two-way' process are adults. This is not to say that children are not addressed through the means of policy, but that they are not represented in terms of their present 'being', but rather in terms of their 'becoming'. Even education, which is especially pertinent to migrant children and is considered among the most powerful tools for integration, is regarded as a base for the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge and thus as a gateway to (future) employment and social inclusion (EC, 2016). In this sense, education in migrant integration reflects the aims of "the social investment state"; it is concerned with the idea that it is strategically wise to 'invest' in children so that they will be (as adults) healthy, educated and prepared to assume the nation's social and economic challenges. As highlighted by Gilbert, Parton and Skivenes (2011, 253), this is a future-oriented approach, one that considers childhood as a preparation for adulthood and treats children in terms of becoming adults.

Important to note is also that in migrant integration policy, education is predominately discussed within a neoliberal framework, which focuses on performance in school. For instance, migrant children are considered as disadvantaged compared to their native peers, disproportionally represented among underperformers and also among early school leavers (Jalušič, Bajt & Lebowitz, 2019). Consequently, the proposed measures generally tend to support language training, welcome classes, skills and language assessment. While these aspects are vital in view of migrant integration, they address it mainly through the lens of academic performance and not through other aspects that are likewise important for integrating children, as for instance their social and emotional needs' (EC, 2019, 21). A child-centered approach, conversely, calls for additional attention and care to respond to their personal, social and emotional needs in order to create an optimal state for learning as well as for their successful inclusion into host society.

In this aspect, we see that EU migrant integration policy could be more child-centred. Following this path, it should conceive migrant children as individuals *here* and *now* and as political subjects, who are different from but equally valuable as adults. Migrant children should be included in the polity in terms of deciding on what they *as persons* need and want, and in terms of what goods *as a class* they should have or what material conditions and opportunities are optimal for them. Instead, they are mostly dealt with within the parameters of their future role as citizens and workers rather than within the parameters of the welfare of the child *qua* child (see also Appell, 2013; Thomas, 2005; Lewis, 2006). Finally, a child-centered integration policy should take migrants' well-being (e.g. migrants' subjective well-being, family, home, friends, living area, time use patterns, safety etc.) as the main challenge that needs to be tackled. It should not unproblematically assume that school success and academic achievement contributes to their successful integration and well-being. The basic premise of child-centered approach is also that responding to migrant children's current well-being fosters their well-being in future. It is recognized that because of children's special position as future adults, their well-being encompasses both the present situation and future development (Frønes, 2007). A child-centred migrant integration policy would hence approach migrant children through the prism of their present well-being and future opportunities at the same time and not deal with them as future adults at the expense of neglecting their present needs.

A CHILD-CENTRED MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY

The argument in this section pursues a claim that a child-centred policy in any respective field would begin with framing the dominant problem in relation to (lack of) children's participation and would propose solutions and measures to bring children's voices into defining directions that are relevant to them. A child-centred migrant integration policy would take into account the basic elements of a child-centred approach, resting on five aspects; (1) knowledge obtained in line with a child-centred approach; (2) emphasis on children's present well-being; (3) participation and involvement of children in policy development; (4) participation of children in the wider social context; and (5) principles of child-centred education. This section briefly explains each of the respective aspects in relation to the field of migrant children's integration.

Knowledge obtained in line with a child-centred approach

The child-centred approach is widely recognised in theory and practice in the field of social science, pedagogics and social policy, and also psychiatry and psychology. In social sciences, a child-centred approach has been most often understood as one in which children are active participants and the most relevant source of information on their lives and thus provide a valid source of data (Mayeza, 2017). This is an approach that recognises children as active participants, actors and knowers, who are able to speak for themselves (Clark & Moss, 2005; Fattore, Mason & Watson, 2007).

