Dealing with Diversity

A research about what is needed to guide first generation immigrant children, whose mother tongue is not English, in secondary school education in Sint Maarten.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports

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Master thesis

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Content

Abstract

Since the implementation of compulsory education in Sint Maarten, the number of undocumented immigrants in secondary schools increased. These students often face a language barrier and have limited academic and social skills. On behalf of the Ministry of Education, this research investigated whether extra guidance for these students is necessary. The research used a mixed-method design and focussed on first generation immigrants who faced a language barrier. 128 respondents participated in the research: 85 members of schools, 28 students, five parents and ten members of external organizations. Results showed that immigration of these children causes challenges on macro- micro- and meso-level. At macro-level, overpopulation in schools reduced the general quality of education. At micro-level, immigrants turn out to have academic, social and behavioural problems. Teachers face difficulties with teaching a diverse student population. In the home-environment, children have to deal with disadvantaged socio-economic situations. At meso-level, parental involvement and communication between parents and teachers seem to be a problem. This research posed solutions at the different socio-ecological levels. At macro-level, all stakeholders should be included in tackling the issues. The immigration department has a key role in the regulation of the immigrant population by revisiting the laws. At micro-level, teacher trainings must be provided to make teachers better equipped to work with a diverse student population. Students who are struggling with learning the language need additional classes to improve their language proficiency. Last, language programs for parents are necessary in order to improve the parental involvement and parent-teacher communication.

Compulsory education – Immigration – Language issues – Secondary Schools – Sint Maarten

Samenvatting

Door de invoering van de leerplicht in Sint Maarten, is het aantal ongedocumenteerde jongeren in de middelbare scholen toegenomen. Deze jongeren hebben vaak een taalbarrière en beperkte academische en sociale vaardigheden. Dit onderzoek heeft op verzoek van de overheid in kaart gebracht of extra begeleiding voor hen nodig is. Het onderzoek heeft een mixed-methods design. Er hebben 128 respondenten meegewerkt: 85 schoolmedewerkers, 28 studenten, vijf ouders en tien leden van externe organisaties. Resultaten laten zien dat de immigratie van deze kinderen uitdagingen veroorzaakt op macro-, micro- en mesoniveau. Op

macroniveau heeft over populatie in scholen geleid tot een vermindering van de algemene kwaliteit van het onderwijs. Op microniveau blijken immigranten academische, sociale en gedragsproblemen te hebben. Leraren hebben problemen met lesgeven aan een diverse studentenpopulatie. In de thuiscontext blijken deze kinderen vaker in een nadelige sociaal economisch situatie te leven. Op mesoniveau zijn ouderbetrokkenheid en communicatie tussen ouders en de school een probleem. Dit onderzoek heeft oplossingen op de verschillende niveaus in kaart gebracht. Op macroniveau moeten alle stakeholders betrokken worden bij bestrijding van problemen. In het bijzonder de immigratiedienst kan hierin een hoofdrol spelen, door immigratiewetten te veranderen. Op microniveau, moeten er leraar-trainingen komen die leraren beter in staat maken om les te geven aan een diverse studentengroep. Voor de kinderen die moeite hebben met het leren van de taal, zijn extra klassen nodig om extra taalvaardigheden te leren. Tenslotte zijn er taaltrainingen voor ouders nodig om de ouderbetrokkenheid en communicatie tussen ouders en leraren te bevorderen.

Leerplicht – Immigranten – Taalproblemen – Middelbare Scholen – Sint Maarten

1. Thesis Introduction

1.1.   General information Sint Maarten

Sint Maarten is a small Caribbean island of 87 square kilometres, which is divided into two regions. Since 1948, under the Treaty of Concordia, this island has been divided into a Dutch and a French territory (Unicef, 2013). The southern part of the sland is Sint Maarten (34 km2), which is part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands but not of the European Union. The northern section, Saint Martin (53 km2), is part of France and the European Union. The entire Dutch side holds a population of 38.247 (Department of Statistics, 2015).

In 2000 a referendum took place and citizens voted to become a self-governing country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Sint Maarten obtained autonomy from the Netherlands in 2010 (Unicef, 2013) and the Dutch side has its own government and is basically completely autonomous. However, the national defence and foreign relations remain under the responsibility of the Netherlands (Unicef, 2013).

1.2.   Immigration on Sint Maarten

There is a high proportion of immigration on Sint Maarten, which caused a significant population growth in the past years (Unicef, 2013). There is a large inflow of immigrants who come to meet labour needs and are employed in construction, cooking, services or cleaning (Unicef, 2013). In 2001, six out of ten people on Sint Maarten were born somewhere else, and there was a mixture of 100 different nationalities. In 2011 this number increased: seven out of ten people were from elsewhere and 118 different nationalities were living on the island (Department of Statistics, 2011). The highest percentages of immigrants are coming from the Dominican Republic (12,4%) , Haiti (9,2%) and Jamaica (7,9%) (Department of Statistics, 2011; Unicef, 2013). 13,3% of the immigrants are children of a compulsory education age (Department of Statistics, 2011). The main languages spoken are English, Dutch, Spanish, Haitian, Creole, Papiamento and French (Unicef, 2013).

The population growth causes various challenges for the island and its citizens. The infrastructure on the island is not adequate to cope with the growth. Problems like unemployment, child abuse, school dropout and poverty are just a few examples of the diversity of problems that the people on Sint Maarten face (Unicef, 2013). Many immigrants are undocumented and can be described as 'individuals who are no citizens of the country, do

not have current permanent resident visas and have not been granted admission under rules for longer-term residence and work permits' (Nienhusser, 2013). The economy of Sint Maarten is for an important part dependent upon the labour of these undocumented immigrants (Geerds & de With, 2011).

1.3. Compulsory education and undocumented students in Secondary schools

Compulsory education is education that is mandatory by law (Inspectorate of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports, 2015b). The Netherlands Antilles signed two international treaties in which the right of free and accessible education for all children was mentioned: The Treaty on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (1966) and The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (Inspectorate of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports, 2015b). Since August 2009 the Law on Compulsory Education is implemented in Sint Maarten which enables all children between the age of 4 and 18, both documented and undocumented, to receive education. (Inspectorate of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports, 2015b).

Before education was made compulsory, most undocumented children were going to 'unregulated' schools which were set up by people who cared about them. In general the quality of education in non-regulated schools was low: most teachers were not qualified and 60% did not have English as native language. Moreover, the buildings where the schools were operating were unsuitable for schooling (Geerds & de With, 2011). With the implementation of compulsory education it was decided that all undocumented students should be registered and placed in regulated primary and secondary schools in Sint Maarten (Geerds & de With, 2011).

In the academic year 2014-2015, 3008 students were enrolled in the eight secondary schools on Sint Maarten[1], of which 5,7% were non-registered[2] (Inspectorate Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, 2015). Non-registered students are students not registered at the Civil Registry's Office in Sint Maarten (Inspectorate of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports, 2015). The Ministry of Education noticed that these students often face a language barrier and have limited academic and social skills, which causes various challenges for these children and the schools.

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[1] See appendix 7.1. for an overview of the secondary schools' language of instruction, levels of education, educational program and financial sources

[2] See appendix 7.2 for an overview of numbers and percentages of non-registered students per school

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, this research investigated whether the students need additional guidance. The theoretical analysis will frame the scientific literature about challenges and opportunities migrant youth is facing in general on macro-, micro- and meso-level, and gives an overview about solutions other countries pose in order to guide these children. In the result section, data from questionnaires and interviews with members of the school staff, students, parents and members of external organizations in Sint Maarten are discussed. The challenges of the migrant youth and the best solutions to guide these children are investigated. In the discussion, the scientific literature and the results of this research will be combined in order to provide the most feasible solution for the situation in Sint Maarten. Additionally, recommendations will be made for the Ministry of Education.

2. Theoretical Background

Immigration is worldwide an increasing phenomenon that represents an opportunity for individuals and societies, but also involves challenges (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder (2006). First-generation immigrants are defined as people who are born in a foreign country, and whose parents are also born in a foreign country (OECD, 2013). Although there is an exceptional group of highly skilled immigrants, many immigrants are low-skilled and have a social disadvantage. This disadvantage combined with cultural and ethnic differences can create a gap and inequities between the host society and immigrants (Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007). To frame the opportunities and challenges that are faced by migrant youth, the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner will be used.

