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# Research on Hybrid Integration and Local Policies in the Education System

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents a European research project addressing migrant children's participation in the education system in seven countries. The article primarily concerns a part of the research project, based on transcribed recordings of facilitated classroom activities in primary and secondary schools, prefaced by a summary of the research findings that provides a background. The analysed facilitated classroom interactions show forms of hybrid integration based on the ways in which migrant and nonmigrant children exercise agency, sharing their personal cultural trajectories. The paper shows the importance of using research on classroom activities for the support of educational policies at local, national and European level. The analysis also suggests the ways in which these policies can be supported by the use of resources based on field research. Finally, the paper briefly focuses on the support of classroom activities in exceptionally unpredictable conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1 | Introduction

This article presents the European research project Children Hybrid Integration: Learning Dialogue as a Way of Upgrading Policies of Participation (CHILD-UP, GA 822400), addressing migrant children's participation in the education system from a sociological point of view. This research project studied the educational practices and policies in seven EU countries (Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) with different migrant communities' presence and profiles. The project was based on field research to support effective educational policies, benefitting migrant children and the education system in Europe. The project offered the school community a battery of tools to reflect and act for a successful inclusion of migrant children. The project was based on a broad and intense involvement of stakeholders at the local and international level to discuss the analytical and operational approach, to support the multiplication of good practices across countries and to influence public policies. Two previously published papers

from the CHILD-UP project, based on the key concept of hybrid integration, addressed the gender dimension of adolescents' narratives in Italian higher secondary schools (Baraldi 2024a) and a comparative analysis among forms of facilitation in school classes in Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom (Baraldi, Farini, and Ślusarczyk 2023). An edited book summarises the results of the CHILD-UP project (Baraldi 2024b).

This article focuses on some transcribed recordings of classroom activities in primary and secondary schools in the Italian setting, in which the highest number of facilitated classroom activities was recorded and facilitation was more successful, to understand the conditions of migrant children's successful participation in the education system and to reflect on policies that can enhance this participation. The analysis aimed to show the importance of these classroom activities for educational policies at a local level and the support these policies need at national and European level, giving primary value to local practices.

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Section 2 introduces the most important concepts that guided the research project. Section 3 includes some important findings concerning relations between children and teachers, thus introducing the analysis of classroom activities, which is presented in Section 4. Section 4 provides three examples of transcriptions from recorded interactions in the Italian setting. Section 5 focuses on the ways in which research findings can inspire a bottom-up approach to local, national and European educational policies and provides a few suggestions about the ways of dealing with unpredictable conditions in the education system. The conclusions summarise the main achievement of the European research project.

## 2 | Theoretical Background of the European Research

The European research focused on the ways of achieving *hybrid forms of integration* in the education system, resulting from negotiation in interactional processes, based on the manifestation of both migrant and nonmigrant children's personal cultural trajectories (Holliday and Amadasi 2020). The manifestation of personal cultural trajectories has been studied through the production of narratives (Somers 1994). Specifically, the research investigated the social construction of children's narratives of personal cultural trajectories, showing children's views, lived experiences and emotions in school classes. These trajectories are defined as 'cultural' since narratives are based on experiences that give meaning to children's personal trajectories. On the one hand, narratives are constructed in contingent social processes (Norrick 2007), that is in classroom interactions. On the other hand, the narrated trajectories were constructed through past social processes experienced by children. Diversity in the classroom can be associated with the contingent narrative expressions of personal cultural trajectories. In this sense, diversity is necessarily *hybrid* even when the child's narrative is one of belonging to an ethnic or cultural group.

The local negotiation of a plurality of narratives of personal cultural trajectories can lead to *hybrid integration* (Baraldi 2024a, 2024b; Baraldi, Farini, and Ślusarczyk 2023). The research investigated hybrid integration as based on the *systematic interlacement* of narratives of children's personal cultural trajectories in classroom interactions, allowing the construction of threads in these interactions (Holliday and Amadasi 2020). The adjective 'hybrid' changes the concept of integration that means reducing diversity in the name of peaceful coexistence. Hybrid integration amplifies, rather than reducing, diversity, expressed in the dialogic interlacement of a plurality of narratives of personal cultural trajectories. Summing up, hybrid integration requires the combination of a specific process of narrative production with a specific type of narrative, that is the combination of (1) the production of interlacements of narratives in situated interactions, and (2) the inclusion in these narratives of conditions, events and changes related to children's lived experience, including experience of migration.

