



Young migrant students' motivators and drive for obtaining education

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Abstract

This article investigates how students from migrant backgrounds describe their motivators and drive for obtaining an education². It is based on a qualitative study of 17 young people aged 16-24. All are students in combination classes at a large upper-secondary school in Eastern Norway and are recent arrivals in Norway with little prior education. Half aspire to higher education, while the others are applying for vocational training. In this article, we link these educational ambitions to four forms of motivation. The *immigrant motivator* relates to high academic expectations among parents and other family members. In addition to the immigrant motivator, there is what we refer to as the *middle-class motivator*, where parents of low socio-economic status exert influence in a way that can be understood as a kind of middle-class behaviour. The *world-citizen motivator* encompasses the students' desires to contribute by giving something back to their home countries, the host country, and the global community. The *opportunity motivator* is linked to the efforts of the school community to provide an inclusive and facilitative environment for this group of students. Schools that offer adapted and differentiated teaching, customized to the needs of individual students, as with combination classes, seem to function as important protective factors.

Keywords: Young migrant students, educational motivators and drive, school community, combination classes, adapted teaching, differential teaching, world-citizen mentality

Introduction

As a global phenomenon, education can be said to have taken on a key societal role in relation to young people's socialization, schooling, and qualification to participate in the labour market and wider society. The OECD's (2019) report on international trends concludes that "education has an important role to play in equipping students with the skills needed to succeed in the global future" (p. 9). Baker (2014) concurs, claiming that our schooled society is characterized by the pervasive influence of educational ideology, goals, content, and logic, at the same time as education is influenced by developments in society. Accordingly, the extent to which young

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² The term `migrant` is used when writing as authors and reporting our results, while the term `immigrant` is sometimes used when references are obtained from research and literature using that term.

people succeed in completing their education is an important factor in determining whether they become part of society or end up in marginalized situations (Frønes, 2017).

Several national and international studies demonstrate that children of immigrants, and young people who are first-generation immigrants, are both winners and losers in the education system (Bakken & Hyggen, 2018; Lauglo, 2010; Tjaden & Hunkler, 2017). Norwegian studies show that many of them do well at school despite the low socio-economic status of their parents (Reisel et al., 2019). Of those students who advance further within the education system, many choose elite and professional studies (Institutt for samfunnsforskning, 2019; Støren, 2009). On the other hand, research reveals that students with minority backgrounds are more likely to struggle at school, and, on average, achieve poorer results than students from majority backgrounds (Bakken & Hyggen, 2018). Indeed, a larger proportion of young migrant students fail to complete upper secondary education. The reasons for differences in school achievements, study choices and educational ambitions are complex and relate to school motivation, migration and cultural background, language, gender, and social and economic class differences (Reisel et al., 2019).

This study examines how young migrant students, age 16-24, attending combination classes, describe their ambitions and educational drive. Such classes have produced successful educational results for recently arrived young migrant students (Biseth & Changezi, 2016; Lindvig & Mousavi, 2017; Rambøll, 2018; Thorshaug & Svendsen, 2014). The combination classes, which are a partnership between county councils and municipalities, are customized to fit the needs of the target group. The students are offered an adult version of primary and lower-secondary school education with a particular emphasis on Norwegian language instruction, in conformity with the basic teaching curriculum in Norwegian for students from language minorities (Opplæringslova, 1998, § 4 A1 of the Education Act). Students are assessed and join ability-based groups in the graded core school subjects: Norwegian, mathematics, English, and social and natural sciences. Classes in physical education and non-graded subjects are also offered. The classes are held in upper-secondary schools. Similarly, aged migrant students from comparable backgrounds attend separate classes. They may also join regular upper-secondary classes in subjects in which they have demonstrated a high level of achievement. Combination classes are characterized by an adapted teaching approach customized to the particular needs of young migrant students. The adaptation is considered essential for the students' successful completion of a primary and lower-secondary education, enabling them to sit in on upper-secondary classes, so that they succeed in gaining qualifications (Lindvig & Damsgaard, 2019).

