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## Civic society and education: international teachers' perspectives on the roles of NGOs in supporting youth immigrants, in Hungary

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### Abstract

*Civil Society (herein NGOs) seem to fall short of improving the education of immigrant youth in Hungary. This failure is significantly attributed to government's immigration policies that perpetually position immigrants at a disadvantage, in terms of equipping them with sustainable educational and socio-economic readiness skills. It appears that immigrants of African, Asian, and Middle Eastern origin, bear the brunt the most. NGOs are expected to defend justice and democracy, develop a language, and empower immigrants with a voice to express their past and present experiences, a possible effective tool in fighting discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and other forms of racisms, which is a path towards a sustainable future. This qualitative exploratory study that explores the various nuanced opinions of foreign teachers associated with the lack of sustainable educational programmes for immigrant youth, focusing on the intersection of civic society and education against the backdrop of the Hungarian political climate. With immigration posing profound challenges to Hungary's educational system, understanding the perceptions of foreign educators is paramount for extracting the complexities at play. Through qualitative analysis of interviews conducted among foreign teachers, this study uncovers multifaceted challenges impeding the development and implementation of sustainable educational initiatives. These challenges encompass insufficient resources, linguistic and cultural barriers, and institutional constraints. Moreover, the Hungarian political climate, characterised by nationalist rhetoric and restrictive policies, exacerbates these obstacles, creating a hostile environment for immigrant. The findings underscore the urgent need for policy interventions and collaborative efforts to address these challenges and foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers to immigrant integration and advocates for transformative change within the educational system. The results reveal a complex interplay of factors that shape immigrant integration within the Hungarian society.*

**Keywords:** International teachers, immigrant youth, sustainable education, Hungarian political climate, civil society.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background Information

Immigration is one of the essential components of neoliberalism and its vices, regional political economies of inequality (Ackerman, et. al, 2000; Milanovic, 2018), which to a large extent are responsible for immigrants' unsustainable future such as economic inequality, job market monopolisation, a lack of job security, the loss of jobs, labour exploitation; (Barrass & Shields, 2017), and an increasing lack of concern for the needs and well-being of individual immigrants, including marginalisation which is a fuelling reasons for immigrants' unstainable future, as suggested by Moreno, et al., (2018). This belief emanates from the fact that in Hungary, like in other post-communist countries, civil society works against the tide of rigorous government immigration policies, Muraleedharan, (2020). This hurdle stands between immigrants and meaningful empowering education. It is important to highlight that the study is focusing on immigrants from outside of the Europe. Studies show that Orban communicates different sentiments for different immigrant groups. *"He portrays refugees from far-off nations in an overwhelmingly negative light ("illegal migrants") while depicting refugees from the neighbouring country – Ukraine with compassion and empathy ("genuine refugees")"* (Syla, 2023, p. 1).

The background information is clarifying the history of civil society. According to Cooper, (2018); the term civil society developed in the 1980s and it became popular, and today is used to refer to a wide range of civic groups, which includes non-governmental organisations, hence the two terms are interchangeably used here. The role of NGOs for the longest time has gained importance and traction due to, in most cases, state decline in addressing developmental issues. However, Vakil, (1997), presents a provisional structural operational definition of NGOs. They are defined as self-governing, private, non-profit organisations that are geared towards the improvement of life of the disadvantage people, and often certain groups of immigrants fall under this category, because of the social ills they have suffered in their home countries.

In addition to the current political motivations for the anti-immigration discourse in Hungary; (Bocskor, 2018) introduces a broader historical context of Hungary. It is important that we also consider this factor because it significantly explains why the anti-immigration discourse seems to be effective among the Hungarian population. This is because it taps on the sad history of the country, where Hungary lost huge territories during the Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920; (Melegh, 2016). This history precipitates the belief that present-day Hungary is largely ethnically homogenous and with immigrants arriving from the European Economic Zone; (Kiss, 2016), and low arriving from other continents. Dating back to the Trianon Peace Treaty, Hungarians have always regarded themselves as a small ethnically homogenous nation; (Juhasz, 1995). Another point to consider is that during communism, Hungarian borders were sealed, and emigration and immigration were strictly controlled; (Bocskor, 2018). Therefore, the fear that the Fidesz

is instilling on the population by portraying immigrants as an economic, social and security threat, appears justified in the eyes of Hungarians, based on this historical fact.