This production of hybrid integration requires that children exercise *agency* in narrating their own personal cultural trajectories. Agency is a sociological concept (Archer 2003; Giddens 1984), widely used in studies on children (e.g., Baraldi

and Cockburn 2018; James 2009; Oswell 2013), including studies on migrant children (e.g., Baraldi 2024a, 2024b; Baraldi, Farini, and Ślusarczyk 2023; Ottosson, Eastmond, and Cederborg 2017; Rigon, Dabaj, and Conti 2023; Rübner Jorgeseen 2017). The concept of agency relates to the availability of children's choices of action, allowing children's contribution to change of interactional trajectories. Particularly in the education system, the achievement of children's agency is achievement of rights and responsibilities to produce knowledge (Baraldi 2022). However, the achievement of children's agency is based on social constraints (e.g., Leonard 2016), which can be particularly inhibitive for children's agency when they are based on a hierarchical generational order (Alanen 2009). In the education system, a systematic hierarchical generational order is based on teachers' rights to convey knowledge and evaluate children's performances (Luhmann 2002), as it is shown by a long tradition of research on teacher–children interaction (Delamont 1976; Mehan 1979).

Several studies on teacher–child interactions have highlighted the importance of introducing dialogic forms of education that reduce the hierarchical order of teaching (Black 2018; Egelandsdal and Riese 2020; Mercer and Littleton 2007; Sharpe 2008), thus increasing learners' agency (Hart and Brando 2018; McLaughlin 2018; Mick 2011; Portante 2011). Along these lines, *facilitation* of children's exercise of agency aims to overthrow the hierarchical conveyance and evaluation of knowledge, by taking children's narratives seriously, that is listening to children, supporting their personal expressions, giving them rights and responsibility in the production of knowledge (Baraldi 2022; Matthews 2003; Shier 2001; Wyness 2013). Facilitation is achieved through an interactional organisation that can allow the production of interlacements of narratives of children's lived experience, thus supporting hybrid integration (Baraldi 2024b).

## 3 | Research Plan and Background Findings

### 3.1 | The Research Plan

The CHILD-UP research project investigated the conditions of hybrid integration based on both migrant and nonmigrant children's agency. The project was divided into two phases. The *first phase* included (1) a review of national legislations, policies and practices of inclusion of migrant children in the education system, and (2) a survey involving children, parents and professionals (teachers, social workers and interpreters/mediators). In particular, the survey involved 3958 children, ranging from preschools to high secondary schools, 36.7% with migrant background, 2282 parents, 33.3% with migrant background, 886 professionals. The survey provided data about children's use of language in schools and family, school and institutional experience, relations and challenges; agency and professionals' support of it; adults' representations of intercultural relations regarding migrants. The *second phase* included (1) individual and focus group interviews with children and professionals about representations of school experience and relations and (2) video and audio recordings of education classroom/group meetings, followed by children's assessment of these meetings through focus groups and questionnaires.

The second phase was foreseen in the months in which the COVID-19 pandemic afflicted the European countries, causing long periods of school's closure in almost all countries, thus difficulties in involving children, above all migrant children, and in admitting researchers in schools. During the lockdown, only interviews with professionals could be done, above all remotely. The focus groups and interviews with children could be done when schools reopened. Individual and focus group interviews involved 284 professionals (teachers/educators, social workers and interpreter/mediators) and 1305 children, half of them with migrant background.

Several reopened schools denied researchers' access, so that recordings of school activities were limited in several countries. A relevant and interesting exception was Italy, where several school activities and research were also done remotely. Overall, recordings were possible for 207 facilitated classroom activities, 68 of which in Italy, one third of the total number of recordings collected in the seven countries involved in the European project. Focus group interviews and questionnaires concerning evaluation of these meetings involved 1601 children (536 in Italy), half of them with migrant background.