Theoretical framework

Motivators for obtaining an education

The term *immigrant drive*, also understood as a motivator for obtaining an education, is explained in various ways, including as selection patterns, where students with resourceful and ambitious parents encounter the expectation of realizing the dream of a better life through

education. This type of motivator for obtaining an education can be also understood as a form of repayment to parents or others in order to improve their standard of living in their new home country. Understood in this way, education can be experienced as a normative pressure that causes young people to make additional efforts (Bakken, 2016, p. 3). Kindt (2017, p. 71) asks whether the immigrant motivator can be better understood as a kind of middle-class motivator, whereby parents who had “high socio-economic status” in their home countries involve themselves in their children’s schooling in ways reminiscent of typical “middle-class behaviour”, even though in Norway the parents have low socio-economic status.

Others have found that educational motivators are primarily linked to young student’s migration experiences, transnational backgrounds and their identity as world citizens (Lindvig & Mousavi, 2017).

Motivation and mastery

Educational ambitions and motivators are closely linked to theoretical perspectives on motivation and mastery. Motivation is significant for choices of activities, the amount of effort devoted to the chosen activity, perseverance when tasks are demanding, and choices of problem-solving strategies (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Self-efficacy in social learning theory describes a person’s belief that he or she has the ability to manage certain situations or to successfully complete a task (Bandura, 1997). As applied to academic performance at school, the concept is important because it concerns the extent to which a student believes he or she can achieve the desired results. A student’s self-efficacy affects both the cognitive and emotional processes associated with managing tasks. In this regard, the concept of “academic emotions” has been used to describe emotions related to learning and achievement (Pekrun et al., 2002). The concept distinguishes between positive activating emotions; positive deactivating emotions; negative activating emotions; and negative deactivating emotions. Of these, positive activating emotions, such as joy of learning, hope of success, and pride, function as motivational factors. Surprisingly, it also emerges that negative activating emotions, such as frustration or anxiety about not being able to master something, can also motivate school efforts.

Students with high degrees of self-efficacy are more committed to their tasks, set challenging goals, persevere and have belief in their ability to achieve good results, compared to students who have little belief in their own mastery. Students who have great confidence in their own mastery and are guided by intrinsic motivation are more likely to be self-regulated, (Zimmerman, 2002). Confidence in one’s own mastery is closely linked to aspirations. Students will be able to move from ideal to real aspirations through experience and good study guidance from teachers and other school staff. Schools that emphasize teaching adapted to the individual student’s needs and abilities, strengthen their opportunities to learn and develop within the community of their peers (Damsgaard & Eftedal, 2014).

Hegna (2010) points out that students’ educational efforts are also affected by external social conditions, gender, class and ethnic background, and not least by their migration experiences. Students’ motivation, mastery, aspirations, emotions and ability to self-regulate, are therefore also related to their previous experiences, backgrounds and basic attitudes to life. The ability to

cope with challenging life situations and experiences can result in a strong feeling of mastery, and strengthen a more resource-centred approach (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

Before we examine more closely the students' descriptions of what drives and motivates them to obtain an education, we will describe our methodological approach to collecting our empirical data.

Method

The study has a qualitative design using ethnographic interviews with an indirect conversational method (Moshuus & Eide, 2016). This approach gives access to the student's experiences, understandings, interpretations and the contexts that make their life-world meaningful (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014).

As part of a larger project, Marginalisation and Co-created Education (MaCE), the study received research clearance from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data and adhered to the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee's privacy policy (NESH, 2016). The teachers and students associated with the combination classes were informed about the research project's goals, purpose, content and approaches. It was made clear to the participants that they could withdraw from the project at any time.

The sample consists of 17 young people aged 16–24 with an equal balance of male and female students. At the time, their periods of residence in Norway ranged from 3 months to 4 years, with an average of 2.1 years. The students' names are replaced with pseudonyms and identifying characteristics are removed, making our data presentation somewhat less lively than it would have been otherwise. The data is stored by the project managers and will be available to the Norwegian project members in MaCE until June 2021.