In recent years, Hungary has experienced an influx of immigrants, including school going immigrants. Despite efforts to support these students, sustainable programmes remain a challenge. This pilot study aims to explore the perceptions of foreign teachers working in Hungary on the challenges faced by immigrant youth and the role of civic society in addressing these issues. This study is based on the premise that youth immigrants are predisposed to unemployment or labour exploitation and a general poor quality of life because they are a minority, a situation referred to as the “acquired quality of life” Bălăţescu, (2007). As a minority they are deprived of a sustainable life-long learning in Hungary. Barna, (2019) states that since 2014, the Hungarian ruling party, has been scapegoating immigrants for its political and economic scandals by launching an anti-immigration campaign using the tools of propaganda. It is reported that in 2015, the Fidesz leader, prime minister Viktor Orbán told a reporter from the Hungarian national television channel M1 that ‘We [Hungarians] do not want to see minorities of significant size with different cultural characteristics and backgrounds among us. We want to keep Hungary as Hungary;’ (Barna & Koltai, 2019, p. 49). Based on such utterances and narratives, this article finds it important to investigate some of the prominent reasons that compel potential collaborations to fail in assisting particularly immigrant youth navigate this political climate so that it can be prepared for employability and other economic requirements. Unlike Hungary, which lacks meaningful educational programmes that have been identified as one of the main causes for unsustainable immigrant resettlement; (Hellgren, 2015), Spain is reported to be one of the countries that utilises education to accomplish social cohesion, public anti-poverty, and anti-exclusion programmes for immigrants, argues Józwiak, et. al. (2018).

It is therefore against this background, literature review and data that this paper seeks to discuss the lack of sustainably effective NGO education programmes in Hungary in educating immigrant children, against the backdrop of political narrative.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Despite Hungary's increasing immigrant population, there is a significant lack of sustainable non-governmental organisation (NGO) programmes designed to support the educational and social integration of immigrant youth. Foreign teachers, who often play a critical role in the education of these students, perceive notable gaps in the availability and effectiveness of such programs. There is an urgent need to explore these perceptions to understand the specific challenges and to inform the development of more effective, sustainable interventions or even policy interventions.

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

The views of foreign teachers in exploring the roles of NGOs in supporting immigrants in Hungary are intricately linked to a broader immigration and educational issues in Hungary. Various literature discusses the topic of immigration and civil society against the current

political climate in Hungary, but these studies lack discussing how the current politics starve civil society from effectively supporting immigrant youth education. This study has the potential of enriching future academic research. As an immigrant myself, and a teacher living in Hungary, I was curious if civil society was doing anything meaningful to help immigrants fit into the Hungarian society, considering the anti-immigration government policies.

### **1.4 Research question**

What are the perceptions of foreign teachers regarding the availability of NGOs programmes to support immigrant youth in Hungary?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Overview of relevant literature**

It is significantly crucial to mention that the literature is largely in unison with collected data from the primary and secondary sources. Teacher's views suggest that organisation that offer educational and developmental programmes should adopt certain specific approaches to empower immigrants so that they can independently secure their futures in host countries. Furthermore, the literature also assists the reader in positioning the effectiveness and failure of the NGOs against the political space of Hungary.

This section begins by discussing the undemocratic politics of Hungary. The discussion is crucial because it informs the reader about significantly necessary roles of NGOs in advancing immigrant knowledge and skills for host country's labour market and social demands, that appear neglected at present. Abiddin, et al. (2022), categorise NGOs into two broad categories; Operational NGOs, whose primary pursuit is to carry out development projects for underprivileged members of society. Another one is Campaigning NGOs, whose primary objective is to influence a country's policymaking process. These roles can be linked with the position of Sweden and Italy and other countries in the EU which receive immigrants. Upon viewing their circumstances, they seem to be better prepared to channel their focus in playing these documented roles to assist immigrants resettle sustainably. This is because of the undisputed role that civil society plays in these countries, additionally the politics of these countries, even though they may have elements of right-wing ideologies, but their approaches are progressive compared to those of Hungary and other Visegrad countries, argues Csanyi, (2020). Existing literature highlights the importance of collaboration between civic society organizations and educational institutions in supporting immigrant youth. However, the lack of sustainable programmes and resources hampers effective integration efforts; (Kiss, 2020).