The CHILD-UP research was approved by both the ethics reviewers of the European Commission, according to the European GDPR 2106/679, and the Ethical Committees of the participant institutions. The researchers committed to protect personal data. Information was shared with all participants in advance, including information about research procedures and ways of anonymisation and storing of the data. Consent related to all aspects of the research. Consent from children's guardians was obtained before research was undertaken and documented through a signed agreement. Assent from children was sought verbally after research aims and activities were discussed prior to research activities. Children were asked if they wanted to participate in the research and were informed of their right to change their minds about participation during research activities.

### 3.2 | The Background Findings

This section includes a short summary of the research findings that give background to the analysis of facilitated interactions. The review of national policies and practices in the seven countries showed several barriers hindering the hybrid integration of migrant children in the school system. These barriers include (1) lack of linguistic support, (2) stereotyping and discrimination, (3) lack of consideration for migrant children's experiences and needs and (4) lack of support of their learning and agency.

According to the teachers responding to the survey, the availability of linguistic support for migrant children concerns L2 teaching (69.1%), while language mediation (34.9%) and resources for the use of native language (34.1%) are much less frequent, and this shows potential problems for migrant children's participation. However, the survey shows that almost all migrant children speak well the language of the host country (80.9% in primary schools and 93.7% in secondary schools), reflecting the very large number of second-generation migrant children in Europe. Thus, the most important challenge in schools is teachers' difficulty in

dealing with cultural stereotypes (60.2%), promoting awareness of cultural diversity (58%) and supporting children's initiatives and creative ideas, that is children's agency (54%). Most teachers responding to interviews recognise the children's need to express agency in school life, the need for teaching methods based on dialogue and the need to be welcoming and open-minded towards migrant children and responsive to their needs.

The interviews show that migrant and nonmigrant children share the same narrative of school as a meeting place, based on nonhierarchical relations with teachers and on children's active participation. Particularly, children expect more opportunities for co-determination in their education and express their support for methods of teaching open to their needs and interests and promoting their narratives of personal experiences and knowledge. Children claim agency in taking decisions about themselves, having a sense of influence on school activities and being able to form social relationships according to their own needs. By contrast, children show awareness that their agency is undermined by hierarchical relations with teachers, particularly by teachers' focus on evaluation rather than on dialogue and valorisation of children's competences. Children dislike teachers' indifference or discrimination towards migrant children and migrant children refrain from sharing their troubles with teachers to avoid any potential negative consequences.

These findings show that hybrid integration in the education system is limited by the weak support of migrant children's agency and requires increasing awareness for diversity and the reduction of stereotypes. Children are aware of these limitations and ask for changes concerning their possibility to exercise agency in the education system.

## 4 | Analysis of Facilitation of Migrant children's Agency and Narratives

The findings about the facilitation of class activities are important to understand the structural conditions of migrant (and nonmigrant) children's agency and hybrid integration in the education system. Facilitation was experimented in school classes to enhance and support children's agency and interlacements of narratives of children's personal cultural trajectories. In some cases, facilitation was provided by teachers, in other cases by external professionals. This section shows some examples of the analysis of recordings of facilitated interactions supporting migrant children's agency and consequently hybrid integration in the Italian setting.

The three excerpts presented below are part of a set of 68 recorded classroom activities in Italy, ranging from preschool to higher secondary school. An interesting finding is that effective facilitation can be applied from early childhood to adolescence. However, for reasons of space, recordings in preschools are not shown in this section. The transcriptions have been translated into English for international readers. The translation reproduces the spoken language used in the interactions (see Hepburn and Bolden 2017). Some symbols are important in the transcriptions: (1) the (.) (.) symbols show short pauses (less than 1 s); (2) numbers in parenthesis show pauses in seconds; (3) two aligned square brackets show overlapping of talk; (4) question marks in parenthesis show that something is not audible in the recording.