Each student could choose whether the interviews should be conducted in Norwegian or English. All chose Norwegian, except for one who preferred English. The selection of students might be skewed by the fact that students who felt linguistic competence, or who wished to share their story, may have been more willing to participate. This bias might exclude students less confident in sharing their experiences. This bias could affect the study's validity. The quality of the study may also have been limited by challenges in overcoming language barriers, as several of the students had not yet developed the Norwegian-language skills necessary to cope easily with the indirect and conversation-based interview style. At the same time, this situation challenged both interviewers and students to adopt creative solutions, using dictionaries, drawing, and physical gestures. We believe that the empirical data is sound and strengthened by these creative solutions.

All of the interviewers attended a methodological workshop to gain a common understanding of the indirect approach. This approach avoids using an interview guide in favour of a loose thematic starting point. After the individual interviews, which ranged in duration from 45 to 90 minutes, the interviewers wrote down notes from memory, including descriptions of the students, the interview situations, and topics addressed before and after the formal interviews. The notes helped to describe and clarify the interview contexts.

The analysis process was inductively driven with the transcribed interviews scrutinized several times in order to gain familiarity with the content and identify themes relevant to the research question. From reading the transcripts, the following migration-related themes emerged: family/friends, school, language, culture, psychosocial conditions, and educational motivators and ambitions (Tjora, 2017, pp. 197-203). Motivators for obtaining an education and educational ambitions among students from language minorities became the empirical-analytical reference point.

Young people's thoughts about school and education

All the students spoke about the importance of attending school for learning the Norwegian language and completing primary and upper-secondary education. Attending school had put the opportunity to embark on further or higher education within their grasp. Several students described it as their "admission ticket to the future". The students' narratives crystallized around three themes: the clear expectations of their families and networks that they would obtain an education; how their own migratory journeys and experiences from their homelands influenced their educational plans, ambitions and dreams of learning; and the role of the school in the form of adapted facilitation. In the following, we present results from the interviews.

The family's educational expectations and middle-class mindset

The students describe their parents' and relatives' expectations regarding their commitment to their education and how this influences their own attitude towards attending school.

Medhane came to Norway as an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker after spending many years fleeing from his homeland, during which time he was imprisoned and just barely escaped people smugglers. He intends to qualify as an electrician or plumber. His parents' views on schooling and learning are important motivators to complete his education. He talks about his father's strong encouragement to prioritize education, because he himself never had the opportunity to go to school. Medhane says: "... he's told me 'you must go to school, right! You must learn. Everything!' When I ring him up, [he says] 'you must learn, you must learn.'" Other students relate similar experiences. Like Medhane's father, their parents did not get the schooling they wanted and therefore have a great desire for their children to exploit the opportunity they themselves did not have. Learning the Norwegian language and understanding the Norwegian cultural framework is viewed as the key to further education and working life. It motivates the students to focus on their schoolwork.

Other parents want their children to complete school and education because they themselves have a good education and understand its importance. Three students say their parents had a high social status in their home country due to higher education and jobs.

One of these students is Achmed, who wants to work in nutritional sciences. He also came to Norway as an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker. He lives alone, a situation about he is very unhappy about. He has little contact with his family because it is painful for all of them to live so far apart. Achmed says that his parents' ideas about education are important and motivating.

My mom had a kind of primary school at home [...] So she said just ‘come to me’ – there came about eight or nine girls and boys who sat around small desks [...] mom and dad just bought [all the equipment] out of their own pockets, everything, notebooks, everything!

Achmed says that this background influences him, and he speaks with pride about his mother’s commitment to children and young people’s learning.

Caleb, whose mother has an important job in the health care system in his home country, shows a similar type of pride. Being a nurse in a war-torn country, he says, is viewed as being very worthwhile, thus bestowing status and position. Therefore, he is expected to make the best of the opportunity to get an education. Caleb came to Norway as a refugee and explains that his family are spread all over the world due to the war and other difficult circumstances in their home country. He misses his family, with whom he has contact almost every day. He wants to run his own business allowing him to work in both Norway and elsewhere.