The challenges that NGOs continue to face in Hungary are also linked to the restrictive immigration policies that are reinforced by the media. The media plays a significant role in the politics of Hungary, especially under Prime Minister Orbán Viktor. Present day Hungarian politics appear to use similar machinery as that of Communist

Hungary, characterised by old school propaganda which utilised the media; (Bajomi-Lázár & Horváth, 2013). In the EU, Hungary is an example of how media freedom can be controlled and even assaulted for non-conformity with government agenda. The dismantling of media freedom, pluralism and freedom is a systematic and unprecedented act with the EU; (Griffen, 2020). The Freedom House 2019 survey, suggests that Orbán's transformation of the nation's media into a centralised propaganda machine, has seen the Hungarian media being categorised as partly censored; (Haraszti, 2019). The Hungarian government, through its control and influence over media, has effectively promoted its anti-immigration policies. This strategy involves using government-aligned media, state broadcasters, strategic communication campaigns, and suppression of independent media to shape public opinion and reinforce its political agenda; (Szalai, 2017). Media scholars argue that the relationship between politics and media systems in the post-communist countries, although not all of them, is founded on the assumption that political parties seek to have an upper hand over the media to starve the critical voices and amass a wide voter coverage. In Hungary, state media control began in 2010 when Orbán won his first term of office. This saw the Christian, national and conservative government using its two third majority to change media laws and adopted a Media Constitution and Multimedia Act that regulate print press, television, radio and the internet; (Sommer, & Fábíán, 2023).

Civil society's roles as outlined by Jurgen Habermas and Iris Marion Young; (Locke, et al., 2000) go beyond just addressing democratic crisis, but also assist immigrants develop a language and a voice to express their needs and experiences under prevailing political landscape; (Young, 2010). However, literature also shows that existence and survival of NGOs supersedes the supposedly genuine defence of democracy; (Lang, 2014; Hsu, 2010). It further shows that even in cases where they attempt to advocate for democracy, it is not enough because of the priority they put on complying with government de-democratisation policies, instead of resisting them, a decision that gravely alters their core missions; (Depuy, et al. 2015). One of the goal missions of NGOs focusing on immigrant education, is to bridge the gaps that exists in public education due to instances where there is a neglect of immigrants' educational needs by the host government; (Yamanaka, 2006), which is part of the crux of the matter, raised by one of the participants, who both volunteer in an NGO and teaches full time in a public school in Budapest.

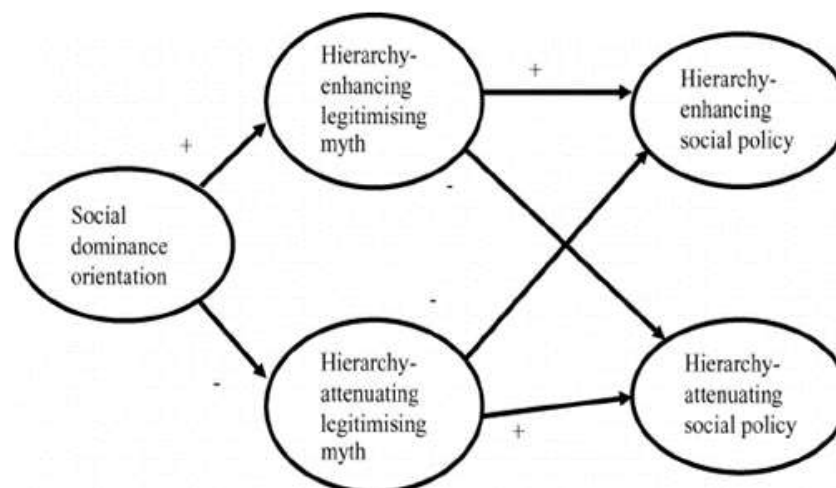
An additional important component that this paper seeks to address is the question that I pose regarding the meaningfulness of the educational programmes in aiding immigrants address the harsh realities of living outside their countries of birth, particularly because immigrants that arrive in Europe are generally young and susceptible to negative changes. The age of immigrants particularly those arriving from Syria are described as skilled and young, an opposite perhaps, for Germany's aging and shrinking labour force; (Csanyi, 2020). While we may argue that many immigrants are well educated or highly skilled, on the other hand data shows that not all are and, more