A child-centred migrant integration policy would therefore shift the focus from the dominant adult-centric perspective on children's experiences. Child-centred knowledge is distinct in view that it 'puts' the children first (Bhana, 2016, 14), reduces common-sense adult-centred explanations in order to facilitate childhood agency in various fields (Thorne, 1993) and challenges the dominant discourse about whose knowledge counts (Clark & Moss, 2011). Within the scope of a child-centred approach to knowledge production, the main aim is to take children's own points of view as a starting point for learning about them (Mayeza, 2017); it is about letting children to report on their own subjective experiences and perceptions and to explain their well-being in their own terms, prioritising needs according to their perceptions.

The methods of gathering knowledge in line with a child-centred approach mean that interaction between adults and children is not limited to spoken words but entails a variety of methods (Clark, 2006), tailored to the needs of migrant children. In this manner, policy-makers work together with children, who are able to communicate and create new meanings about integration and offer different insights into related challenges. This approach considers children's perspectives in context and can therefore offer a different perspective on social processes, especially when children's views oppose the prevailing views of adults (Clark & Moss, 2011). In this context, Coyne and Carter (2018) outline the changed emphasis in childhood research towards a "strength-based" perspective instead of a "deficit-based" one. This means recognising them as capable of expressing their views and capable of social action and giving their views equal importance.

Emphasis is given to children's views on what is important to them and how to resolve and respond to the specific problems concerning their integration. The reason why is it necessary to put more focus on a child-centred approach in this respect essentially rests on the position that if policy aims at advancing the integration of migrant children, the measures have to start from what it is known about migrant children, and, more importantly, has to give them a voice by respecting their views, opinions and desires, instead of bypassing them. Agreeing with Fattore, Mason and Watson (2007), problematising migrant children's integration from the perspectives of the children themselves is likely to have an impact, precisely because policy builds from theoretical insights grounded in evidence; the existing measures regarding overcoming obstacles in children's integration can be improved if the proposed set of measures is also relevant to children. The focus on children's perspectives is not proposed to undermine the role of adults with specific professional expertise, but to recognise that to answer questions about children's experiences, the primary source of knowledge should be the children themselves (Morrow & Richards, 1996).

Emphasis on children's present well-being

As noted by Due, Riggs and Augoustinos (2014), there is still a gap in knowledge about children's well-being, particularly from the perspective of children with refugee or migrant backgrounds themselves. A child-centred migrant integration policy must thus be concerned with discovering dimensions of migrant integration in host societies from a child-centred perspective. It should start from identifying the problem of migrant children's lives, examining the context of integration, considering the social constructs, mapping the children's challenges, opinions and perspective, and, finally, developing solutions based on what children consider to be the best way to achieve their well-being. Crucial in this respect is to understand what it means for migrant children to be "doing well" on their own terms (Due, Riggs & Augoustinos, 2014, 210).

In response to the limitations of past research that did not include children's views, there has been a growing amount of studies concerning children's understanding of 'doing well' that relies on a participatory approach with the aim to gain an understanding of how children perceive well-being (Due, Riggs & Augoustinos, 2014); the studies have focused starting from their interests and concerns – how well-being is defined by children, what is important to them in the present, how they think about their past and the future, what meanings they attach to the physical spaces they inhabit, to the people and activities in their lives (Fattore, Mason & Watson, 2009; Clark & Statham, 2005). Qualitative studies of child well-being have shown that a number of themes are appearing, including feeling happy, feeling safe, a feeling of acceptance, and positive physical spaces around them, enjoying good health and access to education, religious practice, feeling of being taken care of, protected and being able to participate (Fattore, Mason & Watson, 2007; Carboni & Morrow, 2011); all of these highlight that migrant children experience integration differently from adults and differently from how the problem of integration is problematised in existing migrant integration policies. Given the context of the need for revisiting integration policies in regard to newly arrived migrant children as well as long-term residents, a child-centred policy would consider what it means for these children to be 'doing well'. If a migrant integration policy is to be in line with a child-centred approach, it should conceptualise migrant integration through the parameters of children's well-being and propose measures that respond directly to the above-mentioned aspects.