2.1. Ecological model Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological model to describe how the development of a child is influenced by social relations and the world around them (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The child is in the middle of an ecological web and is surrounded by different systems. The first system is the microsystem, the system that is closest to the child and with which the child is in direct contact, like family or peers. The second system is the meso-system, which consists of interaction between different parts of a person's microsystem. The third system is the exo-system, a setting in which the person is not a direct active participant but that still affects him, for example, the work environment of the parents. The fourth system is the macro-system. This includes the cultural environment in which the child lives and all other

systems that influence him, like economy, cultural values and political systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

2.2. Challenges and opportunities in the macro-system

There are several factors in the macro-system that influence the level of successfulness of migrant students in schools. First, the immigration laws and practices can partly influence the composition of immigrant population by using criteria to decide if someone is accepted in a country or not. When a country attracts mostly less-skilled workers, which is the case in Sint Maarten, this led to a disadvantage for the children of these immigrants (Geerds & de With, 2011; Heath, Rothon & Kilpi, 2008). Countries where the migrant inflows are more selective, like Australia, Canada and New-Zealand, seem to have a more skilled and socio-economically advantaged immigrant population (OECD, 2013). In these countries, the immigrant students perform above average: in Australia immigrants students outperform the natives, and in Canada and New-Zealand they perform equally (OECD, 2013). Second, in countries where the economic conditions are more unequal or with high rates of unemployment, ethnic penalties tend to be larger (Heath et al., 2008). The unemployment rate in Sint Maarten is 12,2%, and among youth in the age 15-24 it is even 29,4%. (Unicef, 2013). A lack of job opportunities can lead to lower expectations of the future which can cause higher dropout rates and engaging in illicit activities among youth (Unicef, 2013).

2.3. Challenges and opportunities in the microsystem

The challenges and opportunities on the micro-level will be divided into the two most proximal microsystems around the child: the school- and home environment.

2.3.1. School-environment

Education is an important factor to prepare children of immigrants for participation in the labour market and society (Nusche, 2009), and teachers and the school environment are essential for the socialization and acculturation of immigrant students (Mc Brien, 2005). Young adolescents, and in particular immigrant youth, need a stable and academically challenging school environment where structure and relational warmth are both provided. It is important that the needs, but also the strengths of immigrant students are taken into account in order to make them flourish (OECD, 2013; Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, Bang, Pakes, O'Connor & Rhodes, 2010).

Unfortunately, the integration of immigrant students in schools seems to be a challenge for most countries (OECD, 2013). The educational needs of students with an immigration background can be difficult, especially when they do not speak the language of the host country (OECD, 2013), or when they did not receive education for a period of time in their home country due to civil war or economic hardship (Hood, 2003). The high school environment has a tendency to not take into account the needs of immigrant students (Hood, 2003). Major weaknesses are for instance a shortage of teachers trained to teach English language learners, a large high school setting with no provision of individualized attention and no additional time to respond to students with extra needs (Hood, 2003).

Teachers

Teachers are the most important resources in the learning outcomes of the student, independently of socio-economic background. The degree of qualification and the length of experience of the teacher influence student achievement in a positive way (Nusche, 2009). Especially immigrant and disadvantaged students greatly benefit from high quality teaching. Unfortunately, research has shown that they have the least chance to receive it (Field et al., 2007). The more qualified and experienced teachers are more likely to enrol in schools with mostly native students (Nusche, 2009). Schools should recruit high quality teachers who stay on the job for several years in order to help immigrant students to succeed (Nusche, 2009).

Academic challenges and opportunities

On Sint Maarten there is no data available on the performance of first generation immigrant students, but research in the United States and Europe has shown that they are struggling to succeed in the new educational system (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Heath et al., 2008; OECD, 2013; Nienhusser, 2013; Nusche, 2009). They tend to perform lower on academic indicators, such as grades and achievement tests compared to native students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Heath et al., 2008; OECD, 2013). Furthermore, absenteeism and dropout rates are higher among immigrant students compared to natives (Heath et al., 2008, Nienhusser, 2013; Nusche, 2009, Amnesty International, date unknown). First generation immigrants, who arrive at an older age, do not speak the language of the host country and are from a undeveloped country with lower educational standards, are most vulnerable (OECD, 2013; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). It is challenging for them to adjust, develop academic English skills and fulfil the graduation requirements (Suárez- Orozco et al., 2010).

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Although immigrant students have a lot of obstacles against them, they have one great advantage: they are often highly motivated. In order to achieve a better life, first generation immigrants tend to work hard to excel in school. However, because of issues of poverty, race and language this desire is often challenged (Hood, 2003). Good teachers, programs and acceptance in the school setting can reduce the impact of environmental and cultural barriers. (Mc Brien, 2005).

Social difficulties

Unwelcoming practices, such as prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes can increase isolation, be an obstacle in adaption for immigrant students, and cause lasting effects on self-perception, motivation and achievement. Discrimination is often caused by cultural misunderstanding and a lack of information about the students (Mc Brien, 2005). There is no data available about negative attitudes towards immigrants in Sint Maarten, but research in the United States showed that many of the students who have been in advanced courses in their home country, are placed in low-level classes in their new schools. These negative attitudes of school counsellors can discourage students (McBrien, 2005).

2.3.2. Home-environment

There is a correlation between immigrant families and a higher poverty rate compared to natives. Explanations for this correlation is that immigrant parents do low wage work, attain less access to benefits, lack full time year round work and have lower educational levels and English proficiency (Cheah & Leung, 2011). Research in Sint Maarten showed that immigrant parents 'have difficulties with finding a well-paid job, because they are often poorly educated and do not master the language. To meet the basic needs for survival, like food and shelter, parents are forced to take multiple jobs' (Dekker & Kleijn, 2012, p.8).

Teens from immigrant parents may not have the adult support normal teenagers get from their parents because immigrant parents also undergo a similar search of identity in their new country, with finding a job, housing and cultural adjustment. This often makes them not able to give their children the emotional support they need (Mc Brien, 2005). Besides a lack of social-emotional support, immigrant parents also tend to fail in giving academic support. When they do not acquire the language of the host culture they are not able to help their children with doing their homework or other school related issues (Mc Brien, 2005).

2.4. Challenges and opportunities in the meso-environment

2.4.1. Discrepancy between two cultures

Immigrant children are able to socialise with students of different cultures in school, so they become more familiar with mainstream cultural norms than their parents (Cheah & Leung, 2011). They may encounter discrepancies between their parents' culture and the mainstream culture, especially when values are contradictory to one another and when parents hold on more strongly to their own cultural values and beliefs (Cheah & Leung, 2011). Some adolescents have difficulties with balancing loyalty to the family and adapting of the new culture. This can lead to intergenerational conflicts about authority, acceptable punishments or gender roles (Mc Brien, 2005). The constant cultural crossings can also contribute to identity confusion in adolescence (Mc Brien, 2005). According the psycho-social theory of Erikson, the major conflict in adolescent life is the search for identity (Berger, 1997). The discrepancy between the home and school culture makes this more complicated for immigrant youth (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010, Mc Brien, 2005). Where native youth has a stable environment to lean on, immigrant youth is sailing extremely stormy seas (Berger, 1997). 'They describe periods of feeling mentally and emotionally exhausted during this time when they are caught between two cultures' (Watts-Taffe, & Truscot, 2000 p.4).

2.4.2. Parental involvement

Parental involvement has a positive influence on the language acquisition and academic achievement of immigrant children (Lahaie, 2008; Nusche, 2009). Research showed that immigrant parents with a lower SES, are less involved in the educational achievements of their children than native born parents (Nusche, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2006; Ramirez, 2003). Parents may have high aspirations for their children but face difficulties in helping them with doing homework and other school related issues because they have low educational levels themselves, (Cheah & Leung, 2011) and are facing a language barrier (Mc Brien, 2005). Parents are however able to communicate certain values and expectations about education (Nusche, 2009).

2.4.3. Parent-teacher communication

Parents of a lower socio-economic status and a different cultural background seem less interested in their children's education (Ramirez, 2003; Guo, 2006). However teachers misinterpret this lack of interest, as parents do want their children to succeed in school. Teachers need to understand the barriers that hinder parents from participating in their

children's education (Ramirez, 2003; Guo, 2006), like lower educational levels, no proficiency in the language or working multiple jobs in order to meet the basic needs for survival, like food and shelter (Cheah & Leung, 2011; Mc Brien, 2005; Dekker & Kleijn, 2012). It is important to recognize the teachers' biases towards parents with a different cultural background as teachers can have lower expectations of parents and their children.