importantly their arrival is not motivated by economic desires; (Csanyi, 2020), it is all about securing safety and security. OECD, (2015) argues that there is no guaranteed success for them in the job market. This is where NGOs are expected to intervene, according to some participants. They expect the Campaigning NGOs to operate against the odds and influence educational policy, which is responsible for a successful integration of immigrant into labour market. However, if the education system is ignored, continued gaps between the educational performance of native and immigrant children will continue, like in the case of Sweden, Spain, Greece, Belgium, France, Germany, and Finland; (Csanyi, 2020).

This is a concern for participant teachers because from their formal training and teaching experiences, they are aware that education plays a big part in empowering marginalised learners or children, especially in an environment where they are subjected to injustice. It is also noted by Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco; (2009), that there is a constellation of factors that make it possible for children to navigate their immigratory transition, and one of them is education. However, I have since observed that the educational programmes primarily lack the ability to counter act discrimination. Systematic discrimination of low status groups by high status groups, for example are visible in education and justice; (Kozol, 1991 & Jacob, 1996). Therefore, to make the plight of immigrants in Hungary to be concretely understood, I present my arguments in the context of the Social Dominance Theory. To understand the theory in the context of immigrants, every year, more than a million immigrants arrive in the EU, some illegally and some legally. Most of them come from poorer countries, in the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. These immigrants are often not made very welcome; Küpper, et al. (2010).

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The study is framed by the Social Dominance Theory (SDT, herein) and its derivatives which I shall not detail here. According to the SDT immigrants are often subjected to acts of discrimination and other forms of injustice because of the structures and hierarchies that exist in societies. Sidanius & Pratto, (1999) state that group-based hierarchy is generally a global phenomenal, where society is structured as a group-based entity. Even though these hierarchies can exist in multiple layers, but to the very least, they consist of a minimum of two social categories. The prime group whose members enjoy positive social values such as wealth, power, health, education while at the bottom of the hierarchy, members are disproportionately allocated negative social values, for example, prison, poverty, poor health, illiteracy and many more; Sidanius & Pratto, (2001). Reflecting on the data presented by the participants, evidence shows that immigrant's education programmes largely lack the ability to counter discrimination.



**Figure 1:** Model of hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating legitimising myths mediating the relationships between SDO and social policies (Source: Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 105).

A couple of countries in Europe are experiencing an unprecedented influx of immigrants due to their geographical location, for example, Italy and Spain. Similarly, Hungary like Italy, is also a destination of choice for immigrants, either permanently or temporarily. Based on the EU laws, Hungary has a legal obligation to protect people who seek asylum. Hungary is also well positioned for those who just want to utilise it as a gateway to Western Europe, hence, a vast majority of asylum seekers, reach western EU via Hungary. Despite an apparent increase in immigrants entering Hungary to seek protection, the Open Society Foundation argues that the Hungarian government made no provisions; to accommodate asylum seekers, it was assistance from the civil society that alleviated the immigration burden. With the outbreak of the Syrian war, Italy began facing a similar situation like Hungary, but on the contrary, NGOs assisting refugees and asylum seekers, have managed to find a way to help refugees against anti-immigration sentiments; (Dickson, 2017). One of these organisations is S. Home, located in the Italian coast of Sardinia. Melis, (2021) presents S. Homes as an NGO that is advancing equity and justice for immigrants.

### 3. Methodology

This qualitative exploratory study has data generated from ten international teachers who live and work or volunteer in schools and educational-based NGOs in Budapest. They were interviewed through both focus group and one-on-one open-ended interviews. The duration of each interview was an hour long, conducted in English. I made use of the tape recorder and handwritten field notes. Their selection was based on the idea that they themselves are not Hungarians, they are probably positioned relate better with the plight of immigrants and their views would be informed by the realities of immigrants in the institutions where they teach. Their views offer a unique and critical perspective that can help NGOs support immigrants effectively and meaningfully. The data was analysed and categorised into thematic blocks.