The analysis of the three excerpts shows how facilitative actions can encourage, enhance and support migrant children's agency in narrating and interlacements of their narratives. The exemplified types of facilitative actions reflect the general results of the research on facilitated classroom activities. Excerpts 1 and 2 are part of a series of facilitated meetings promoting personal reflections about short written stories proposed to the children at the beginning of each meeting; children were invited to read the stories and work in groups to reflect on the texts, then sharing their reflections with the classmates. Excerpt 3 is taken from a facilitated meeting on digital platform. In Italy, several facilitated meetings were adapted to the new conditions of distancing and contagion prevention by using digital platforms. Thus, while a massive use of digital platforms for teaching had negative effects on children's agency, digital platforms could support the facilitation of migrant children's agency, respecting physical distance and lack of access to the classroom.

Excerpt 1 was recorded in a primary school. In Turn 1, the facilitator asks a child to tell his opinion about one protagonist (Mrs Piera, a teacher) of the written story proposed by the facilitator herself. The facilitator (FACf) asks an open question addressed to the whole class, which aims to encourage the children to choose how to produce their narratives. Four children, three boys and one girl, including a child from migrant-background (M2), answer to the facilitator's question, interlacing their narratives. All children stress that Mrs. Piera helps the pupils to prepare for high school. The facilitator provides minimal responses (yes, Turn 3; okay, Turn 5), showing her attention to the children's narratives and inviting them to continue to produce narratives. Then, the facilitator provides a formulation (Turn 9). Formulations are provided to summarise, make explicit or develop the 'gist' of previous narratives (see Heritage 1985) In this cases, the facilitator's formulation summarises the children's narratives ('you grasp a difference between the two people i.e. you tell me that Mr Andrea eh (.) tends more to think that he wants his son to become autonomous mh? while instead Mrs Piera hopes more for a solid foundation mh?'). This formulation shows the facilitator's effort to capture the contents of the children's narratives, and support and orient the children's new narratives (see Hutchby 2007). The attribution of authority to the children in producing narratives is highlighted by the dubitative way of formulating (I don't know if I have understood correctly) and the interrogative tone (mh?). This formulation promotes the migrant child's new narrative (turn 10), which moves the conversation beyond the narrative which was shared in turns 2–8.

Excerpt 1

01	FACf	And the difference with Mrs. Piera? (0.2) what do you think it is?
02	M1	ehm the difference is that (.) Mrs. Piera ehm hopes that teachers ehm eh raise de- interests and mh (.) so as to build a solid foundation for schools later
03	FACf	Yes

(Continues)

Excerpt 1 | (Continued)

04	M2	my opinion is that Mrs. (.) Piera for (?) all students let's say eh (.) that mh let's say (0.2) ehm arouse interests and so she can build a basis for going to hi- high school
05	FACf	Okay
06	M2	Manage to take a step forward
07	M3	(?) difference between Mr. Andrea right? And Mrs. (.) Piera is that then Mr. Andrea hopes that his son will become autonomous therefore that he will know how to do things by himself that he will know how to do his (?) studies maybe to proceed in the future mh (.) to high school work and instead mh Mrs. Piera hopes that (.) the teachers themselves let's say will raise mh a solid foundation for mh as- how do you say? To go yes to go to high school to reinforce it (.) eh for- for the future
08	F1	For me, the difference between what Mr. Andrea thinks and what Mrs. Piera thinks (.) is mainly that Mr. Andrea hopes that his son will become autonomous on his own, that is, (..) he has to understand how to become autonomous instead Mrs. Piera hopes that the teachers will help them to build a solid foundation
09	FACf	then I seem to have understood something but I don't know if I have understood correctly you grasp a difference between the two people, that is, you tell me that Mr. Andrea eh (.) tends more to think that he wants his son to become autonomous mh? while instead Mrs. Piera hopes more for a solid foundation mh?
10	M2	but for me ehm it doesn't say that the teachers in my opinion there is a similarity in the sense that Mr. Andrea talks about his son that he succeeds in becoming autonomous instead Mrs. mh Piera hopes that all the students succeed in becoming autonomous let's say by themselves and that they succeed to arouse interests mh (.) let's say to build a solid basis so to go to high school