Muna, who has lived in Norway only for a short period, believes she is fortunate to have come to Norway as part of a large family. She emphasizes the importance of belonging to an education-oriented and politically active family as a motivating factor for completing her education. Her family were persecuted in their home country and eventually forced to seek political asylum, because of the mother’s critical writing. Her mother has continued her writing career in Norway and according to Muna has recently: “... *finished her first novel*.” The daughter is impressed by her mother, and the courage she shows to stand up for her views and opinions, and what she has achieved as a newcomer in a foreign country. Muna paints a picture of a resourceful family that is politically aware, concerned about education and that brought along cultural capital from their home country. Her ambition is to become a doctor.

The students point out how the expectations of their parents externally motivate them to invest their efforts in completing their education; most of them seem to share their families’ emphasis on the importance of learning and education, which gives them inner motivation as well. This becomes especially clear in the conversation with Medhane. He would rather be in school than have free time, because at school he can be together with other people and learn the language: “... *it’s important that though I’m new in Norway, I just have to speak Norwegian. Because that’s how you get better*.” Further, he expresses how doing homework can be difficult, but he motivates himself by saying: “... *Try, try, try!*” Many of the students express the difficulties of learning a new language, mastering the subjects, doing homework and understanding all the unwritten rules. Because they consider education important, they are active in trying to overcome these barriers to learning. In addition to the expectations of parents and families, the young people also have their own wishes and dreams.

Migration experiences and world-citizen mentality

All the students describe demanding and sometimes difficult migration processes, many referring to painful and dramatic experiences involving war, conflict, torture and other forms of violence. Many explain that they suffer from trauma after the dramatic events they experienced, as well as grief over everything they have lost. Their present is strongly affected by their experiences. At the same time, they all state that these difficult experiences make them

feel a sense of obligation to obtain an education. Several of the students also explained that they want to train to do something useful, so they can contribute and give something back to the global community whether in their homeland, in other places in the world, or in Norway. Muna's ambitions are representative of several of the others. Muna says:

I have a dream, I wanna be a doctor [...] Yeah, because in my country there is no doctors there. Like everyone, every doctor who is good and has work, he go out [leaves the country] because there is no work, good work inside my country [...] So I wanna help my family, the people, my country.

Muna articulates what motivates her to make an effort at school. She talks about her close hand experiences from a war-torn country, and the importance of having skilled health workers. This motivates her to continue her education and to have ambitions of completing higher education. Muna also wants to be useful in Norway: *“Of course I want to help Norway, because this country will learned me (teach me) and will make my dream.”*

Hassan came to Norway as a refugee together with his family and describes how he struggles with disturbing thoughts after his experience of living in a war zone. Although he has his family with him in Norway and describes Norway as “a land of opportunity”, he longs for his home country. Hassan wants to pursue an education that will enable him to work in both Norway and his home country. He says: *“When I’m older, I want to become a (qualified) car mechanic and work in my home country.”* He is motivated to complete a car mechanic education in Norway in order to be able to use this competence in his home country, which he says is in need of great efforts regarding reconstruction. He wants to use his education to have a better life, but also to contribute to creating better living conditions for people in vulnerable life situations. To achieve such goals, what happens in the school arena is of great importance.

Including school community, combination classes, and students' strong relationships with the teachers

The students describe their everyday school life with their contemporaries as secure and adapted for their needs. They receive valuable help from teachers in learning and mastering the subjects, the Norwegian language, and the cultural setting. They emphasize the importance of close relationships with teachers and the sense of belonging in a class of students who all share the experience of migration. One of the students, Aaron, fled alone from his native country, leaving behind his girlfriend and his family, in order to avoid being conscripted. He talks a lot about his anxiety of being alone. He says that education is important and he experiences the combination class as a safe place to learn how to study. Aaron describes the teaching as follows: *“I feel that I’m learning to learn,”* adding he feel comfortable in class. Achmed explains in more detail what the school and class mean to him: *“We learn a lot. [...] The teachers really give us a lot of help. We even get an extra teacher. [...] But here the teacher stays [with you] and just explains and doesn’t leave [before] you have really understood. I can attend a homework group from 2–5 pm on Tuesdays.”*