Language has a significant role in the communication between parents and teachers (Ramirez, 2003). Immigrant children usually become more fluent in English than their parents. This may lead to children having to translate for their parents, to communicate with teachers and directors of the school (Cheah & Leung, 2011; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). The changes in roles of parents and children may be stressful for the parents and the children (Cheah & Leung, 2011; Wesskirch & Alva, 2002). Programs to help parents develop language skills can help to improve the communication between the parents and the schools, and make the parents better equipped to help their children with schoolwork. Programs should have a participatory didactic approach in which daily personal and family life is the starting point for learning (Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2016). An example of a certain program what is used in the Netherlands and Sweden is the IDEAL-program (Integrating Disadvantaged Ethnicities through Adult Learning) in which: 'the teachers shared the same background as the participants and served as role model facilitators and social brokers' (Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2016, p.1). This program has showed promising results in language learning among immigrants mothers without basic education.

2.5. Language acquisition

Language is one of the most obvious challenges and an important barrier for immigrant students (OECD, 2013). It is challenging for the students to adjust quickly to the language and catch up with the performance of their peers, while at the same time getting used to the new educational system and social environment (OECD, 2013). Good language skills are a predictor for a better adjustment to the new culture and school environment, a fundamental factor for successful education outcomes, and important for interaction with teachers and peers (Mc Brien, 2005). On the other hand, when students do not speak the language adequately they can lack academically behind and be bullied by peers (Mc Brien, 2005).

There are different factors that play a role in the acquisition of the language (Goodwin, 2002). First, age at the time of migration is an important factor because younger children tend

to learn the language faster. Second, a high quality of schooling in the home country accounts for a faster language acquisition among immigrant children (Goodwin, 2002). And last, parental factors play an important role in language acquisition. Parents can stimulate the learning of the new language, but can also be an obstacle in the learning process when they are not proficient in the new language themselves (OECD, 2013), or when they think the maintaining of their own language is most important (Goodwin, 2002).

2.5.1. Language instruction

It is essential to provide language instruction to older immigrant students, and they would benefit from a program that takes their multiple disadvantages into account (OECD, 2013). Many countries therefore have education policies to improve the language proficiency of migrant students (Mc Brien, 2005). There are large differences between the methods and programs countries adopt to reach this aim. Numerous immigrant students who arrived newly are immediately placed into mainstream classes, where they sometimes receive extra guidance or support to develop language skills (OECD, 2013, Mc Brien, 2005). In other countries, special preparatory classes are used for language training before they transfer the children into regular education (OECD 2013, Mc Brien, 2005). A lot of countries are struggling to meet the increasing demand for language learning, due to a shortage of trained teachers that are specialised in teaching the native language as a second language and a lack of appropriate teaching material (Field et al., 2007).

2.5.2. Transitional classes

In the literature there are several terms used for the special preparatory classes for newcomer students, such as 'welcome classes', 'beginners classes' or 'pull out programs'. In this research the term 'transitional classes' is used to refer to the preparatory class for newcomer students. A transitional class is a class for immigrant children where the main focus is on improving their language proficiency in English (Nusche, 2009; DeCapua, Smathers & Tang, 2007). Students are either pulled out of mainstream classes or placed immediately in these classes when they are new in the country. These students acquire English as a second language instruction, academic skills development, literacy and content area support (DeCapua, Smathers & Tang, 2007).

In the literature there is disagreement about the effectiveness of transitional classes. On the one hand, research has shown that newcomers can greatly benefit from specialized care in such classes. They generally feel comfortable in transitional classes: it is a safe and structured environment where they learn the language, develop their skills and become familiar with the new educational system and society (Ramaut, 2002). A pilot study in Sint Maarten[3] showed improvements on academic achievement (Berppi, 2007), and research in Spain showed that newcomer children who only spend a few months in transitional classes are able to stream into the mainstream classes without huge difficulty (OECD, 2013).

On the contrary, several negative effects of transitional classes have been pointed out in the literature. First, in a lot of countries students stay in transitional classes beyond the point that it is helpful for them. For instance, in Sweden children stay in the transitional classes for more than one year, and in Norway 20% of the students never leave the beginners' classes (OECD, 2013; Nusche, 2009). Especially in countries where there is funding provided for separate classes, schools are encouraged to keep the students in the classes longer then needed (OECD, 2013). Transitional classes should be short and transitory because the separation of migrant students from the native students can have stigmatising effects and reinforce inequalities (Nusche, 2009). Furthermore, studies show that the transitional classes do barely provide students with extra teaching-time (Nusche, 2009), require students to miss parts of the regular curriculum and are often given by less-qualified teachers (Nusche, 2009; Karsten, 2006). In Switzerland, newcomers who spend two years in a transitional class were still considered as not being able to integrate into the normal classes, had a lower than average level of cognitive development and little knowledge of the official language (OECD, 2013). Furthermore, a bad communication between the transition teacher and the classroom teacher tends to be a problem (Karsten, 2006). Finally, research in the area of English as Second Language education showed that language development and cognitive development are interconnected and language proficiency seems to work best when learners use language for meaningful purposes (Nusche, 2009). Therefore, researchers believe that language learning should take place in conjunction with learning of the academic content (Watts-Taffe, & Truscot, 2000).

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[3] See appendix 7.3. for more information about the implementation and results of the pilotproject Transitional Classes in primary education in Sint Maarten from 2004-2006.

2.5.3. Helping students inside the mainstream classroom

When students are placed into the regular classroom but assignments are modified to help the students to attain the language it is called total immersion (De Capua et al., 2007). In countries that have to deal with a lot of immigration, it is beneficial when language learning takes place within the mainstream classroom (Nusche, 2009). Immersion is most effective when teachers are flexible in providing lessons to a diverse group of students (Teese, Aasen, Field &Pont, 2005). A student-centred teaching style, in which students are active participants and learn about things that are relevant for them, can be helpful in order to meet the needs of a diverse group of students (Peyton, Moore & Young, 2010). Freire's theory on problem posing education breaks the traditional dynamic between teacher and student and holds a more equal relationship. The students learn through dialogue with other students and with the teacher, instead of teachers depositing knowledge onto the children (Freire, 1970).

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) developed a social constructivism theory. He states that learning and development are collaborative activities and that children develop cognitively in the context of socialization and education. Learners are central in the learning process and are better able to understand the information they constructed themselves. Learning is seen as 'a social advancement that involves language, real world situations, interaction and collaboration among learners'(Ozer, 2004, p. 1). It is showed that collaborative learning improves the language proficiency and the academic skills of students (DeCapua, et al., 2007). Programs to improve the language proficiency of students focused on students working together and interacting with each other on various themes. Working together in small groups showed positive results (Hoogeveen, 2014).

In order to make teachers better equipped to work with students from various backgrounds, teacher education programs are needed (Field et al., 2007; Mc Brien, 2005). Teacher should develop skills, dispositions and sensibilities with regard to new students, and acquire a basic understanding of tools, materials and techniques that are necessary for giving students ESL (Field et al., 2007; Mc Brien, 2005). Research showed that students obtain better results when their teachers participated in professional development on working with students with different cultural and linguistic background (Field et al., 2007; Nusche, 2009).

2.5.4. Essential features to make an educational program successful

There are a few characteristics that language support programs need to have in order to become successful (Chistenen and Stanar, 2007). First, it is important that the course

programs are based on the regular curriculum. Second, the teachers have to be specialised in training second language to students. Third, the programs have to be time intensive and offered in a continuous way throughout primary and secondary schools. To integrate language and academic learning it is important that content-area curricula for second language learning are developed. Also, a good cooperation between classroom teachers and language teachers is essential (Christenen and Stanar, 2007).

2.6. Research questions

The theoretical framework showed that immigrant students face a lot of challenges when they arrive in a new country. Children who arrive at an older age, do not speak the language of the host country and are from a undeveloped country with lower educational standards, are most vulnerable. Since the implementation of compulsory education in Sint Maarten, there is an increasing number of students with these characteristics inside the secondary schools. This research will investigate what needs to be done in order to improve the situation of these students. The main question of the research is: what is needed to guide first generation immigrant children whose mother tongue is not English in secondary school education in Sint Maarten?

In order to answer the research question, it will first be investigated what difficulties the immigration of these children involves on macro-, meso- and micro-level. The most proximal micro-systems around the child that will be taken into account in this research are the school- and family environment. The meso-environment is taken into account by measuring the communication between these micro-environments (the parents and the school), and the parental involvement in the education of their children. The macro-level is measured by examining what implications migration has for the educational system in general, and how macro-systems are influencing the child. Second, it will be explored what current solutions the schools offer to guide the children whose mother tongue it not English. And finally, it is investigated if other solutions need to be implemented in order to improve the situation.