Excerpt 2 was recorded in a lower secondary school. During this activity, the children produced and interlaced narratives about the experience of the COVID pandemic. Particularly, Excerpt 2 concerns the impact of the pandemic on the children's experience of school. In Turn 1, the facilitator (FACf) asks a focused question to investigate the children's point of views on a girl's expression of ambivalent feelings about her school experience. A child with migrant background (F1) explains that she disagrees with this view because she can meet friends out of school without problems (Turns 4 and 6). First, in Turn 5, the facilitator supports her narrative through a minimal encouragement. Then, in Turn 7, she

makes F1's narrative explicit through a formulation ('then your mate says I see the people I want also outside school and (.) I have to be with people I don't like at school') and asks for confirmation of this formulation ('right?'). This formulation promotes M1's new narrative about the importance of school relations to make friends. In Turn 9, the facilitator provides a second formulation which makes part of this narrative explicit ('because you have (.) not learned to have relationships'), promoting M1's narrative expansion. In Turn 11, F1 contributes to the interlacement of different narratives by stressing the importance of character for making friends. The facilitator asks a new focused question, thus supporting the production of new narratives (Turn 12), and the interlacement of narratives is furtherly developed by F2 who makes her agreement with F1 explicit (Turn 13). The facilitator encourages F2 to explain her point of view and the girl distinguishes between more and less socially oriented individuals, referring to F1 as an example of socially oriented girl (turn 15). In Turn 16, the facilitator provides first a short formulation about F2's narrative ('easily'), then a new focused question that aims to clarify the children's narratives. Both F2 and M1 stress the importance of learning at school, and the facilitator asks for an explanation of a term used by M1. The child's answer, regarding the importance of teaching social relations, is followed by F1's new narrative about the school effect of changing children's character (turn 21).

Excerpt 2

01	FACf	Do you share this thought that your classmates have said (.), that is, sadness for the lack of school, happiness because school can bring you together, which is a bit what she repeated ((referring to a girl))?
02	F1	No
03	FACf	no who said no? (.) I heard no over there
04	F1	Me
05	FACf	go on
06	F1	because even without school I see my friends anyway (.) and then, well, sometimes it happens that there are people here at school that you may not like so much (?)
07	FACf	then your mate says I see the people I want also outside school and (.) I have to be with people I don't like at school right?
08	M1	ehm yes, but I think that at school you can make friends with other people you like, but outside of school it's a bit difficult to make friends because most people you don't know, for example, if you had never been to school, even in kindergarten, it would be much more difficult to make friends because you wouldn't know almost anyone.
09	FACf	because you have (.) not learned to have relationships

(Continues)

Excerpt 2 | (Continued)

10	M1	maybe through your parents but maybe your parents didn't go there to- to say and so they don't have many friends maybe colleagues either however
11	F1	(?) this depends on the character, however, there are those who are more sociable and therefore make more friends, and those that is—if I go let's say to the seaside, I make friends with a little girl and I play with her at the seaside even (.) if I've never seen her
12	FACf	some of the others want to say something about this? (.) So you are as you share-not share as she doesn't or some of the others share?
13	F2	((indicating F3)) no I like- like her
14	FACf	Like her? [explain why]
15	F2	[there are- there are people who are more sociable and people who are less sociable I didn't go through the whole kindergarten as a child (.) and it was a bit more difficult for me to make friends, but there are people like her ((indicating F1)) who are much more sociable and make friends [quickly]]
16	FACf	[easily (0.4) but is school just about making friends?]
17	F2	no is also learning to then (.) learning to have a a (?)
18	M1	at school then they can teach you maybe even ways eh to have a more secure or harder bond with other people for example—
19	FACf	explain harder (.) I don't understand
20	M1	that is for example eh mh a more stable relationship the more eh they teach you anyway at school by being together all the time they also teach you eh things you must not say about people or things you must not do to try not to lose your p- his friendship
21	F1	that is, so they change your character