The school is described as a place for learning. The teachers do a good job by being actively present and helping students in their learning. Like Achmed, Ariana, who lives with her family and wants to become a lawyer, highlights the importance of teachers, especially contact teachers, for helping with motivation and mastery in everyday school life:

The teachers are very good at helping us here [...] they work a lot with us [so that we] can learn more Norwegian. Or when you have a problem with (specific) subjects, you can go to the contact teacher and say that you have a problem with that subject.

She also emphasizes the importance of teachers in helping her learn Norwegian and understanding Norwegian cultural norms, which are often unwritten. It contributes to her belief that she will be able to master what is difficult.

Another student, Elias, tells of dramatic experiences in his home country, involving violence and attacks. This background permitted him to come to Norway on the grounds of family reunification, as some of his family members were already established in Norway. He emphasizes the teachers' respectful, non-discriminatory and kind attitudes: "*[The teachers] have respect. We also have rules. What to do... [The teachers have] respect – also they don't discriminate, if you are white or black. The teachers – they're really very kind, have morals for you (show a good moral attitude).*"

Elias further describes the close relationship he has to one teacher: "*I call her mum; she's very special for us. [...] As soon as she comes and so on and so on (...) You kind of feel happy.*" All the young people say that school is a good place to be – a place where they can learn to learn. The students feel the teachers are very helpful in the learning process. In addition, homework groups are highlighted as a safe learning environment where they can get help in a learning community.

Meron, who lives with her family, plans to study art and design. She also highlights the sense of community in the combination class and emphasizes that the class is experienced as a safe learning environment. She says that the school facilitates integration by organizing joint teaching where, among other things, they are taught together with students from the health sciences. She says: "*We talk about everything together and play some games, for example, and other stuff as well.*" She declares that the joint teaching creates a social network where you can talk openly about different topics and challenges. Still, it is difficult having the ambition of successfully completing one's schooling and mastering what is required to continue one's education.

Because the students' ambitions vary, we have identified four categories of motivators among them. These motivators will be discussed under the headings: *The immigrant motivator and the middle-class motivator; The world-citizen motivator; The school-as-opportunity motivator; and The school as a protective factor.*

Discussion

As young migrants, the students in our study tend to fall within the general category of students most likely to drop out of school. Nonetheless, despite their lack of previous school education, the challenges of language and cultural differences, difficult processes of migration, and adapting to a new home country, they are all motivated to complete their education. They are driven by various forms of motivation, often in combination. In the final part of the discussion, we will address school as a protective factor through the provision of adapted teaching.

The immigrant motivator and the middle-class motivator

The students relate various circumstances of significance for their educational ambitions. One important motivating factor is their parents and relatives' expectations that they will apply themselves diligently to their school studies. This so-called *immigrant motivator* results in a particularly high level of commitment to school studies and educational aspirations among this group (Bakken, 2016; Leirvik, 2010; SSB, 2019; Tjaden & Hunkler, 2017). Hence, their children may regard obtaining education as the key to educational and social life and/or a form of repayment to their parents and others who missed the opportunity of an education.

The immigrant motivator is similar to the so-called *middle-class motivator*. In other words, it concerns parents' expectations that their children will be able to realize the dream of a better life through education. The parents' involvement in their children's education is more reminiscent of typical "middle-class behaviour", despite the fact that the parents have a low socio-economic status in Norway. Several of our students whose parents have higher education, or who otherwise have a high social status in their home country or their new country, talk about their parents' high expectations regarding their education. Muna points out that it is common in her family to complete higher education. In their home, children are also encouraged to participate in conversations about society and politics. Such adult-led activities, together with the emphasis on education, are typical in middle-class homes. Consequently, strong parental involvement, together with a close ethnic community that values schooling, hard work and perseverance, can have a positive effect on young migrants' possibilities of succeeding in the education system (Lauglo, 2010). Such communities may be more important for students who have parents with low social status in their home country, than for those who have parents with high social status in their home country and who have typical "middle-class behaviour" (Kindt, 2017, p. 71).