3. Method

This research used a mixed-methods design in order to answer the main question, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative techniques were interviews, observations and focus groups. The quantitative research methods were questionnaires. In order to get an overall picture of the situation on the island it was decided to include all eight secondary schools in the research. The original aim of the study was to investigate what guidance undocumented children needed. However, during the interviews with the principles it became clear that the challenges were not limited to children with an illegal status, so the focus of the research was broadened to all children who migrated to Sint Maarten and had difficulties with the English language.

3.1. Participants

Data was collected on all eight secondary schools in Sint Maarten[4]. In total 128 respondents participated in the research, including 85 school staff members (eight principals, one vice-principal, five care members/counsellors, 71 (remedial) teachers) and 28 students. The age of the students varied from 12 till 18 years. The time they were living in Sint Maarten varied from 8 months to 15 years. The children's countries of origin were the Dominican Republic (12), China (5), Colombia (4), Haïti (3), Venezuala (2), the Netherlands (1), and Gayana (1). There were five parents that participated in the research, including four mothers and one father. The parents' countries of origin were Dominican Republic (1), Colombia (3) and Sint Maarten (1). The reason for the low number of parents involved in this investigation is that it was difficult to get in contact with them. The contact occurred when our stay in Sint Maarten was almost over. The parents were found via primary schools, by giving letters to all children on which parents could write down their phone number if they were interested in participating in the research. The letters were in Spanish and English. With three of the respondents the interviews were done in Spanish, the other two were done in English. In addition to respondents from the schools, data was also collected by interviewing ten members of external organizations, including the inspectorate (2), the border protection service (3), the former pilot project [5](2) and the ACE foundation (3).

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[4] See appendix 7.1. for an overview of the secondary schools' language of instruction, levels of education, educational program and financial sources

[5] See appendix 7.3. for more information about the implementation and results of the pilotproject in Sint Maarten from 2004-2006.

3.2.   Instruments and procedure

Different   research   instruments[6]   were   developed   for   the   different   groups   of respondents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with (vice) principals, care members, counsellors, (remedial) teachers, students, parents and members of external organizations. Two focus groups were organized: one with twelve mentor teachers of various schools and one with twelve students with various countries of origin. Two observations in remedial classes have been done. The observation method that was used was an unstructured observation, meaning that the behaviours were not coded according to a scale. Finally, questionnaires were distributed among mentor teachers. The questionnaire contained nine open, eleven closed and 25 Likert-scale questions. In total, 52 mentor teachers filled in the questionnaires. The questionnaire included eleven Likert-scale items about the difficulties faced by children with a mother tongue other than English. Difficulties were measured on four subscales: academic (two items, $r = 0.889$, $N=33$, $p = 0.000$) , social (three items; $\alpha = .909$), behavioural difficulties (one item), and difficulties in the home-environment (four items, $\alpha =.902$). Mentor teachers could report how much of a difficulty this was for the children on a scale from 1 (no difficulties at all) to 5 (it is a big challenge).

3.3. Data analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The program Nvivo 10 was used to code and analyse the qualitative data from the interviews, focus groups and open questions of the questionnaire. SPSS was used to analyse the Likert-scale questions.

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[6] See appendix 7.4. for the instruments that were used during this research

4. Results

4.1. Macro-environment

School staff

The immigration in Sint Maarten is causing a population growth which has several implications for the educational system in general. This was discussed by seven respondents of the school staff. The first negative effect that respondents mentioned is that the general level of education has dropped because of immigration. The teachers and principals are lowering their standard to make the students comply with the requirement to pass. The students are not being challenged enough:

> Teacher: Every year it is getting worse. It's because of the problem with immigration that the educational system gets worse.

> Care member: I feel like we're not educating. We're babysitting.

The second negative effect that immigration has on the educational system in general is overpopulation and a lack of space in the schools. According to the respondents the school system is unable to accommodate a growing student population because the government has not built any new schools in the last 20 years. The number of students per class is increasing, which causes more challenges for the teachers. The students become irritated more easily due to the overcrowded environment:

> Principal: 'When there are too many students too compact in one area they become more aggressive. You just touch somebody's sneaker and temperature flows up: 'you touched my sneaker!', you know.'

Another issue that arises from the lack of space in schools, is that some children are promoted to the next grade when they are old enough for it, even if they have not yet acquired the required skills or reached the appropriate level:

> Care member: 'We have 50 students that are repeaters. If they don't pass this year by law they should go to another institution. But there is no space so what happens is: the children are allowed into form two, because there is no space.'

Furthermore, the timing of the immigration seems to be a problem. Children are coming to Sint Maarten in the middle of the schoolyear. These interim placements are a great challenge. It seems to be most beneficial when children stream into the class at the beginning of the schoolyear. Unfortunately, some parents bring in their children when the schoolyear

already started so the children stream in throughout the year. Determining on which level a child has to be placed often takes more time then would be desirable:

> Child psychologist: 'When a child arrives and has to be placed it can take a few weeks before the child is really going to school because their papers are still in the moving boxes, etc… And there has to be sorted out at what level a child can be placed best.'

For the teachers, the interim placements are also really challenging:

> Remedial teacher: 'They are taking the kids in just in the middle of the year. Teachers feel frustrated because of that.'

Finally, the age of the students when they come to Sint Maarten is an issue that has a negative impact on the educational system in general. Some parents bring in their children when they are 15 or even older. When the children do not speak the language they cannot be placed in the grade that their age requires:

> Principal: 'Because of the language barrier some of them end up in fist or second form, depending on how good they did on their placement exam.'

4.2. Micro-environment

4.2.1. Difficulties inside the school-environment[7]

School staff

In the questionnaire and during the qualitative interviews it was investigated which academic, social and behavioural difficulties students face according to the school staff. Academic difficulties were seen as a challenge by 33,3% of the mentor teachers who filled in the questionnaire[8] (M:2,98, SD: 1,28), and mentioned by nine of the school staff members during the qualitative interviews. The school staff indicated that the major problem for children is comprehension (reading and listening). The children who do not speak English at home do grasp certain concepts slower and therefore face problems with understanding the questions or exercises. Also producing (writing and speaking) the English language is a challenge for the students. Spelling, grammar and writing in English is more difficult for the children who do not have English as a mother tongue:

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[7] See Appendix 7.5.1. for data about the number of student whose mother tongue is not English and the number who face difficulties because of this per school. Appendix 7.5.2. includes a qualitative analysis about the situation regarding immigrant children at the specific secondary schools.

[8] These teachers gave a score of 4 or higher on at least one of the Likert Scale items that measured academic difficulties.

> Counselor: 'We have a lot that are Spanish and they have trouble with writing and reading. Verbally no problem, they would speak to you in English. But when it comes to work, it becomes difficult.'

According to 16,1% of the mentor teachers, the students face social difficulties (M:2,28; SD;1,16), and six of the respondents mentioned social difficulties during the interviews. All of the teachers who thought that the child was facing social difficulties mentioned that the children had communication problems with the teachers. These children are able to understand what the teacher is saying but afraid to speak:

> Counselor: 'She can understand you. But she does not practice to speak it. Because if they try to speak it and are struggling, children probably do make fun of them.'

Difficulties with making friends and a rejecting attitude from other students towards newcomers were both mentioned by 50% of the teachers who saw social difficulties. During the qualitative interviews, the respondents mentioned that the adolescence is a period of insecurity. Adolescents want to fit in, be accepted by their peers and do not want to be different:

> Remedial teacher: 'Sometimes when it is very cold because of the airco and I want to open the door, they tell me close the door because they don't want the other children to see that they are in remedial, because they feel like they're dumb.'

However, for some children it seems to be difficult to adjust to the new country. They do not speak the language, are missing the friends and family from their home country and have to adapt to a new cultural context:

> Principle: 'It is difficult for them to adjust, they have an adjusting problem. If the child is a person that is not open, or that find it difficult to understand another cultural context that makes it hard. You have to be flexible.'

24,2 % of the mentor teachers saw a lack of classroom motivation because of a language deficit (M:2,64, SD: 1,20). During the qualitative interviews six respondents mentioned that a lack of motivation can result in behavioural problems:

> Care member: 'They show a lot of behavioural issues. Not being able to pay attention. Disrespectful. Speak a lot. Move around a lot. They don't do homework, they don't do research. Stuff like that.'