Excerpt 3 shows that facilitation can also work through a digital platform, supporting the production of a migrant adolescent's narrative about his experience in a higher secondary school class. In this case, two facilitators work together to support the adolescent's narrative. In Turn 1, one facilitator (FACm) asks an open question to invite M1 (the migrant adolescent) to say what he appreciates in his class. The adolescent's answer links mutual trust and strength of relations to the 'multi-ethnic' composition of the class (Turns 4–8). The other facilitator (FACf) supports this narrative through a repetition of the adolescent's words (Turn 5), which shows the facilitator's attention for the adolescent's narrative, also inviting him to continue to produce it. FACm uses an

interrogative formulation to develop the gist of M1's contribution (Turn 7). Then, FACf asks a focused question on M1's origins (Turn 9). In turn 11, this facilitator uses a formulation, prefaced by an appreciation ('fine'), to make explicit the adolescent's answer about his Ghanaian origins and second-generation condition. This formulation shows the facilitator's effort to capture the content of the adolescent's narrative and promote the adolescent's additional narrative on the origins of his classmates, suggesting that these origins do not make a difference for friendship (turn 12). In turn 13, first FACf provides a positive comment about the normal condition of multiculturalism in school classes, thus reassuring M1 about his right of narrating, then she asks a focused question to clarify the positive effects of the multi-ethnic composition of the class according to M1. Following the adolescent's hesitation, the facilitator provides a supportive comment clarifying that her question does not imply any evaluation (Turn 15). Then, M1 cites the opportunity of mutual learning of spoken languages. The facilitator appreciates his answer (Turn 17), produces another interrogative formulation that makes the adolescent's description of mutual learning explicit (Turn 19), then she adds a positive comment showing appreciation, once again reassuring M1 about his right of narrating (Turn 21).

### Excerpt 3

01	FACm	M5 can you tell us something you like about the class?
02	M1	what I like about the class?
03	FACm	Yes
04	M1	that we all know each other (.) we are we trust each other
05	FACf	we know and trust each other, yes
06	M1	that that we are a multiethnic class
07	FACm	is this a thing for you a good thing? (.) Right? Is diversity within the classroom good for you?
08	M1	yes it's a strength of our class
09	FACf	ah please tell us why (.) I mean where does this positive you you originate, what is your origin?
10	M1	I have Ghanaian origins but I was born here
11	FACf	fine your family is Ghanaian but you were born in Italy fine
12	M1	even if in this class there are also those who were born here we are anyway friends
13	FACf	ah this thing is clear everyone says it and then obviously it is so (.) and instead this thing that you said that according to you the fact that there are different ethnic groups is a richness how do you see it? What is it that you enrich yourself with diversity?

(Continues)

### Excerpt 3 | (Continued)

14	M1	that (..) mhh
15	FACf	there is no right and wrong M5 not there isn't there is there is nothing what you think is the right thing take it easy
16	M1	that in every moment we always learn different languages
17	FACf	ah this surely
18	M1	(?) of other languages and each of us says the meaning
19	FACf	nice so you often confront yourself wondering how do you say this thing in your language of origin how is this said in yours?
20	M1	Yes
21	FACf	ah this is a funny game

Excerpts 1–3 show the successful facilitation of migrant children's exercise of agency in narrating their views, experiences and feelings in different types of school and for different ages. They show that facilitation includes the following actions:

1. Open questions that encourage children to introduce or produce their narratives (excerpts 1, 3).
2. Focused questions that activate narratives or enhance clarifications about children's narratives (excerpts 2, 3).
3. Minimal responses and short repetitions that show facilitators' active listening and attention for children's narratives, thus inviting children to continue to produce these narratives (excerpt 1, 3).
4. Requests of explanation that support children's narratives (excerpt 2).
5. Supportive comments and appreciations that reassure children about their rights of narrating (excerpt 3).
6. Formulations that summarise (excerpt 1), make explicit (excerpt 2) or develop (excerpt 3) the gist of children's narratives and may also express doubts about the facilitators' understanding of the gist (excerpts 1, 3), thus entitling the children to assess the validity of the formulations.

All these facilitative actions can increase children's rights to produce knowledge and contribute to the interlacement of narratives about the children's personal cultural trajectories, thus enhancing hybrid integration in the classroom. Particularly, Excerpt 3 shows that facilitative actions do not change significantly on the digital platform, but, on this platform, facilitation of interlacements and hybrid integration is realised through interactions between the facilitator(s) and individual children/adolescents.