## 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Results

The research question has been widely answered, both by participants and the literature. The anti-immigration political climate is at the core of the unsuccessful NGO interventions. NGOs are held responsible for a significant role they play in improving the lives of immigrants through education. However, these programmes should have a sense of meaningfulness, such as instilling self-worth among immigrant children. It is understandable why in the context of Hungary this could be a difficult attempt due to the government immigration attitude, however teachers believe that NGOs have a far-reaching influencing in terms of shaping attitudes. The consensus among participants is that organisations, schools, and national institutions all have a duty to fulfil in the educational path of immigrants.

### 4.2 Discussion

#### 4.1.1 *There is no one glove fits-all approach*

While immigrants may generally experience challenges, but it is worth noting that they are diverse in nature, they do not possess homogenous set of skills, language, religion and culture, levels of education, or reasons for immigrating, among other diversity traits. Data shows that immigration is a growing global social phenomenon, such that even countries that do not have long histories of immigration, recently, they are inundated by a growing number of immigrants, comprising of children. Teacher 5, lives in Hungary, but she first lived in Italy, so, she can contrast both contexts. She is a Moroccan by birth, and possesses a master's degrees in education, which makes her fully qualified to teach in a secondary school, but she tells me, that she is struggling to find a job that she is qualified to do, apart from teaching in private pre-schools and occasionally volunteering in two different NGOs in Budapest. As an immigrant herself, she has some expectations from the NGO in terms of its programmes in assisting other immigrants who are in worse conditions than her, settle. *"We are all offered weaving lessons, not everyone, wants to be a weaver, some of us, we want to get drivers licenses and other useful qualifications,"* she says.

Drawing from Nawyn's, (2010), the role of NGOs also includes advocacy and cultural activities which ideally should create space for refugees to challenge their downward mobility in society, as in the case of the U.S. where welfare NGOs assume this role in gender and racial/ethnic hierarchies. This role can be accomplished by implementing educational programmes that address social and emotional learning; (Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). However according to some participants' experiences, volunteer teachers in English clubs and camps, teach content that has been just pulled out of the internet and taught to all the children without screening or testing their individual level of language proficiency, which would be English in this case, the immigration category (whether they are asylum seekers or refugees or children of expatriates and students),



age and or other factors that may inform the teacher(s) about the specific needs of each immigrant child. In this case, the spectrum of diversity is ignored.

It transpired during the interviews that NGOs apply a *laissez-faire* approach in integrating immigrants through education, instead of formulating a coherent immigration policy, in collaboration with the Hungarian immigrations office. A similar situation is identified in the USA, where it has been noted that there is no single national unit that has been set aside to head the creation, implementation, and co-ordination of a federal immigrant integration capacity; (GAO, 2011). This apparent lack of disregard for policies that can meaningfully integrate immigrants, shows some short-sightedness in designing programmes that will consider all present factors, such as diversity so that they can effectively and critically charter a roadmap for a sustainable future.

#### ***4.1.2 Beyond formal education***

The connection between NGOs and schools, in my view is important because as Suárez & Suárez, (2009) argues, schools are the first point of contact where immigrant children experience systematic processes of the new culture. Therefore, if these Hungarian based NGOs focus on creating a collaboration with schools, that will mean that their education programmes are geared towards facilitating the immigrant children's adaptation in schools and ultimately into the entire society, which is a barometer that will significantly predict the children's future well-being and their contribution to society. I find this approach fundamentally important to consider because unlike other EU member states, according to Langer-Buchwald; (2009), Hungary is not an immigrant friendly country, a situation portrayed by the government funded media, since 2015, Juhász, et al. (2017).

It is also important to acknowledge the disadvantages that immigrant children will generally experience merely because of their immigratory status, and how these impact on their general basic education. These disadvantages sometimes consist of lack or low level of knowledge of the official school language, family, group of origin, and social levels; (Langer-Buchwald, 2009). This begs the question if NGOs are aware of the influence each level of education an immigrant child is enrolled in, has on a particular immigrant student. For example, if an immigrant child arrives in a host country quite early in his or her early years, and enters pre-school or early child development programmes, that child stands more chances of acquiring Hungarian, in this context, as a language of the host country; (Esser, 1990). From the perspective of educational progress, the importance of the language competency cannot be disputed; however, that is not the only factor, the children's background knowledge is crucial to consider as well. Therefore, the education programmes need to be well focused and be extended to really addressing real life situations of immigrant children.