Students

In the interview with the students adaption to the new culture, learning the language, making new friends and a lack of support from teachers were mentioned as challenges when they arrived in Sint Maarten. Two of the students mentioned that they had to get used to the

culture in Sint Maarten. Ten of the children mentioned the language as a major challenge when they arrived:

> Girl (16), Dominican Republic: 'It was so hard at the beginning. Because I never used to talk English. Only Spanish. So when I came here, the first day I was like oh my god. And my auntie told me: don't worry you will get the language.'

Two girls mentioned that they had to stay back because of the language which was really frustrating for them:

> '*How was that in the beginning*'
>
> Girl (16), Colombia: 'Really bad. In Colombia I already finished high school, I was going to university. And then they brought me here so I had to go again. And because of my language they made me stay back two times.'

There were four children who mentioned that it was hard for them that they did not know anybody when they arrived, and they had to make new friends. Two girls mentioned that they were being bullied because they were not proficient in the language:

> Girl (16), Dominican Republic: 'Some people that heard me trying to talk English they used to tell me: what are you doing in Sint Maarten? Go back to Santa Domingo. I try to ignore them, don't pay attention to them. But inside of me I was frustrated, I try my best and they are like 'go back Santa Domingo' and that's not nice.'

However, most of the children had good experiences with making new friends and experienced support from their peers with learning the language.

> Girl (16), Venezuela: 'It was pretty easy to make new friends. Everybody is just friendly to you. They see you speak Spanish and they are like: 'oh you're Spanish, teach me Spanish. And I'll teach you English', and I'll be like okay.'

During the focus group and several interviews, the majority of the students mentioned that the teachers in the regular classes are not supportive. In the remedial class they get extra attention, but most teachers from the regular classes do not pay attention to them:

> Boy (18), Dominican Republic: 'The teachers aren't motivated. They have no patience to help us and don't care about us. When we don't understand and ask them, they say: look it up in the dictionary.'

According to the teachers, this is because they already are under much pressure. There are a lot of students with behavioural problems in the classes. The teachers do not have time to give the students from abroad the extra care they need, and feel frustrated because they do not know how to take care of them:

> Remedial teacher: 'The teachers feel like they just dump the kids on you.'

4.2.2. Difficulties in the home environment

School staff

According to 38,5% of the mentor teachers, and three of the respondents, students whose mother tongue is not English face difficulties in the home-environment due to a low socio-economic status. Three of the stakeholders discussed the background of the immigrants who come to Sint Maarten. According to these respondents, the majority of the people who come to Sint Maarten are economic refugees who are struggling in their own country:

> Principle: 'We are not getting de crème de la crème. We are getting the people that are coming from the most low socio-economic classes.'

These respondents indicated that a lot of the children who migrated here are coming from disadvantaged economic situations. The parents of the children are mainly doing low-skilled jobs that do not get paid very much. The home-situation of these children is often difficult:

> Principle: 'Most of this children come from a single parent home, there is only a mother. And most of the time they have 3, 4, 5, 6 children. (…) I went to house visits and I was totally besides myself to see under what conditions they live. It's easy to say they live in small huts. But then you go there and you see how they live. And then you ask yourself how are they surviving. '

Parents

Three mothers came to Sint Maarten for their partner, who was already living there. One mother came to Sint Maarten for economic reasons. Four of the five parents were working in the tourism-sector. They indicated that the tourism-sector in general pays better than other jobs, but that it is also an uncertain sector because they are dependent upon tips:

> Father: Last year I could make 120$ tips a day. Now you make 20-30$ tips.

4.3. Meso-environment

The meso-environment was taken into account by investigating the parental involvement and communication between the parents and the school.

School staff

The parental involvement was seen as a challenge by 28,8% of the teachers. The teachers indicated that the children had a lack of support from their parents with doing their homework (36,5%) and learning the language (30,8%). According to the schoolstaff, the low parental involvement is mainly caused by the unfortunate economic situation these families are in. Most parents have two or even three jobs in order to take financially care of their

children:

> Care member: 'A lot of parents have to work so hard so the children practically take care of themselves.'

Also the language barrier seems to be an obstacle in the parental involvement of immigrant parents. A lot of parents do not speak the language, which makes it more difficult for them to get involved in the schoolwork of their children. Also during meetings inside the school this can create difficulties. Some schools have bilingual teachers who can translate during meetings with parents. But in some cases students must join and help with the translation:

> Principle: 'Sometimes the children fool the parents, then you see the parents smiling while I'm telling them that their child isn't doing well.'

The low parental involvement is a topic of concern, because once the parents are showing more involvement the school staff sees differences:

> Principal: 'We also ask that involvement from parents, just to be there for them. And you can see that once a parent supports the education it can go well.'

A member of the former pilot project mentioned that a high parental involvement was one of the factors that contributed to the success of the project. Parents had to sign a contract which stated that if they wanted their children to successfully complete the program, their total commitment and involvement was needed. The staff of the project put a lot of effort in getting the parents involved, and with success because the parental involvement was almost 100%:

> Member of the former pilot project: 'Sometimes the children said: my mother finish work at 11, so then I would be by the house at 11. When parents get to know that this school manager is not one who is going to let you, they cooperate and they are the nicest people in the world.'

Students

Twelve of the children pointed out that their parents could not speak English or just a little bit. Their parents are not able to help them with their homework, but most of them did not see this as a problem. They have support from other people in their environment like siblings, classmates or teachers. Two girls mentioned that their parents are not able to help them with their homework but that they support them in other ways:

> Girl (16), Colombia: 'My father can't help me with the language. But he helps me with the money or other stuff that I need for school.'

Parents

Three of the four mothers could not speak English, but they all indicated that they wanted to learn the language. Two of them were following online courses in order to learn the language. Unfortunately, they had difficulties managing their time to pursue this regularly:

Do you want to learn more English?

Mother: Yes! Very much so. I know very little English. But I have to work, I have to cook and do housework.

Three of the mothers mentioned that they were in a relationship with a partner from Sint Maarten, so their children can practice English with their stepfather. The stepfather that was interviewed is involved in teaching the children English. He helps them with their homework and teaches them additional English by using books and the internet, because he believes that 'education is the key to a good life'. His stepdaughters are now top of the class, so this family is a good example that stimulation of learning the language at home can lead to good results at school.

4.4. Solutions

4.4.1. Current solutions

The schools who faced challenges with children whose mother tongue is not English, already offered some solutions to help these children. First, there were four schools who offered Remedial teaching classes for Dutch, English and Mathematics for the children who face difficulties. When the rest of the class is going to the regular lessons these students are receiving education in the same subjects but in smaller groups and on a lower level. Although the remedial classes seem to be a place where the students feel comfortable and learn a lot, it is not an ideal solution. One remedial teacher indicated that she faced pressure because she is actually not equipped to give English as a second language. Remedial is not meant for children who are learning a foreign language but for native speakers who have difficulties:

Remedial teacher: 'So what I find happening, those children who really need remedial help but are native speakers of English, I cannot give them as much attention as I want to. Because I have some who do not speak a word, and you're spending so much time to let them even speak a little English.'

Another solution that two academic schools use to guide the children who are new to the school and are not proficient in the language is peer support. Children who are struggling are

coupled to a peer who speaks the same language in order to help them with doing homework and learning the language:

> Principal: 'Sometimes that works even better. For some reason they understand each other.'

During the observations in the remedial classes it was also showed that peer-teaching is a solution that happens in a very natural way. The children had spent more time in Sint Maarten translated for the children who did not understand what was said, and corrected them when they were pronouncing a word the wrong way. Finally, some schools are using technology in order to help children who do not speak English. At two schools the children are allowed to bring their mobile phones which they can use for translation. Even though this is a practical solution, it also involves disadvantages. The phones can be a distraction in the lessons because teachers do not have sight on what children are doing with it. To allow children to use phones as translators, can also reinforce inequalities:

> Remedial teacher: 'Children from Santa Domingo their parents don't have the money to pay the high-tech phones for the translation. So most of the time they have to borrow the phone of a student.'

4.4.2. Solutions at the macro-level

Respondents from the inspectorate, former pilot project and school staff emphasized that the solution should not only be inside the schools, but that all stakeholders should get involved when tackling the issues regarding immigrant children. There are not enough resources, human and financial, to take care of all the children. According to the respondents, the immigration-department should have a key-role in in the regulation. A member of the inspectorate mentioned that the immigration department should make sure that when children immigrate to Sint Maarten they already know a certain amount of English. Once they are here, there are no teachers that can give the children the extra attention they need. There were also respondents who indicated that the immigration laws should be revisited:

> Member of the former pilot project: 'The immigration laws, they have to be re-addressed and changed. There are too many loopholes in that law that a child can come on vacation for 10 days, and end up in the classroom and never ever leave.'