The basic argument behind the need to focus on children's well-being in migrant integration is that a person feeling comfortable and as a member of society is also a successfully integrated person, while, on the other hand, unsuccessful integration results from migrants feeling unsatisfied, insecure or unwanted. Following this, a child-centred migrant integration policy would need to reach beyond an adult-centric understanding of what successful integration is (such as good performance in school, meeting developmental milestones and good behaviour) since a lack of negative indicators does not necessarily imply positive well-being (Fattore, Mason & Watson, 2007). Migrant children may do very well in all of the above-mentioned aspects without having a feeling of security, comfort and happiness. Positive well-being that reflects their inner world thus makes a sensible starting point to approach the question of migrant integration without imposing the normative framework of integration policies and values of host societies.

Participation and involvement of children in policy development

Children are actively and positively engaged in creating their lives and future for themselves – probably more than we are willing to admit – but they soon become bound by what others think are their best interests. In this regard, the problem highlights that the existing social and political order does not offer enough autonomous space where children could independently speak for themselves. A child-centred migrant integration policy would therefore start from Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), according to which all children, including migrants, have a right to be heard in all decisions and to express their views in all matters affecting them, and the views have to be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. A child-centred migrant integration policy would seek an answer to how to create 'a political space' where migrant children of all ages with resident status, asylum seekers, irregular or undocumented migrants are able to communicate and share their experiences, needs and aspirations after arriving in receiving societies. This would help make heard the voices of the least powerful members of communities, as an argument and factor for change.

Children's active involvement in legal and administrative proceedings and in decision-making processes at individual, family, organisation, and policy levels in society has been recognised as key to realising a child-centred perspective. But despite the clear-cut intentions of Article 12 of the CRC, it has remained a challenge to identify effective methods for achieving children's participation. In this respect, Friðriksdottir explains that when aiming to facilitate child participation, stress should "placed on individuals having the *rights*, the *means*, the *opportunity* and the *support*, when necessary, to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making" (2015, 59, emphasis in original). The fact remains that if children are not acknowledged as rightful political actors with the ability to enact their rights, this puts them into a precarious position in which their rights depend on the generosity and goodwill of others; such a position undermines the understanding of the political dimension of children's rights for it does not treat children as political beings to whom children's rights obligations are owed, but are instead treated as vulnerable subjects, whose rights will be respected out of kindness and compassion.

Recommendations on how to facilitate children's participation in policy development have also been put forward by some international organisations from the fields of children and human rights. The Council of Europe (CoE, 2008) has, for instance, been very productive in this regard and developed key recommen-

dations for how to recognise, encourage and promote young people's participation in democratic processes; it has suggested various approaches, methods and instruments to implement these priorities, including intergovernmental and international co-operation on the development of youth policy; services to countries, in particular through international reviews of national youth policies and youth policy advisory missions; partnerships with other stakeholders and services involved in areas that are relevant to youth policy and co-management, as a unique and valuable co-operation mechanism between governments and youth organisations. According to CoE recommendations, measures should be taken to encourage all governmental sectors to co-operate with youth and to take into account the youth dimension when defining and carrying out their programmes of activities. Finally, governments should support youth organisations and allocate additional sources of financing.

Participation of children in the wider social context

Based on the above starting points, it can be said that a child-centred migrant integration policy would profoundly touch upon implementation of Article 12 of the CRC, while governments would be called to devote particular attention to ensuring that marginalised and disadvantaged children, such as migrant or refugee children, are not excluded from consultative processes in various segments of society. A child-centred policy would address a wider social context and devote attention to how to ensure and implement children participation across different societal domains and various institutional settings, including schools, local civil society organisations, governmental institutions, independent human rights institutions, and commissioners with a broad children's rights mandate. In other words, it would call for systemic mechanisms for influencing public decisions at all levels as well as development of child-friendly and collaborative public services and support for child-led organisations.