The posttest questionnaires collected in Italy show that a large majority of children (74.5%) appreciated facilitation, while only 3.3% did not appreciate it. Particularly, equal evaluation of activities among migrant and nonmigrant children means

that hybrid integration was effective. The positive assessment of facilitation was confirmed during the final focus group interviews. However, 21.3% of ambivalent answers (neither appreciated, nor disliked) and some comments during the focus group interviews also showed some problems of facilitation. These problems were more frequent in the overall set of activities in the seven European countries: in this set, appreciation was lower (68.9%) and lack of appreciation was higher (7.5%). The analysis of facilitated classroom activities clarifies the nature of these problems, showing that, in some cases, facilitation was more directive, including comments aiming to guide children's contributions, explanations of concepts and normative comments about positive behaviours or attitudes. In these cases, children's agency was limited by the increase of facilitators' production of knowledge. There is no space to deal with these cases in this paper.

## 5 | From Research to Local Educational Policies

The CHILD-UP research shows that systematic promotion and support of migrant children's agency and hybrid integration can allow new, important knowledge on the ways of improving effective education and supporting specific actions to take in schools. This research also shows the importance of giving primary value to local practices and activities in educational policies, particularly to practices/activities supporting migrant children's interest in participating in their own education, including school decisions and classroom design, children's creative ideas and initiatives, children's responsibility for this participation and children's production of personal narratives about their feelings and experiences. This means supporting a school based on non-hierarchical relations, inviting teachers (1) to provide facilitative support of migrant children's exercise of agency, (2) to enhance dialogic interlacements of narratives related to children's experiences and reflections on children's personal cultural trajectories and (3) to adapt facilitative actions locally, depending on age, gender, language proficiency, conditions of hybrid integration (e.g., number of migrant children, time spent by migrant children in the local school system and migrant family conditions). Strengthening and supporting teachers in facilitation of dialogue and agency is crucial in educational policies.

The implementation of local policies requires particular attention to the relations between schools and their community contexts. The CHILD-UP research has shown the importance of Local Stakeholders Committees to create connections at the local level. Involving stakeholders in local practices is very productive and effective to support actions that are attuned to local conditions in the education system. Particularly, it is important to implement interactional processes between schools/teachers, professionals and agencies working with educational institutions to construct knowledge and practices. While several activities were coordinated by teachers skilled in the use of facilitative methods, active collaboration with external facilitators created the conditions of successful facilitation of many classroom/group activities.

The implementation of local actions also requires strong and radical policies at national and European level. First, these policies can promote the shift of focus from migrant children's

performances to migrant children's agency and change in the ways of interacting in the classroom, from hierarchical to facilitative, considering methods that are open to migrant children's needs and interests, from early childhood to adolescence.

### 5.1 | Resources to Enhance Local Policies

The CHILD-UP project has provided three evidence-based resources to support local educational policies by enhancing and supporting migrant children's agency and hybrid integration. The first resource is an *archive* including written documents and 32 audio-video (in original language and subtitled in English) of effective facilitated interactions to support local schools and stakeholders in the implementation of new practices. Different types of data can be reached, distinguishing between genders, school grades and any combination of these. The research project aimed to show that the construction of specialised and interactive digital archives is more effective than big and general datasets. The second resource is *guidelines* aiming to give orientation to professionals working in the education system, aiming to support the planning and design of innovative activities. The third resource is a *training package*, including a Massive Open Online Course, designed to offer practical tools to promote skills and communication strategies in professional practice and to empower users as agents of innovation. Users can choose to work independently (using the MOOC) or share their training with colleagues to analyse materials included in the training handbook. The combined use of the archive, the guidelines and the training package can extend the promotion of agency and hybrid integration to European educational institutions, supporting educational policies that aim to enhance local practices.

### 5.2 | Policies for Unpredictable Conditions in the Education System

The CHILD-UP research project has highlighted that support of migrant children's agency and hybrid integration is particularly important in unpredictable and unfamiliar conditions, such as the conditions of pandemic (Amadasi and Baraldi 2022). In educational policies and practices, memory of unpredictable conditions is particularly important, because memory finds in the past the frame in which the future can be imagined. The problem is that memory includes both remembering and forgetting. While remembering restores experiences for reuse, so that it is possible to learn lessons from the past (Luhmann 1995), forgetting prevents the block of social processes and frees up social processing capacity. Particularly, forgetting concerns surprising and unfamiliar situations in society (Luhmann 2012). Thus, unpredictable and unfamiliar conditions can be easily forgotten in society, but it is a mistake to forget the unpredictable conditions that increase difficulties of hybrid integration in the education system, due to migrant children's isolation and lack of contacts with school.

