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Based on focus group discussions with secondary school teachers in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, we investigated teachers' views on home-school collaborations with migrant families in the context of student wellbeing. We asked 1) what roles and strategies constituted home-school collaborations in teachers' views, 2) what norms of belonging characterized teachers' perceptions on collaborations; and, 3) to what extent teachers' perceptions of home-school collaborations reflected equity. Findings revealed two major themes: seeing parents in paradoxical roles and attempting to collaborate in a

context of constrains. These themes were often underpinned by teachers' perceived 'ideals' on the educational, cultural-linguistic, familial and psychosocial characteristics of a 'family' and a 'parent'. These assemblages seemed to set belonging for migrant families on condition of meeting teacher-perceived ideals, and pointed to the necessity to enable plural belonging to a collaborative school community that fosters wellbeing.

Keywords: home-school collaboration; parents; teachers; wellbeing; belonging; equity; migrant students

Introduction

In recent years, migrant students' wellbeing – approached from a holistic perspective including academic, social, emotional, and mental health (Dryden-Peterson, 2018; Franz, 2019) – has gained greater attention in educational policy and practice (Hamilton, 2013; OECD, 2022). Research has affirmed the importance of schools in fostering migrant students' wellbeing, for example, by connecting students with mental health services, providing a space for social support, positive relationships and belonging, and developing practices that foreground wellbeing (Borsch, Vitus & Skovdal, 2021; Fazel, 2015; McDiarmid et al., 2021; Norozi, 2019). However, the difficulties teachers experience to meet the holistic needs of migrant students are also notable (Borsch et al., 2023; Häggström, Borsch & Skovdal, 2020; Mock-Munoz de Luna et al., 2020).

As a way to effectively promote student wellbeing, home-school collaborations are often proposed (Crooks et al., 2020; Fazel & O'Higgins, 2020; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Despite this affirmative stance, migrant parents are usually portrayed in negative images (Free et al., 2014; Heidbrink & Statz, 2017), and as the "problematic 'Other'" (Guo, 2018, p. 16), which raises questions about what norms of belonging characterize schools' collaborative efforts for student wellbeing, and whether collaborative processes reflect equity (Ishimaru, 2019).

In this article we explore teacher-perceived home-school collaborations with migrant families in the context of student wellbeing in some secondary schools in Denmark, Finland,

and Sweden. Drawing on the concepts of equitable collaborations (Ishimaru, 2019) and politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006), we ask: (1) What roles and strategies constitute teacher-perceived home-school collaborations with migrant families?; (2) What norms of belonging characterize these collaborations?; and, (3) To what extent do teachers' perceptions of home-school collaborations reflect equitable collaborations? Our study adds to the state of art by analyzing the complex positions teachers' perceptions on home-school collaborations occupy in portraying norms of belonging for migrant families in the context of wellbeing.

Theoretical perspectives and literature review

Migrant families in schools: the "politics of belonging" and "equitable collaborations"

While belonging can be studied on many levels, here we focus on norms of belonging, defined as assemblages of "ethical and political values" that normatively identify individuals as part of or excluded from larger social groups (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 203). The "politics of belonging" is then a boundary making process that define inclusion and/or exclusion (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204). Differences in place, religion, ethnicity, and culture between migrants and a nation-state (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019) construct "hierarchies of belonging" in which migrants are often positioned as less desirable members of a society (Kaptani et al., 2021, p. 70; also Halse et al., 2018).

In educational contexts, the norms of belonging are interrelated with value judgements about teaching, learning, and students' familial backgrounds (Berge & Johansson, 2021; Högberg et al. 2020; Juva & Holm, 2017; Szelei, Pinho & Tinoca, 2024). In schools exclusionary processes may co-exist with efforts to establish belonging in an educational community (Danielsen & Bendixen, 2019; Halse et al., 2018; Hilt, 2015; Szelei et al., 2024). While belonging has been studied with a focus on migrant students, less research explored belonging in the cases of migrant families when schools try to collaborate in view of student wellbeing. The link between schools' collaborative efforts and belonging is highly relevant to

study, since home-school collaborations are typically proposed as a mechanism to overcome deficit perspectives, foster student wellbeing, and prompt equitable school change (Fazel & O'Higgins, 2020; Ishimaru, 2019)

Several terms have been used to denote home-school collaborations, for instance, parent/family involvement, engagement, cooperation, or partnerships. We here understand these concepts as part of collaborative efforts while noting that they may occupy different places on the continuum towards family inclusion and equity (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Ishimaru, 2019). Given the fact that not all parents are provided with the same opportunities to participate in their children's school education (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013; Ishimaru, 2019; Matthiesen, 2016); we approach home-school collaborations through the lense of equitable collaborations (Ishimaru, 2014, 2019). Four concepts constitute this framework: goals, strategies, roles and contexts.