A child-centred migrant integration policy would also necessitate the sensitisation and awareness-raising of adults – pre- and in-service training on the rights of children for all professionals working with and for children – for instance, the training on Article 12, and its application in practice for lawyers, judges, police, social workers, community workers, psychologists, caregivers, residential and prison officers, teachers at all levels of the educational system, medical doctors, nurses and other health professionals, civil servants and public officials, asylum officers

etc. Such training would need to stress how to ensure appropriate conditions for supporting and encouraging children to express their views, and make sure that these views are given due weight, by regulations and arrangements which are firmly anchored in laws and institutional codes and are regularly evaluated with regard to their effectiveness.

Finally, a child-centred migrant integration policy would touch upon legislative, policy and practice provisions both to establish entitlement to children's participation and to hold governments and others to account to realise that entitlement (Lansdown, 2010). For instance, since children need to be able to challenge violations of their rights, a child-centred migrant integration policy would propose to establish complaints mechanisms, access to the courts and legal aid, and entitlement to establish school councils. Further, since children cannot exercise their rights unless they have access to information in a form that they can use and understand, a child-centred migrant integration policy would require the development of systematic provision of information on rights for children of all ages and abilities – for example, human rights education in schools, child-friendly information on what to expect in the hospital, child-friendly consultative documents from governments.

Principles of child-centred education

A special focus of a child-centred migrant integration policy would have to be devoted to child-centred education. The latter addresses children's needs in the present time, based on flexibility of learning environments and student participation. The principles of child-centred education lead teachers to take into account the specific learning needs of migrants and pay attention to an individual learner's strengths and challenges, as well as needs that are tied to a personal set of circumstances such as length of stay, ethnic and cultural background, religion, age, gender, socioeconomic and legal status, and other personal traits and circumstances. In this way, adjustability, flexibility, and contextuality that forms the foundation of child-centered education facilitate migrants' equal conditions and opportunities and hence contributes also to their integration.

Moreover, through the principles of child-centred education, migrant children are encouraged to discover forms of self-expression – emotional, intellectual, physical, artistic – that are all valued and bring them to self-discovery, help them increase self-learning and allow them to choose, make connections and communicate, think and search for answers,

thereby stimulating creativity and enhancing communication skills.[3] In this manner, they are empowered and build on their agency, learning to work together on goals that cannot be accomplished individually. A child-centred education stresses that students develop their knowledge in new contexts in open-ended challenges such as problem-solving, creative and critical thinking. It also stresses students as co-creators in the learning process, as individuals with ideas and issues that deserve attention and consideration (McCombs & Whistler, 1997), while providing opportunities for feedback and improvement throughout evaluation and judgement at the end of the learning process (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Finally, child-centred education is also community-centred as it identifies individuals as members of the wider community which facilitate purposeful interactions among learners to promote and sustain learning and communication. Stemming from the above-mentioned principles and perspectives, the added value of a child-centred education is in that it is very much concerned with showing and developing the responsibilities of children themselves as learners and community members. From the aspect of managing cultural diversity and building a cohesive society, this emphasis is important because it directs children to accept differences and commonalities between themselves and respect for each other, and it also creates a foundation for building strong and inclusive communities of socially intelligent individuals. Child-centred education is thus seen as a strategy for building cohesive and inclusive societies on a wider societal level, as well as building migrants' skills and capacities relevant for their inclusion in society and peer groups.

CONCLUSION

The article discussed a child-centred approach to the integration of migrant children and deliberated on the principles of this approach in policy-making and in practice. Starting from Bacchi's (2009) approach to policy analysis, it proposed that such policy strives toward basic children's participation rights, particularly the right to be heard and the right to express their views as fundamental legal principles, and, more importantly, that it takes these rights as its operating principle and underlying as-

sumptions. The article demonstrated that the existing EU migrant integration policy lacks a child-centred approach, especially in view of the fact that it treats migrant children as future adults rather than as children in terms of their present needs. Starting from these observations, the article developed a child-centred policy framework, which builds on the knowledge obtained in line with a child-centred approach, children's present well-being, children's involvement in policy development, their participation in a wider social context, and child-centred education. It showed that the main challenge of a child-centred policy is how to accomplish children's participation, how to promote children's agency and how to respond ensure their well-being.