The family's expressed expectations and involvement can act as external motivation for the students to invest their efforts in successfully completing an education. When they share their family's views, then inner motivation can also be created. Children can be motivated in their schoolwork by external factors, such as parents showing interest, commitment and expecting children to prioritize schoolwork.

The study reveals that several parents and students view education, not least learning the Norwegian language, as a doorway to further education and employment. This view can generate an internal motivation in the students to do well at school and complete their education. In contrast, the socialized expectations of resourceful parents with respected positions and high social status, together with the normative pressure exerted by the ethnic minority community, can be understood as external motivation. This type of external motivation can contribute to the young people making an extra effort in an educational context (Bakken, 2016; Lauglo, 2010).

Hope for success and the approval of the family and community network can have a positive impact on the young migrants' learning performance, because it can activate positive academic emotions (Pekrun et al., 2014). However, this can also lead to negative emotions and be demotivating. If the gap between demands and the ability to master the educational challenge becomes too huge, young people may lose faith in their own ability to master the situation (Bandura, 1997). Moreover, young people's educational ambitions are driven not only by parents' expectations, but also concerns their own experiences and desires.

The world-citizen motivator

The students' experiences of migration and what we have identified as a form of world-citizen identity also seem to function as a motivator for obtaining education. Students have a desire to obtain an education in order to give something back to the global community. We can refer to this as the *world-citizen motivator*. Most of the young people in our study have experienced loss, grief and traumatic events. For some, this has resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health conditions. Children and teenagers who have had to flee their homes are considered to be at particularly high risk of mental health disorders and social and emotional difficulties (Lidén, 2017). Their ability to concentrate may be affected, with the result that they experience further challenges at school, where they are expected to make up for their lack of previous schooling in a relatively short period not only in a new language, but also in a new society with an unfamiliar cultural context.

However, challenging life experiences do not seem to be an obstacle to the young people's motivation regarding their education. Perhaps their migration experiences drive them to continue their education and the dream of giving something back to their home countries. In this context, Muna may represent this type of behaviour, when she says "*I have a dream*" (of becoming a medical doctor). This dream motivates her current school efforts, where achieving high grades is essential if she is to gain admission to medical studies. She is driven by her own experiences as a world citizen and the desire to give something back to her home country, but also to the international society that has given her the opportunity to achieve a better life. Experiences from war, and other types of traumatic events, can lead to psychological strains that can have a negative impact on young people's education, but they can also lead students to mobilize inner strength to overcome hindrances and seek support where they can find it (Lauglo, 2010).

The students in our study seem to belong to the category that masters the ability to handle external pressures and stress situations in ways that strengthen their ability to cope (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). They have a robust attitude to their situation and an ability to create an experience of connection between past, present and future (Antonovsky, 2012). The connection between past and present is made possible through the use of modern communication technology, which allows them to have regular contact with their close family, relatives and friends that in many cases live geographically far away. At the same time, the students are able to relate to Norwegian society, learn the language, complete their education and adapt to the country's cultural values and norms. Many of the students commute between several countries and have established their lives as belonging to several "transnational spaces" (Eastmond & Åkesson, 2007). Regarding this situation, they are often described as "cross-cultural", because they have connections to different countries and cultures that they commute between and thus develop a world-citizen identity (Lindvig & Mousavi, 2017).

Several of the students, such as Hassan, state that they are motivated by a desire to secure a vocational education they can use in both Norway and their home countries. There is much to suggest that this type of motivation can create an inner educational drive. Further, most of the students express a relatively high degree of self-efficacy, and belief in their own resources; in

addition, they are self-sufficient in the sense that they have a high degree of awareness of what is required of them if they are to achieve their educational goals (Bunting & Lødding, 2017). They seem to have real aspirations, in the sense that they realistically describe what will be required of them, and the efforts they are willing to make, in order to achieve their goals (Hegna, 2010; Lauglo, 2010).