Bălțătescu; (2007) introduces us to the concept of a subjective quality of life and immigrant life. This can be defined as a way in which people develop an evaluation system for their significant areas of their lives, holistically. With immigrants predisposed to the acquired quality of life in the host countries, *"NGOs are thus expected to focus on these*

*real-life situations, instead of being preoccupied with nursing political egos” (Teacher 1). The need for NGOs to develop educational programmes that address discrimination was brought up several times. “I understand this because I am an African myself, but I have also seen how Asian and Arabic student at our school are treated by teachers and fellow students, sometimes it is not what the teachers say to the student’s face, but what they also say behind their backs. I believe that the legacy of colonialism has a lot to do with this.” (Teacher 5). The participant believes that while NGOs such as the one that she volunteers at for weekend English club lessons, should also consider designing real curriculum lessons, for example integrating English and History. “*The Hungarian History curriculum is vague, it doesn’t address the topic of colonialism and racism, you can just imagine what our children are learning during History lessons, nothing that will make them critical thinkers and inform the way in which they pave their paths in a foreign land. This is where NGOs need to step in and bridge the gap. Obviously, the Hungarian education system is not going to teach our children that the reason why it is an uphill to get a job that matches your qualifications, and pays you well, is because immigrants, especially non-European ones, are not good enough in this country because of the political propaganda.*”*

#### **4.1.3 State and NGOs’ Progressive Attitudes**

Government politics and neglect of immigrants is a long-standing challenge world over. Yamanka, (2006) presents a Hamamatsu situation, a Japanese town, in the late 1980s, where Japan saw more than half a million growth in unskilled immigrants. This was also a time where different non-governmental stakeholders rallied behind the welfare of immigrant children, because of a scenario like that of Hungary, where the newcomers in Japan found themselves subjected to discrimination in various areas, such as in public service, medical care, social-welfare, and political participation. Like Hungary, in those years Japan regarded itself as a homogenous society, with the government maintaining that Japan was not a country of immigration. Iredale & Piper; (2003), state that it was for this reason that the Japanese government refused to endorse the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Furthermore, the government made no effort to establish policies that eradicated discrimination against immigrants in Japan. Similarly, this political attitude is fundamentally responsible for the insufficient political will or lack thereof. This in my view raises an important discussion about the role of NGOs and civil society in general in bridging the gap between government and immigrant’s education, and ultimately the realisation by governments that there is a need for collaboration with civil society.

The above begs the question if NGOs can collaborate with schools and teacher training institutions by training teachers on civic education, under the political climate in Hungary. Teachers 8, 10 and 6 argue that this is a possible feat only if civil society tried harder, and resisted government threats. While they these three teachers had varying ideas, but they agreed: “*Collaboration is key, in any situation, different views can enhance how institutions function*” Teacher 8.

An example of a progressive relationship between the state and civil society, is Sweden and NGOs. This relationship has evolved over time, and Valutis, (2013) states that this relationship can be described as one of the trust-based mutual dependency, characterised by consensus. Historically, NGOs did not play the welfare services role, instead they acted as mediators of interests between citizens; (Pestoff 2000; Wijkström 2004), however, recently more NGOs are redirecting their work in advocacy and anti-discrimination campaigns and education. Teacher 10: *“Civil society that is involved in educational programmes should seek ideas from us as well, because we can relate better to the topic of immigration.”*

In 2001, the Swedish government integration office, began to make necessary steps in responding to national action plan against racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and discrimination, but initiating a dialogue with NGOs. It is my view that the Swedish government felt compelled to respond positively because of the transformative course that the civil society took. Similarly, the Japanese Government, to manage the crisis that developed due to the neglected needs of immigrant children, began to spearhead collaboration with the local civil society in trying to mitigate the circumstances that were alleged to have developed from the lack of educational programmes for immigrant children, such led to rampant acts of criminal activities alleged to have been committed by immigrant children who decided to drop out of school. Fearing a public embarrassment, the city of Hamamatsu began to focus on teachers and administrators to evidently redirect is political focus on the education of immigrant children. together with civil society, the city endeavoured to support volunteers to teach in Japanese, but also in the languages of the immigrant children, such as Portuguese, for those who came from Brazil.