The members of the immigration and border protection service explained that they were currently developing a policy for 'Illegal minors who are attending school'. They think it is important that the number of illegal children in schools gets reduced, because the financial burden is high and there is not much money available in Sint Maarten. The members of the border protection service suggested that immigration could work together with schools in

order to send children who have no legal residence in Sint Maarten back to their home country. However, most stakeholders from other organizations see this as an inhumane solution. They think that it is better to prevent children from coming and pursue education here, instead of sending them back when they are already in Sint Maarten for a while.

4.4.3. Solutions at the micro-level

School staff

The majority of the respondents thought that a transitional class with a focus on language would be a good solution to help the children who come new to the island and who are struggling with the new educational system and language. Of the teachers who filled in the question about transitional classes, 79% indicated that it would be best to integrate a transitional class inside the school. In the qualitative interviews, nine respondents mentioned that a transitional class should be integrated inside the school. The reasons for integrating the transitional class inside the school varied. First, the respondents indicated that immersion in a new language helps to learn it faster:

> Remedial teacher Dutch: 'In my opinion it should be integrated in the school. Because children also learn a lot from each other. And when you hear it a lot, you learn it faster.'

Another reason for integration is that it would be better for the self-esteem of the children when they are educated in the same building with their native peers:

> Principle: 'Then they are still a part of the program. They don't feel completely isolated.'

Also, easier communication between the teacher of the transitional class and regular teachers was mentioned as a reason for integration. And last, it would financially be more beneficial to integrate a transitional class inside the schools:

> Carememeber: 'If you put them in different building you also have different rents. And then also separate teachers and everything.'

However, some respondents thought it would be better to organize a transitional class outside the regular schools. The main reason was that space is already lacking in the schools, so there is no place to organize something like a transitional class. Furthermore, the respondents thought it would be better to make it a separate entity where the focus is only on language learning.

Parents

Three mothers do think extra guidance for their children is necessary. One mother thought that a transitional school would be a good idea. The other two mothers find it important that they get extra tutoring lessons, for example in an afternoon school. These mothers however mentioned that they have no money to pay for extra tutoring lessons.

Students

During the focus group students were asked if a transitional school would be a good idea. All children thought it would be better to immediately go to a regular school. According the students, you learn the language faster when you are forced to talk with other students. During the qualitative interviews with the students, four children told that they had extra classes outside of school. This helped them with learning how to read and write, but for learning to speak they believed it was best to go to a regular class and get along with native people:

> Girl from Colombia (16): 'Because when you're in class with other Spanish people, and they pronounce it the wrong way, that's the way I'm also going to learn it right?'

Immigration and border protection service

The three members of the immigration and border protection service were against the implementation of a transitional class. They mentioned that when you create demand, it would only attract more illegal immigrants.

5.   Discussion

There is a high proportion of immigrants on Sint Maarten, which caused a significant population growth in the past years. Since the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law in 2009 all children, including unregistered youth, must be accepted in the schools that are subsidized by the government. The Ministry of Education noticed that these students often face a language barrier and have limited academic and social skills. Therefore they wanted to investigate if these students need additional guidance. Research showed that children who arrive at an older age, do not speak English and had lower educational standards in their home country, are most vulnerable (OECD, 2013). Therefore, this research focussed on children in secondary schools who migrated to Sint Maarten, and did not speak the language upon arrival. The main question of the research is: What is needed to guide first generation immigrant children, whose mother tongue is not English, in secondary school education in Sint Maarten?

5.1. Problem analysis socio-ecological model

In the theoretical background and results of this study, the socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner was used to investigate what difficulties the immigration of children whose mother tongue is not English involves on macro-, micro- and meso-level.

5.1.1. Macro-level

At the macro-level, the respondents indicated that immigration changed the educational system in general. The quality of education decreases due to immigration, because schools get overpopulated. Children are placed in the next grade even when they are not on the appropriate level for it. Other challenges that decrease the quality of the educational system are the instream of children in the middle of the year, and placements in a lower grade than they should be in according their age.

5.1.2. Micro-level

At the micro-level there were challenges in the school- and home environment. Results about the school environment were in line with the scientific literature: the students whose mother tongue is not English showed more academic and social challenges compared to their native peers, mainly caused by the language barrier. The literature shows that teachers are the most important resource in the learning outcomes of the students. Especially immigrant students can greatly benefit from high quality teaching (Nusche, 2009). Unfortunately, the majority of the students mentioned that a lot of teachers are not supportive and give them the feeling that they do not care about them. The teachers on the other hand,

mentioned that they are under a lot of pressure and that they are not equipped to guide children who do not speak English. This is an unfortunate situation because research showed that it is important that teachers take into account the needs and strengths of immigrant students in order to make them flourish (OECD, 2013). The literature about the home environment revealed that children who have immigrated are at a higher risk for poverty than native children (Cheah & Leung, 2011), which is in line with the results of this study. A lot of the children who migrated here are living in disadvantaged economic situations. Parents are often doing low-skilled jobs.

5.1.3. Meso-level

An issue on the meso-level according to the members of the school staff is that the parental involvement among immigrant parents is generally low. This is unfortunate, because parental involvement has a positive influence on language acquisition and academic achievement for immigrant children (Nusche, 2009). The immigrant parents indicated that they wanted to be involved in their children's education, but experience barriers in doing so, like working multiple jobs to provide for the household and not speaking the English language. These factors can discourage them to come to meetings with the teachers or hinder them in helping with homework of their children (M Brien, 2005). Even though parental involvement seems to be an issue in Sint Maarten, members of the pilot project 'Transitional classes in Sint Maarten' were a good example of how parents can be included. The members took their own initiative to get into contact with parents and get them involved.

5.4.   Current solutions

It was investigated what current solutions the schools offer to guide the children whose mother tongue is not English. The schools use remedial teachers, peer support and technology to guide the children with difficulties. Although these solutions seem to be helpful, they contain a few challenges. The remedial teaching class should be a place for natives who have difficulties with the language, not for children who do not speak the language at all, because the remedial teachers are not equipped to teach English as Second Language. Peer support is a solution that the schools with higher educational levels use in particular. Whether this solution also works for lower educational levels has to be sorted out. Last, technology can be very helpful, but it can also reinforce inequalities: children from families where there is no money for a high-tech cell phone are disadvantaged because of this solution.

5.5. Required solutions

Finally, this research examined whether other solutions must be implemented in order to improve the situation, with help of the socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner.

5.5.1. Macro-level

A solution on the macro-level could be a change in the immigration regulations. The theoretical background showed that migration laws and practices are important in regulating the influx of immigrant populations (Heath et al., 2008). During the interviews it became clear that the respondents thought that the immigration department should revisit their laws, in order to manage the influx of immigrants to Sint Maarten better. For instance, this can be achieved by requiring prove that children received adequate English lessons in their home country, before they get accepted into the country. According to the respondents it is necessary that the influx reduces, because there are not enough human and financial resources to take care of much more children.

5.5.2. Micro-level

Extra guidance on the micro-level is important in order to help the children who are already in Sint Maarten to succeed. The best way to organize such guidance is something on which there is a lot of disagreement. In the literature and in the results of this investigation it was shown that there are supporters of transitional classes, and on the other hand people who think that placement in the regular schools with additional help is the best solution. When recommendations are made, it is important to take into account what the most practical and feasible solutions are for the situation in Sint Maarten. The majority of the respondents thought that a solution inside the school context would be better, because it has a lot of benefits: getting along with native children helps to adapt to the new cultural environment and immersion in a new language helps to learn it faster. Also from a financial wise perspective it would be more beneficial to organize something inside the school context. Taking into account that there are not many human and financial resources on Sint Maarten, guidance inside the regular schools seems to be the most feasible solution.

5.5.3. Meso-level

On the meso-level, there are several solutions in order to improve the parental involvement and the communication between the parents and the teacher. First, it is important that schools meet the needs of parents, for instance by organizing parent-teacher meetings in evening hours instead of during working hours. Second, to improve the communication

between the parents and the school, it will be helpful when parents learn the language. This will also make them better equipped to help their children with homework. Programs with a participatory didactic approach in which daily personal and family life is the starting point for learning, showed promising results in language learning among immigrant parents (Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2015).