Although the students have ambitions and are motivated by several types of motivators, they may still find it difficult to master school subjects and understand the social and cultural codes. In this context, all of them emphasize that the teaching programme of the combination class is crucial in that it supports their educational drive. In other words, the teaching in the combination class facilitates the realization of their ambitions.

The school-as-opportunity motivator

The students state that combination classes provide a crucial positive opportunity through teaching that is based on their ambitions and enthusiasm for education. These young migrant students are offered a customized teaching programme based on their educational needs. The school adapts to its students, rather than the other way round. This is what Aaron is describing when he says that the teaching programme is making him “*feel that he is learning to learn*”, a viewpoint that is echoed by the other students.

All the students state that the school's educational programme, adapted support measures, and teachers who closely follow up their students, contribute to strengthening their motivation, well-being and ability to master school (Halvorsen & Bunting, 2019). This may be understood as contributing to promoting the students' psychosocial health and their feeling that the educational programme is relevant to their lives. Such protective factors have been documented as having a great effect on young people's school motivation and the feeling that they master school (Krane et al., 2016). In addition, the young migrants feel they are motivated in their schoolwork when they are met with respect and when their cross-cultural experiences are viewed as a resource in their lives. Furthermore, this attitude can help to create greater awareness among them that their commuting between different cultural arenas and roles is a resource in their lives (Pollock et al., 2009).

Together with participation in the diverse community of students with migrant backgrounds, this attitude can form the basis for a confirmation of their world citizen identity. This can also strengthen their inner motivation for educational pursuits and desire to give something back to the global community (Lindvig & Mousavi, 2017).

The school as a protective factor

The Norwegian school system is considered the most important competence-promoting institution to the realization of the provisions of the Education Act regarding the requirement to ensure that all students have access to teaching that is adapted to qualify them for further school education. Competence is appreciated as a source of independence, social mobility, equal participation in society, and as a means to counter social exclusion (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016). For this reason, school researchers argue in favour of the importance of adapting school life to help promote school attendance and prevent students from dropping out (Lillejord et al., 2016; Lindvig & Damsgaard, 2019). Promoting motivation and generating a

sense of mastery and self-belief are identified as decisive for students' opportunity to achieve optimal learning and school attendance (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In our study, the adapted, combined educational programme and teachers who really care about their students can be viewed as a protective factor. Seeing the material as a whole, it seems that the combination class' adapted teaching and the close relationship the teachers have with the students, motivate the young people in their schoolwork and contribute to their further educational ambitions and drive. This result accords with motivational theoretical perspectives, which hold that students' motivation is affected by conditions both inside and outside school.

The role of the school as a mediator of a set of moral rules and norms is emphasized in the interview with Elias as something that has a positive effect on school motivation. He points in particular to the teachers' respect for the students and their non-discriminatory attitude. He feels this contributes to him feeling that he can master his studies and to his desire to prove worthy of the respect he has been shown. Such an appreciative and inclusive attitude can be understood as protection against social exclusion. In this respect, the school's clear learning-oriented goals are important as they contribute to motivation, because they create predictability regarding the ability to master the various tasks. This is supported by international research that shows "that the school's goal structure is important for students' motivation, attitude to studies, and the goals they have for their schoolwork" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, p. 18).

The students emphasize the importance of an educationally focused everyday school life, where they learn the Norwegian language and receive professionally adapted teaching from teachers who persevere until the students comprehend what may be academically challenging. Many of the students state that the relationship between teacher and student is very robust. This is highlighted by school researchers as one of the foremost protective factors against students dropping out of school. The students also refer to the importance of a good relationship with the teachers for creating opportunities for adapted education, well-being, mastery, and motivation.