To a limited extent but nevertheless importantly, the article has also exposed that a child-centred orientation in policy is occupied with a question of effective methods for achieving children's autonomy, rights and well-being in collaboration with adults. It highlighted that simultaneous stress on the protection and participation aspects of child well-being is needed for the best balance between the two. Multi-level recognition of the right to be heard and to participate in decisions affecting children's rights seems essential when pursuing a child-centred approach; this often involves arrangements adjusted to meet children's needs, competencies and maturity by viewing situations from the perspective of the child (Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes, 2011, 252–253).

Finally, following Lansdown (2010, 11), the article highlighted that pursuing a child-centred approach to a migrant integration policy requires a transformation of policy-making processes, as the latter would essentially need to ensure more space for active participation of migrant children in politics and civic life. As Lansdown (ibid.) says, the foundation for such a transformation is already there; however, the success in achieving effective participation of children depends on a clear understanding of the scope of the relevant rights in the CRC and the obligations they impose on governments. She underlines that the first step is to hold governments accountable for introducing necessary legislation, policy and practice to ensure that children are enabled to claim their right to be heard and be taken seriously in all decisions affecting them.

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3 These principles are achieved through various means and in diverse ways. For instance, a broad spectrum of approaches includes active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1984), inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991), problem-based learning, peer-led team learning (Tien, Roth & Kampmeier, 2001), team-based learning (Michaelson, Knight & Fink, 2004), peer instruction (Mazur, 1997), inquiry-guided learning, just-in-time teaching, small group learning, project-based learning, question-directed instruction.

PRINCIPI OTROKOSREDIŠČNE POLITIKE INTEGRACIJE PRISELJENCEV – ZAKLJUČKI NA PODLAGI LITERATURE

Barbara GORNIK

Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper, Inštitut za družbolsovne študije, Garibaldijeva 1, 6000 Koper, Slovenija

e-mail: Barbara.gornik@zrs-kp.si

POVZETEK

Članek obravnava temeljna načela otrokosrediščnega pristopa k oblikovanju integracijskih politik za otroke priseljence. V uvodnem delu povzema izhodišča teorije Carol Lee Bacchi, ki k analizi politik pristopa na osnovi vprašanja: Kaj je predstavljeno kot problem? V skladu z njenim pristopom besedilo zagovarja, da je otrokosrediščna politika integracije priseljencev politika, v kateri sta participacija in zastopanje otrok glavni značilnosti in načeli njene konceptualne zasnove (na čem temelji), njenega delovanja (kako se razvije in kako deluje) in njene usmeritve (kakšni so njeni nameni). Članek argumentira, da je pri oblikovanju otrokosrediščne politike integracije priseljencev potrebno dati poudarek na (1) vednost (knowledge) pridobljeno v skladu z otrokosrediščnimi metodami, (2) zagotavljanje dobrobiti otrok, (3) spodbujanje sodelovanja otrok pri razvoju politike, (4) spodbujanje participacije otrok v širšem družbenem kontekstu in (5) izvajanje otrokosrediščnega izobraževanja. Temeljna predpostavka članka je, da je otrokosrediščni pristop k politiki integracije otrok priseljencev nujen, če želimo odgovoriti na trenutne potrebe otroka ter prispevati k njegovemu občutku varnosti, pripadnosti in sprejetosti, ki je v procesu integracije ključen.

Ključne besede: otrokosrediščni pristop, otroci priseljenci, integracija priseljencev, integracijska politika, participacija otrok

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