Against this background, the findings of the CHILD-UP project suggest introducing flexibility in schools, to grab the unexpected and to deal with its effect on social life, by opening systematic

public spaces for migrant children's exercise of agency and facilitating their reflection on changes which can deeply affect their personal cultural trajectories. The enhancement of migrant children's narratives on their personal cultural trajectories can make the new and unfamiliar conditions of experience in and out of school evident. Thus, it is particularly important to encourage migrant children's exercise of agency in unpredictable conditions, for instance using digital platforms, strengthening migrant children's digital skills and competence and making technical resources and terminal devices available, even when online connections are not immediately necessary.

## 6 | Conclusions

The research findings of the CHILD-UP project can provide a new guide for current educational policies. First, the background research, the questionnaire and the interviews show important weaknesses regarding support of migrant children's agency and narratives in the education system. Second, the analysis of facilitated classroom activities shows the ways in which: (1) migrant children exercise agency and narrate their personal cultural trajectories; (2) migrant children's agency and dialogic interlacements of narratives of personal cultural trajectories can be facilitated; (3) hybrid integration can be produced in the classroom by facilitating interlacements of narratives of personal cultural trajectories.

The research findings show that the present use of the term 'integration' is critical because it suggests a process through which migrant children should adhere to the social and cultural conditions of the host country. The research findings show that integration is hybrid, that is, based on the interlacement of different personal cultural trajectories that leads to produce new forms of hybrid narratives in the classroom. Moreover, the research findings show that hybrid integration is supported by children's exercise of agency, rather than by children's learning of cultural meanings or values. Facilitative actions can enhance migrant children's authorship of choices and knowledge, through the production of narratives of their personal cultural trajectories, dialoguing with other children and teachers. Thus, facilitation can change the social and cultural context in which children's trajectories are produced, enabling hybrid integration in the education system and opposing to stereotyped views of cultural difference and integration.

Facilitation of migrant children's agency requires the recognition of public spaces in which migrant children's views are interlaced with adults' views, thus giving valuable contributions to the understanding of variety and unpredictability of events and personal cultural trajectories. European projects of applied research can support the construction of these spaces, highlighting the importance of a collective engagement of adults and children as coagents in school and society. Particularly, the CHILD-UP project aimed to encourage educational policies to pay great attention to the specific conditions of facilitation and hybrid integration in classroom contexts that include all children, independently from their origins, providing specific resources for this purpose, such as the archive of best practices, the guidelines and the training programme. The political support of migrant children's agency and hybrid integration

requires awareness of the complexity of facilitating classroom interaction, children's narratives of personal cultural trajectories and their interlacements.

Summing up, the political encouragement of important local innovation in the education system can have the primary objective to support and increase (1) the recognition of hybrid integration, clarifying the differences among hybridisation, value of cultural differences and forms of integration as adherence to the social and cultural conditions of the host country, and (2) the use of facilitative actions that encourage, enhance and support migrant children's exercise of agency in producing narratives of their personal cultural trajectories and interlacements among these narratives, against the image of school as a fearsome machine for teaching and evaluating.

Finally, the findings of CHILD-UP suggest the importance of research projects which focus on classroom activities and the adaptation of these activities to unpredictable conditions. These research projects require flexibility to understand the unexpected and the ability to deal with its effect on social life and personal cultural trajectories. Thus, these projects can facilitate sociological reflections on what affects children's lives and what can support children's agency in school life.

The data used in this article are available at the following website: [www.child-up.eu](http://www.child-up.eu). The website includes complete research reports and an archive of data. The archive is accessible with username and PSW, which can be provided by the author.

### Ethics Statement

The research was approved by research committees of the seven participating institutions and checked by the European Commission (according to the GDPR 2016/79).

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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