The students in our study refer to positive activating emotions when they say they feel they are learning to learn. They attribute this to the fact that they are "seen" by the teachers and receive the professional teaching and personal follow-up they need in order to master the school subjects. This affects their school performance positively and motivates them to continue their education. Consequently, this also contributes to reducing the dropout rate. Feedback on their academic performance given by the teachers, together with their own positive learning experiences of mastering the studies, provides the students with an emotional connection to the school situation (Pekrun et al., 2014). Nonetheless, it is not only positive emotions that the students express. They make no secret of the fact that they have been through a lot of difficult situations, both in their migration experiences and in the resultant psychological consequences. Further, they find it demanding and frustrating to learn new subjects, languages and cultural competence after a relatively short time in Norway and with a lack of functional bilingualism. By pointing at mediation and transparency as significant tools in language learning and internalization processes, Halvorsen (2017) in her comparative study depicts a common relevance regardless of where in the world the learning takes place. The school needs an insight

of the language mechanisms and knowledge of the languages' vital position in the learning process, whether students use Kiswahili, Kichagga, Arabic, Norwegian or English to acquire knowledge.

Many students express anxiety that they will not be able to do what is expected of them, or embarrassment about their inability to master the subjects at a level appropriate to their age. However, it seems that such negative activating emotions can help them overcome barriers to avoid their anxieties and embarrassment, and reach the desired educational goals. In this way, negative emotions can motivate positive learning work, especially when there are committed teachers who can help to equip students with self-efficacy through guidance and concrete feedback (Pekrun et al., 2002). The teachers' assistance and the adapted teaching appear to be crucial in this context, allowing the students to build up a belief in their own ability to cope.

What would have happened if the young migrant students had not been given an adapted programme of studies, but instead had been expected to follow a regular programme of studies? What will happen in the future when a similar group of students is assigned a similar programme of studies in combination classes, but the time allotted for completing the programme is halved? Based on the empirical results, this would put at risk a highly motivated group of young people with world citizen identity and educational drive who, given the opportunity, can be important resources and bridge builders in education, working life and society, both in Norway and in the global community.

Concluding remarks

In this article, we have examined how young migrant students, who are recent arrivals in Norway and have little previous education, think about school, their ambitions and drive, and the factors that motivate them to obtain an education.

Some students refer to motivation linked to a desire to fulfil their parent's clear expectations for them to obtain an education. Some also cite their backgrounds in their home countries, where their families belong to an education-oriented middle-class. They consider this kind of educational motivator to be deeply rooted within themselves, because of a socialized awareness of the high importance of education for participation in the labour market and wider society.

Perhaps the most surprising finding in our study is that the young people seem to have transformed their difficult experiences of migration and the accompanying negative emotions, into a sense of moral responsibility that can be described as a world-citizen mentality. They have experienced much pain and suffered severe losses, but this seems to have given them a global perspective, a sense of solidarity, and a robust attitude to life, all of which help them to overcome educational barriers. Their transnational backgrounds and experiences of migration seem to have engendered within them a kind of world-citizen identity that also motivates their commitment to school.

Accordingly, their ambitions to complete their school studies are linked to the opportunities for mobility these would provide: a kind of admission ticket to higher education, work and society not only in Norway, but also in their respective native countries and potentially other places in the world. They want to give something back to the global community and to help other people who are in need, as they were helped themselves in the past. As we have discussed, it is obvious that the young people indicate that school is an important arena for learning and

motivation, which gives them the opportunity to gain the qualifications for further studies, so that they will be able to realize their educational goals.

Our study also shows that genuinely adapted and differentiated teaching practices can enable the school community to become an opportunity-based motivator for stewarding and liberating the various educational motivators that young migrants bring with them. In Europe, as well as other places in the world, migration is changing the cultural and linguistic composition of societies, for example, and bringing new opportunities and challenges to educational institutions at all levels. In this article, we have provided a portrait of an educational institution that seems to have succeeded in developing learning strategies well adapted to the experiences and competencies of young migrant students.

In order to promote inclusion and prevent dropping out and social exclusion for these young people, it is necessary to acquire more research-based and practice-oriented knowledge about how schools, both nationally and internationally, can enhance their ability to promote a sense of protection. This study is therefore internationally relevant as one example of how to respond to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and particular target 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, 2015). Such education is a ticket to the future for young migrant students.

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