Introduction to volume 9 – Guest Editor's Note

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I am delighted to introduce this special volume of *HAGIRA*, dedicated to an area that is very precious to me—namely, the educational perspective of migration.

Immigration to Israel is controlled by the government's two-sided immigration policy. One side applies to *olim*[1] or immigrants of Jewish descent and is welcoming and all-inclusive, granting many benefits, among them immediate citizenship and financial support (Sever, 2000). The opposite side of this policy applies to everyone else[2] and is negativistic, especially toward asylum seekers. Unwillingness to accept non-Jewish immigrants is expressed through exclusionary immigration policies and restrictive naturalization rules (Raijman, Semyonov and Schmidt, 2003).

In Israel as in other immigrant-receiving countries, the education of immigrant students elicits fervent disputes that reflect the debate between the demand for cultural uniformity and the choice of diversity and multiculturalism. Educational policies in these countries mirror their basic approach to the cultural diversity generated by the entrance of immigrants into the local education system: Is such diversity a liability that needs to be eliminated, or is it an asset that should be cultivated? The first approach yields policies such as the *melting pot* policy, the *crutches* policy (also known as temporary pluralism) or the policy of *residual or token multiculturalism.* The second approach forms the basis for policies such as the *mosaic* policy (federative multiculturalism) and the *chulent* policy (interactive multiculturalism) (Sever, 2016).

While educational policies regarding immigrant students are often called "integration policies," they actually aim to assimilate immigrant children into the local mainstream culture. According to Berry's (1997) conceptualization, assimilation and integration are two of four different resettlement strategies, the other two being separation and marginalization. The differences between these four strategies stem from a combination of immigrants' attitudes toward their own culture of origin and their attitudes toward the culture of their host society. Assimilation is the strategy used by immigrants who wish to adopt the culture of their host country and forsake their own. Immigrants who want to preserve their culture of origin while rejecting the host country's culture opt for the separation strategy, while those who accept the new culture as well choose the integration strategy. Marginalization is the strategy of immigrants who reject both cultures.

Mainstream educators in countries that accept immigrants are often wonderful professionals, dedicated to the task of properly preparing immigrant children for success in the

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[1] Based on the Law of Return
[2] Based on the Law of Entrance

new county. Yet often their perception of such success is that immigrant children should adopt the dominant culture and reject the culture of origin of their parents, whose human capital is deemed worthless or even harmful for their children's success in the new country. This line of thinking yields the "Transparent Parent" phenomenon (Sever, 2018), according to which immigrant parents, like immigrant teachers (Michael, 2005), are perceived as "alien educational agents" who must not be allowed to influence the local educational system in general and the child's school in particular because their culture, values, and educational strategies hinder the successful assimilation of immigrant children.

The eight articles chosen for this volume after a rigorous peer-review process address a wide range of migration and education issues that correspond with these notions.

Elena Shohami's article titled **"Educational and linguistic perspectives of immigration"** is a policy-oriented paper. Prof. Shohami argues that the current educational and linguistic policies in Israel are not compatible with relevant research findings. For example, these policies do not consider findings about the importance of preserving immigrant students' mother tongues, nor do they take into account the damage to the academic success of immigrant students caused by the need to study in Hebrew during the many (e.g. 9-11) years it takes to master academic Hebrew.

The education system's policies are also addressed by Adi Binhas in her paper titled "**Ideal vs. reality—Absorption of immigrants in the education system in Israel.**" Binhas sought to discover how Israeli teachers cope with cultural diversity in their classrooms and what relevant official policy and guidelines they are given by the Education Ministry. She interviewed 20 high school teachers whose students were *olim* (immigrants of Jewish descent) from France and the Ukraine and a few from English-speaking countries. Her findings reveal a vacuum created by the absence of a clear and consolidated ministerial integration policy, leaving practicing educators in an ambiguous situation that invites personalized interpretations of how to approach the reality created by immigrants. Binhas found a variety of approaches and practices among the teachers in terms of their attitudes toward the immigrant students' parents, their mother-tongue and their culture of origin. Her interviewees reported receiving no preparation for working in a culturally diverse classroom, nor were they aware of any documents outlining the official policy or providing instruction or relevant guidance. Such documents did exist, she found, but were ambiguous, at best reflecting the temporary pluralism approach (i.e., the *crutches* approach mentioned above), and were not accessible to the teachers in the field.

The much-needed, but still rare in Israel, preparation of teachers for work in culturally diverse classrooms is the focus of Dolly Eliyahu-Levi and Michal Ganz-Mieshar's paper titled "**The importance of out-of-school experience as part of the development of intercultural competence among pre-service teachers of Hebrew as a second language**." Their research compared the impact of two models of training pre-service teachers

for intercultural competence: One group of ten trainees experienced only intra-school interactions with their pupils, while another group of ten also got to know their pupils (many of them children of guest workers and asylum-seekers) in their home environments and neighborhoods. The findings imply that such out-of-school experiences have the potential to enhance pre-school teachers' understanding of what cultural diversity actually implies.