5.6. Recommendations

There are a few recommendations that can be made for the Ministry of Education, in order to guide immigrant children whose mother tongue is not English.

5.6.1. All stakeholders involved

It is important that all stakeholders work together when tackling the issues regarding immigrant children whose mother tongue is not English. The immigration department has an important role in managing the influx of the children. The business community can also get involved in order to give financial assistance. They could help with funding of the additional guidance of immigrant children and their parents.

5.6.2. Teacher education programs

In order to improve the situation in the school context for immigrant students, teacher education programs are needed to help teachers develop skills, dispositions and sensibilities with regard to immigrant students. Because Sint Maarten is a country that has to deal with a lot of immigration, it is important that all teachers are flexible in providing lessons to a diverse group of students with various backgrounds. Research showed that students obtain better results when their teachers participated in professional development on working with students with different cultural and linguistic background (Field, 2007). In order to make teachers better equipped to develop flexible programs that recognise diversity of students, and should provide them with skills to include the following elements in their lessons:

5.6.2.1. Basic understanding second language instruction

Part of teacher preparation should be the content and methods to give students second language instruction. In a country as Sint Maarten, that has to deal with a lot of immigration, it is necessary that teachers have basic understanding of tools, materials and techniques that are necessary for new-language learning (Field, 2007).

5.6.2.2. Children participation

Instead of teachers depositing knowledge onto the children, children should be active participants in the learning process (Freire, 1970). Freire's theory on problem posing education breaks the traditional dynamic between teacher and student and holds a more equal relationship. The students learn through dialogue with other students and with the teacher (Freire, 1970). Students should be active participants and learn about things that are relevant to them (Freire, 1970).

5.6.2.3. Collaborative learning

Teachers should develop skills to stimulate collaborative learning among students. Vygotsky states that learning is 'a social advancement that involves language, real world situations, interaction and collaboration among learners'(Ozer, 2004, p.1). Learners are central in the learning process and are better able to understand the information they constructed themselves (Ozer, 2004). Collaborative learning improves the language proficiency and academic skills of students (DeCapua, et al., 2007) and working together in small groups showed positive results (Hoogeveen, 2014).

5.6.3. Extra guidance for students that struggle

Extra guidance is needed for the children who are new in Sint Maarten and are struggling to learn the language. According to the students, immersion in a new language and getting along with native people is helpful in order to learn the language faster. Children should mainstream into the regular classes and follow the courses with their classmates. However, additional classes with a focus on language learning are needed in order to make the students better equipped to academically catch up with their native peers. It is important that people who are trained to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) are hired to provide the classes. The approach of teaching in these classes should be on problem posing education and collaborative learning, because as explained in the previous recommendation this can have great benefits in an environment where the needs of students are divers.

5.6.4. Getting parents involved

Last, it is important that parental involvement increases, since this is important in the language acquisition and academic achievement for immigrant children (Nusche, 2009). Two recommendations can be made to improve the parental involvement:

5.6.4.1.   Meet the needs of parents

Even though parental involvement seems to be an issue in Sint Maarten, members of the pilot project 'Transitional classes in Sint Maarten' were a good example of how parents can be included. The members took their own initiative to get into contact with parents and get them involved. Schools should put effort in encouraging parents to get more involved, and meet the needs of the parents by organizing meetings at hours that are more suitable for them.

5.6.4.2.   Increase the language proficiency of parents

Programs to help parents develop language skills are also essential in order to improve the communication between the parents and the schools, and make parents better equipped to help their children with schoolwork. A good example of a certain program what is used in the Netherlands and Sweden is the IDEAL-programme (Integrating Disadvantaged Ethnicities through Adult Learning) in which: 'the teachers shared the same background as the participants and served as role model facilitators and social brokers' (Nieuwboer & van 't Rood, 2016, p.1).

5.7.   Limitations

There are a few limitations in this research. First, there was a low response rate on the questionnaires of the mentor teachers which can make the quantitative data less reliable. Furthermore, this research mainly focused on the perspective of the school staff. The opinion of 85 members of the school staff was taken into account. In contrast, only five parents were interviewed during this investigation. Unfortunately, it was difficult to get into contact with parents, and the contact occurred when our stay in Sint Maarten was almost over. Future research should focus on interviewing more parents, to draw appropriate conclusions on the perspective of parents. Furthermore, future research should take into account how an ESL program should be implemented practically. A curriculum needs to be set up and teacher trainings should be provided.

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7. Appendix

7.1. General information secondary schools

School	Instruction language	Levels education	Educational Program	Financial sources
SDHS	English	Academic	CXC / IB	Subsidized
VTS	English	Vocational	LMOOE	Public
PSVE	English	Vocational	PBL/PKL	Subsidized
ACA	English	Academic	CXC	Subsidized
SUN	Dutch	Vocational	PBL/PKL	Subsidized
MPC	Dutch	Vocational/Academic	PKL/PBL/HAVO/VWO	Subsidized
CBA	English	Academic	CXC	Subsidized
MAC	English	Academic	CCSLC	Subsidized

Source: Inspectorate of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports, 2015

7.2. Information non-registered students in Secondary schools

School	Total number students	Total number non-registered students	Percentage
SDHS	336	17	5,1%
VTS	248	7	2,8%
PSVE	450	49	10,9%
ACA	529	12	8,6%
SUN	344	36	10,5%
MPC	898	38	6,2%
CBA	115	10	8,7%
MAC	88	3	3,4%
Total	3008	172	5,72%

Source: Inspectorate of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports, 2015b

7.3.   Information Pilot Project Transitional Classes 2004-2006

From 2004 to 2006 there was a pilot project with transitional school and classes on the primary level for children who were new in Sint Maarten and showed language difficulties. It was meant for children who were facing obstacles in the regular education system. A special education programme was needed to provide these children with extra attention. In the first year, 33 students participated (25 boys and 8 girls) in two transitional classes. The students came from five primary public schools. 67% of the students did not speak English at home. Of these students, 40% spoke Spanish at home, 36% spoke Creole, 22% English and 2% Chinese. In the second year, 11 students returned to their regular classes and 10 new students replaced those students in the transitional classes. Of the total 43 students, 56% returned to their original school after a year.

In the second year, the project extended with four classrooms in three schools: two in Ruby Labega, one in Leonard Connor, and one in Charles Bell. The two classrooms of the first year continued to exist. The additional classes were not placed in a separate building like in the first year but were located within the schools; These classes consisted of children who were older, age 9-12, and were in 3rd and 4th grade. In total there were 58 students participating for the second year.

To conclude, 84% of the total amount of students (72 pupils), have been mainstreamed into their regular classes. Of these children, 53 students were performing at an average level. Even though this program benefited the majority of the children who participated, there are a few children who still had difficulties with the language after the program. The majority of these children were referred to special education because they either had a learning disability (6 students) or behavioural problems (23 children). Four students needed counselling for social-emotional problems.

The pilot has been a successful implementation of transitional classes in 2004 till 2006. Unfortunately the classes were not pursued further because the project was funded for two years only. Children were experiencing the most difficulties with language and reading. Therefore, focus on language improvement, especially learning English and Dutch as a second language, is important to primarily focus on in the transitional classes.

7.4.   Instruments

7.4.1. Qualitative interviews with principles / care members / remedial teachers

1) How many children on your school do not have English as a mother tongue? Which languages do they speak?
2) Of these children, how many have difficulties in the class because of this?
3) What are the difficulties these children experience?
   * academic
   * social
   * psychological?
4) What are the difficulties you experience with these children?
   * academic
   * social
   * behavioural problems

4) How do you deal with those problems?

5) What is already going well?

6) What improvements can be made you? What do you need/ what does the school need?

7) What do you see as the best solution to help these children?

8) What do you think of the idea of an transitional class for this children?

9) If this is going to be implemented, what would be the best way to realize this?

7.4.2. Focus group / interviews with children whose mother tongue is not English

Questions about school environment

- When you came to the island, how long did it take before you came to school?
- How were the first weeks/days for you in the new school? What were the biggest challenges?
- On which area do you wish you had extra support? How could the support be better?
- How challenging is/was it for you to learn the language?
- How challenging is/was it for you to make new friends?
- Do you think extra guidance in learning the language for children who are new to the island is needed?
- If so: how you think this should look like?
- Extra assistance in the regular class or is a separate language learning class needed?
  * If separate class: inside the school or separate building? Focus on only language learning or regular courses also integrated?
- If regular class: what extra guidance would children need to learn the language inside the regular classroom?
- If you compare it with now, what have changed since the first day you were here?