Evidence shows that the Japanese government’s concerns about its political reputation, enabled partnership between itself and the civil society activists, and from this collaboration, in 2005 immigrant children were registered in different institutions of education in Hamamatsu; however, still the aim did not fully materialise because the issue of language barrier was not considered. As mentioned earlier, local language deficiency is one of those factors that can cripple the ability of immigrant children to acclimatise well in new environments;(Esser, 1990), hence it needs to be seriously considered. Reports from Japanese scholars show that language deficits hindered the immigrant children’s understanding of instructions of educational materials and teacher instructions; the entire pedagogical approach was unfavourable for them.

It is also recorded that immigrant children in Hamamatsu suffered prejudice, discrimination, and bullying, even from teachers and school administrators, leading to social isolation; (Ota, 1996; Ikegami, 2001(b); Ona, et al., 2001). Seeing the need to address discrimination, more civil groups emerged and among them, to try and supplement these interventions, a group led by immigrant children’s mothers, took advantage of the cultural exchange educational programmes, where representatives were involved in seminars and symposiums on building a multi-cultural society. This

collaboration soon gave birth to a growing positive Japanese attitude in including Brazilian children in their programme. It is also important to highlight the role of higher education in sustaining such initiatives. In this case of Hamamatsu, in 2001, the local university students formed the College Student Network to provide tutoring support services to Brazilian children who were enrolled in Azusa elementary school; (Yamanaka, 2006).

#### 4.1.4 Immigrant children's expectations

The participants raised issues regarding injustices that immigrants are often subjected to. *"I find it important to mention in this section that whoever being tasked with the designing or implementation of educational programmes for immigrants, should ponder on the host country's scholastic context and its contribution to the educational ambitions of immigrants' children, Teacher 7. "Immigrants also aspire to something, so that should be considered, they are not just at school for the sake of it" Teacher 3.*

A study conducted by Minello, & Barban, (2012), evidently shows that there is a correlation between educational ambition for Italian learners attending each of these schools that were researched and the individual ambition of immigrants attending these schools.

*"Our results show that an immigrant child attending a lower secondary school where one-third of the Italians have high short-term educational expectations is more likely to also have high short-term educational expectations. If we look at long-term aspirations, the change happens when more than two-thirds of Italian classmates have high aspirations;" (Minello, & Barban, 2012, p. 22).*

While Teacher 4 does not agree with the belief that NGOs should work towards addressing the "acquired" (which in the Bălătescu's article, "acquired" refers to immigrants being compelled to accept labour exploitation or else suffer unemployment, which to great length affects their s standard of living) with the same passion as the other participants, however, agrees that immigrants should develop a sense of resilience, but they need to be supported along that path. *"Not everyone has the ability to be courageous, they need a little push, and NGOs can actually design programmes for the immigrant youth where their sense of wealth is developed, Teacher 9."* Teachers 2, 3, 7 and 9 raised similar sentiments regarding NGOs being intentional about improving the education of immigrants in Hungary. *"Immigrants should not be used for certain agendas or for symbolic gestures, but this should be a deliberate attempt, to improve the lives of those who find themselves on a disadvantaged side" Teacher 2.*

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has answered the research question by presenting an interplay of factors within the Hungarian politics, history and education system, that position immigrant youth in a disadvantaged position in the host country. This situation according to the research participants necessitates policy reforms as well as cooperation between civil

society, particularly educational NGOs, schools and teachers, however due to the Hungarian political climate, this is a challenge for civil society, leaving immigrants exposed to meaningless and unsustainable educational programmes. Based on these issues, the study is highlighting a deficiency in research where the components of this article and all the issues raised as well as the synergies that exist between them, should be reconciled, and not studied in isolation. The implication of the study is that NGOs have a role to break all barriers, including political ones, but on the other hand, some participants believe that civil society efforts should inspire immigrant agency and resilience, a skill that is required in attaining quality life, an initiative that should begin in schools and in informal education platforms where NGOs should have a stake.

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