Dolly Eliyahu-Levi and Michal Ganz-Mieshar's second paper, titled **"It is impossible to educate children without regard to the parents: The personal relationship between the teacher and African asylum seekers parents in Israel from the perspective of the kindergarten teachers,"** draws attention to the special challenges facing non-Jewish immigrant parents and the educators who work with these children under the exclusionary side of the aforementioned Israeli entrance policy. The researchers interviewed five kindergarten teachers working in kindergartens for children of asylum-seekers from Africa and explored the teachers' relationships with these immigrant parents. In attempting to cope with cultural and linguistic barriers (using ad-hoc translators such as another parent, when possible), the interviewees described how they served as socialization agents for these parents, helping them understand the new culture, its characteristics and its demands. Some—but not all—of the interviewees described warm relationships with the parents, helping these asylum-seekers accept and endure prejudice and stereotypes.

The next two papers illuminate the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education and their impact on their children's academic success. Contrary to the image of immigrant parents as "empty vessels" who are disengaged from their child's education, unable to help their children with homework, and dependent on them as their translators and culture-brokers, recent works (c.f., Olivos & Mendoza, 2010; Roer-Strier, 2010; Unger & Sever, 2012) show that many immigrant parents appreciate the local education system, want to be involved and possess significant human capital relevant to the public school system, namely tacit knowledge (Rios-Aguilar, 2010) and subtle ways of being involved in their child's education (Jeynes, 2010), qualities that mainstream educators often fail to acknowledge.

Adam Israeli's paper titled **"From cultural elitism to social mobility: The family role in changing the meaning of education among second generation FSU immigrants who study in Israeli academic institutions,"** examines the role played by immigrant families from the FSU in transforming the meaning of higher education for their children. The paper is based on 20 interviews with 1.5 generation immigrants in their 20s who came to Israel as preschool children and grew up in "Russian" families while going through the Israeli education system. Israeli's findings reveal family practices that shaped and supported the intergenerational commitment and instilled the importance of education, including family prioritization and resource allocation, attitude toward the school and investment in a "Russian" education inside the household. This sometimes led these youngsters to choose more practical

subjects despite their natural inclination, with the aim of achieving financial independence as soon as possible so they would be able later to support their elderly parents.

The study by Brachi Ben Simon, Dganit Levi and Paula Kahan-Strawczynski titled "**The human factor: Ethiopian-Israeli students' perception of what enables successful integration into academic studies**" looked for factors that enable Ethiopian-Israeli students to integrate into academic studies in Israel. Employing the "learning-from-success" method, they conducted ten in-depth interviews with successful Ethiopian-Israeli students, six men and four women, in an attempt to uncover the factors that these students found helpful. Alongside retention, decisiveness, ambition, peer support and a sense of belonging, they found that family members, particularly parents, also played a central role. This finding echoes the finding of Worku-Mangisto and Horenczyk (2018) that parental encouragement is one of the factors that stop teenagers of Ethiopian descent from dropping out of school.

The research by Meital Amzaleg, Nelly Elias and Yael Kelly titled **"The role of online study groups in the integration of students of Ethiopian origin within Israeli student culture**" also focused on Ethiopian-Israeli students. These researchers found that students of Ethiopian origin at an Israeli academic college were initially isolated, having neither online nor offline interpersonal communication with students from the majority group. However, their situation improved when they were required to take an active part in an online study group designed as a formal part of an academic course. The findings shed light on the potential of participation in heterogeneous online study groups for reducing social alienation and increasing the *bridging* social capital of immigrant students.

The paper by Janet Cohen and Miriam Billig titled **"Ideologically motivated migration to development towns and its impact on educational mobility**" adds the intra-state perspective of migration to this special volume. Their study explores a special type of internal migration: the migration of well-to-do religious settlers into low SES towns with the aim of transforming local education systems in the spirit of their own national-religious approach. Their research, carried out in two Israeli "development" towns, found that the settlers' intervention did cause changes in the formal education system in the towns. It led to the establishment of new schools that were more religiously inclined and to adapting study tracks in the existing schools to the settlers' own vision. These changes were embraced by the more religiously inclined members of the local community, while other members rejected them and objected to what they experienced as the arrogance of the settler group.

Before closing, I want to extend my deepest thanks to all the reviewers of the papers submitted to this volume, who kindly agreed to find the time in their tight schedules and the energy to review a paper. Their valuable reviews and comments contributed a great deal to the academic quality of this special issue. Finally, I extend my sincere appreciation for the significant contributions of our editorial coordinator Doron Dgani, and of our linguistic editors—Elia DeMeter for Hebrew and Donna Bossin for English.

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