Questions about home environment

- How does your home situation look like: with who are you living at home?
- Do your parents and siblings speak English?
- Do your parents support you to learn the language ? If yes, how? If not: would you like them to support you more?
- Do your parents help you with your schoolwork? If yes, how? If not: would you like them to help you more?
- Do your parents support you to make new friends? If yes, how? If not: would you like them to support you more?

Home vs. School

- What are the biggest differences between how you are supposed to act at school and how you are supposed to act at home?
- Do you experience difficulties with finding a balance between these environments? If so: what are the biggest challenges you face?

7.4.3. Focusgroup with mentor teachers

A lot of children on St Maarten have migrated from other countries, and because of compulsory education some of them are placed into the schools directly without knowing any English. I already collected some data on the secondary schools on st Maarten and I know that some schools face more problems/challenges with this than others. But I have a few questions for all of you, because I think it is good to see different opinions on this subject and I like to invite you to discuss with each other about the best way is to cope with this children.

1. Do you face difficulties on your school with children who migrated here in the past years and don't speak English that good?
2. How do you cope with this children now, do you face challenges with them and if so: what kind of challenges?
3. If some of them don't have challenges and others not: first let the people tell about there challenges?
4. What would be the best solution to help these children?
5. What do you think of the idea of an transitional class for this children?
6. If this is going to be implemented, what would be needed to realize this?
7. How can schools work together in finding a solution on this issue?

7.4.4. Questionnaire for teachers of mentor classes

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. I am doing research about students whose mother tongue is not English and students who have migrated to Sint Maarten. For my research I am investigating what difficulties these students face and whether the implementation of transitional classes is necessary. A transitional class is a special class for students who do not sufficiently master the English language yet. The idea is that children learn the language as quickly as possible, after which they can flow into a regular class in secondary education. Your input will be very helpful to create an idea about how many children need a transitional class and what the primary focus should be in these classes.

1. Which subject do you teach?
2. For how many years have you been teaching?
3. Where were you born?
4. What languages do you speak?
5. Which grade are you the mentor teacher of?
6. How many students do you have in total in your mentor class
7. How many students are there in your mentor class who do not have English as a mother tongue?

If the answer on question 7 is 0 you can skip to question 14

8. What languages do the children who do not have English as a mother tongue at home:
   a. How many speak Spanish?
   b. How many speak Creole?
   c. How many speak French?
   d. How many speak Chinese?
   e. How many speak Dutch?
   f. How many speak a different language? Which languages?

9. How many students are there in your mentor class who are new this year because they moved from another country? Which countries did they come from?

10. Do you see differences between students who do not speak the English language at home and children who do? What differences?

11. How many students in your mentor class experience difficulties because English is not their mother tongue?

If the answer on question 11 is 0 you can skip to question 14

12. A. What difficulties do **these children** mostly face? Please rank 1-5. **1 means no difficulties at all, 5 means it is big challenge**.

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Difficulties	
Understand the lessons	1 2 3 4 5
Understand the exams	1 2 3 4 5
Making new friends	1 2 3 4 5
Communication with you / other teachers	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of motivation during class because of language deficit	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of support of parents with doing homework	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of support of parents with learning the language	1 2 3 4 5
Getting used to the new educational system	1 2 3 4 5
Getting used to the new culture	1 2 3 4 5
Discrepancy between home- and school culture	1 2 3 4 5
Rejecting attitude from other students towards newcomers	1 2 3 4 5

B. If you can think of any additional difficulties these children face, please write them down here.

13. A. What difficulties do **you** mostly face with teaching these children? Please rank 1-5. **1 means no difficulties at all, 5 means it is big challenge**.

Difficulties	
Language barrier	1 2 3 4 5
Curriculum does not match to children with different needs	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of materials	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of financial aid	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of support of school board	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of support of principle	1 2 3 4 5

Lack of support of other teachers	1 2 3 4 5
Different levels of education within one class	1 2 3 4 5
Cultural differences	1 2 3 4 5
Difficulties in the placement of children	1 2 3 4 5
Difficulties in communication with parents	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of parental involvement	1 2 3 4 5
Classes are too large	1 2 3 4 5
Lack of specialists (e.g. child psychologic)	1 2 3 4 5

B. If you can think of any additional difficulties these children face, please write them down here.

14. What do you see as the best solution to help the children who face difficulties with the language? And what would be needed to realize this?

15. What do you think of the implementation of transitional classes(*) for students who are new in the school and do not speak the language?

    a. How many students in your mentor class would need to go to such a class?

    b. How should a certain class look like?

    c. What would be the best way to realize a transitional class? (at school, at a different location, etc.) What is needed to realize this?

    d. What should be criteria for a child to enter this class?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COÖPERATION!

(*) A transitional class is a special class for students who do not sufficiently master the English language yet. The idea is that children learn the language as quickly as possible, after which they can flow into a regular class in secondary education.

7.5.   The situation regarding immigrant children per secondary school

7.5.1. Results questionnaires

School	Number of questionnaires	Students Total	Students different mother tongue	Students difficulties	Students new
PSVE	16	321	145 (45,17%)	51 (35,2%)	17
ACA	3	65	7 (10,8%)	1 (14,3%)	0
VTS	10	138	49 (35,5%)	5 (10,2%)	1
MPC/SUN	9	179	38 (21,2%)	10 (26,3%)	0
MAC	4	-	15	0 (0%)	0
CBA	6	92	3 (3,3%)	0 (0%)	0
SDH	4	95	11 (11,6%)	0 (0%)	0
Total	**52**	**890**	**268**	**67**	**18**

These results are based on the responses of the mentor teachers in the questionnaires

7.5.2.   Qualitative   analysis   about   the   situation   per   school

During the interviews with the school staff of the secondary schools it was showed that there are differences between the schools regarding the extent in which they experience problems with children whose mother tongue is not English.

Schools who experience little to no problems

The schools where the staff indicated that they do not experience major difficulties with children who do not have English as a mother tongue are MAC and SDH. According to both principals, there are a few children who do not have English as a mother tongue but all children have been to English elementary schools in Sint Maarten so they are proficient in the English language. In MAC there are no children in the school who came directly from another country into the school. In SDH there is one Chinese boy who went back to China for two years and is struggling a little bit with the language now. But with help of extra language lessons outside the school he is making improvements fast.

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Dutch Schools

At MPC and Sundial the students in this schools face a lot of difficulties with the language, because Dutch is not the native language in Sint Maarten. According to the principals, the children of the HAVO/VWO section face less problems with Dutch as instruction language:

> 'They have a higher level of intelligence, and when they do not understand something they know that they can look things up, Google it, that kind of stuff.'

However, on the lower educational levels the students are in general really struggling with Dutch as instruction language:

> *'And how many children face difficulties because of the language?*
> F: of the 350 students, I think it is around 300 who face difficulties.'

A lot of extra care for the language is provided on the schools. All children get five extra hours of Dutch language lessons with the computer program 'Muiswerk', and there are remedial teachers and a child psychologist for children who need extra care.

The principals see differences between children who have English as a mother tongue and children who do not, especially in the home environment. Children with a mother tongue other than English tend to come from more disadvantaged families and seem to have less support from their parents than the native children. According to the principles this is reflected back in their results, because they are underperforming compared to the native children. However, in some cases the unfavourable home-environment can be an extra driving force to work hard in order to get a good job and improve their situation.

Sint Maarten Academy Academic

This school has a population of 529 students and is comparable to a HAVO/VWO school. In the last few years, there have been a few students who came new to the island and were placed directly into the school. Sometimes they had to be placed in a lower grade. According to the principal and care member of the school the overall IQ of the children is high since they are in a school with a higher educational level. For the children who are struggling they organize peer support inside the school, and advise the parents to get additional language classes outside the school. This additional support makes the children better equipped to keep it up in the classes.

Sint Maarten Academy PSVE

PSVE has a population of 450 students and is the school who faces the most challenges with children who migrated to the island. According to a member of the inspectorate this is caused by the fact that this schoolboard is most generous. The principal gave as a reason: 'When they come here they already have family and friends that are in this school. So when they migrate here the parents say we will get you in school here.'

Since a few years they have more and more students who do not speak any English at all when entering the school. They face a lot of challenges with these students. The children can use their phones to translate what the teacher is saying. In addition they get remedial teaching classes.