Equitable collaborations aim to achieve systemic changes by equal participation and sharing responsibilities and leadership roles between schools and families (Ishimary 2014, 2019). Thus, the role of migrant parents changes from passive receivers of educational actions to leaders who decide about and develop educational programmes together with school staff (Ishimaru, 2019). Equitable collaborations apply strategies of capacity and relationship-building through which both school staff and families become better equiped to work together and support students. These strategies are collective, reciprocal, and relational rather than individual, unidirectional and unilateral – as in traditional collaborations (Ishimaru, 2019, pp. 355-357). Equitable strategies can be categorized as capacity building activities at the level of parents, culturally specific relationships between parents and school staff, and the school system (Ishimaru, 2019, p. 366). They are understood as a political process that take into consideration larger inequities in society (Ishimaru, 2019).

Here we connect Ishimaru's (2019) notion of collaborations as political processes taking place in a context of inequities with Yuval-Davis' (2006) concept of the politics of belonging. As such, we analyze what norms of belonging emerge in teachers' perceptions on home-school collaborations as teachers discuss student wellbeing in focus groups.

Teachers' views on and practices of collaboration with migrant parents

Research with teachers and parents has extensively described perceptions of family engagement, strategies, and barriers. In terms of attitudes, previous studies found that both teachers and migrant parents value collaborations in general and wish for parents to be more included in school life (Bergset, 2017; Reynolds et al., 2015; Povey et al., 2016, Sainsbury & Renzaho, 2011; Schneider & Arnot, 2018).

However, several barriers are notable that may hinder home-school collaborations (Horny & Lafaele, 2011; Kim, 2009). Teachers might understand family engagement simplistically as in attending parental meetings or supporting student learning at home (Povey et al., 2016; Schneider & Arnot, 2018), but expect less engagement in school organization or curriculum (Povey et al., 2016). It also seems that schools often undervalue parents' roles in deciding about their children's educational pathways, and regard teachers as the more knowledgeable actors in these areas (Guo, 2018; Matthiesen, 2016; Tett & Macload, 2020). Importantly, Reynolds and colleagues (2015, p. 768) noted that teachers tended to view parents at the two extreme ends of engagement: either as succesfully participating and interested in education, or as disengaged and indifferent about school.

Obstacles might also exist due to families' experiences of discrimination, isolation, economic difficulties, and physical and mental health challenges (Iruka et al., 2014). Migrant

families might carry stressful and traumatic experiences (Merry et al., 2017), or feel insecurities due to a language barrier and unfamiliarity with a new school system (Reynolds et al., 2015; Sainsbury & Renzaho, 2011; Schneider & Arnot, 2018). Monolingual language policies are also often cited as challenges that make interaction with school staff and accessing relevant information difficult for migrant parents (Piller, Bruzon & Torsch, 2023; Sainsbury & Renzaho, 2011). However, barriers exist not only for parents but also for teachers (Reynolds et al., 2015). Teachers refer to language barriers from their side, and time constraints in their workschedules that do not allow for taking up more substantial parental engagement responsibilities (Reynolds et al., 2015).

In terms of strategies, previous research demonstrated the highly dispersed nature of communication and collaboration activities schools may develop (Dryden-Peterson, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2015; Tett & Macload, 2020). Ishimaru (2019) found three types of co-existing strategies that can contribute to equitable collaborations. Schools launched family capacity building activities which meant providing opportunities and support for parents to understand schools, access information and design family learning activities (Ishimaru, 2019, p. 366). Another type of strategies is culturally-specific relationship-building activities (Ishimaru, 2019), such as building a welcoming environment and trust with parents, working with cultural mediators, or organizing events for parents from the same background. Teachers' availability for establishing personal relationships has also been highlighted (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Bergset, 2017). Studies found that when migrant parents mobilized personal relationships and informal networks with teachers, principals, and other parents, it was possible to take on meaningful roles in home-school collaborations and to feel included in school life (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Bergset, 2017). Yet, caution should be exercised when looking at strategies that rely on individual approaches for they might be succesful for some parents, but not others (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Bergset, 2017). Going beyond individual approaches, the third type

of strategies are systemic change and capacity-building activities (Ishimaru, 2019, p. 366) that occur through making infrastructural changes for collaboration, developing school staff's knowledge, skills and capacities to collaborate with families, and parents taking leadership positions.

Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this article is to explore home-school collaborations with migrant families for student wellbeing, as represented by focus group discussions with secondary school teachers in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. We ask:

- What roles and strategies constitute teacher-perceived home-school collaborations with migrant families for student wellbeing?
- What norms of belonging characterize these collaborations?
- To what extent do teachers' perceptions of home-school collaborations reflect equitable collaborations?

Methods

Study Context

This study was part of the *RefugeesWellSchool (RWS)* project that developed, implemented, and evaluated school-based interventions in order to promote migrant students' wellbeing in secondary schools (see project description elsewhere, RefugeesWellSchool, 2021). This study received ethical approval for the entire project from the Ethics Committee of Ghent University, and national guidelines have also been followed (Denmark: Danish Data Protection Agency, Finland: the Ethics Committee for Human Sciences of Tampere University (Code#9/3/2019),

Sweden : Regional Ethical Review Board at Uppsala University (dnr: 2019-031160)). The data analyzed here were gathered prior the interventions.

Data collection and Participants

The *RefugeesWellSchool* project invited schools to participate in the study that were attended by a high number of newcomer migrant students or that organized specific newcomer reception classes. Data was collected by facilitating focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers who taught newcomer migrant students. FGDs are here understood as a way of bringing participants together to talk about a topic (here: student wellbeing) in dialogue and in interaction with each other (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Morgan, 2012). A conceptual guide and semi-structured FGD outline were set up and used in order to ensure that the following issues were addressed in all FGDs, in all countries: 1) teachers' perceptions of wellbeing and the role of the school, 2) wellbeing and the role of the broader social context; and, 3) teachers' expectations about the *RefugeesWellSchool* interventions. Specific questions were formulated under each overarching objective that prompted responses on teachers' understandings of their students' wellbeing in the classroom, what impacts their wellbeing (in and out of school), the role of schools in fostering wellbeing, expectations about students' futures, and teacher-student relationships. In this article, we analyze those parts of the interviews where teachers talked about parents, home contexts and home-school relationships as part of their understandings on migrant students' wellbeing and ways of promoting wellbeing in schools.

While FGDs were the project's default approach to qualitative data collection, some teachers in Denmark participated in individual interviews because of their busy schedules or dispersed geographical location. Altogether 12 FGDs and 3 individual interviews were included in the analysis here (Denmark: 6 FGDs, 3 individual interviews; Finland: 4 FGDs; Sweden: 4 FGDs) with altogether 62 participants (Denmark: 16; Finland: 15; Sweden: 31). While the majority of the participants (n= 58) were secondary school teachers (in Denmark and

Sweden newcomer migrant reception class teachers, in Finland subject teachers in mainstream schools with a high number of migrant students), in Finland some (n= 3) school-based psychosocial support staff members also joined the FGDs. We note these differences when displaying data quotations from the different participants.

During the FGDs researchers facilitated the conversation, provided a space for various opinions and views in the discussion, and listened to the group conversation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; MacNaghten & Myers, 2004; Morgan, 2012). With regards to safeguarding, the team has strived towards creating a safe space for all participants in the FGDs. This was achieved by establishing a trustful, warm, and open environment. The interviewers explicitly stated that all opinions were welcome, also if participants did not agree with each other, and that the researchers' role was listening and understanding participants' experiences. We also strictly followed national and EU ethical protocols, and ensured anonimity and confidentiality, the voluntary nature of participation, and that withdrawing from participation was possible at any time without any consequences for the participants. The researchers were also experienced in interviewing on topics of psychosocial wellbeing, and some team members were qualified psychologists. Questions that may have been too sensitive for teachers were not pursued. In case the discussions would unconsciously instill feelings of discomfort, follow-up psychosocial support was readily available (organised by the research team in Finland and Sweden, and by liaising with existing school-based counselling services in Denmark and Sweden). However, no teacher participants expressed discomfort, and therefore, follow up support was not taken up.

With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded and afterwards transcribed in the languages of the FGDs (i.e., Danish, Finnish, Swedish). Data was then translated to English in order to enable analysis across the whole material. The translations

were thoroughly checked for contextual adequacy and explanatory notes were added where needed.

Analysis

We understood FGDs as a platform of constructing meaning in interaction, thus, our analysis focused on the "meaning of the content" (Morgan, 2012, p. 162). We applied thematic framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Goldsmith, 2021) which have been found a rigorous and meaningful way of analyzing cross-national data in a team (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The analytical team consisted of the first author who read the English language material, and at least one member from each national team who read the FGDs in the respective national languages.

Thematic framework analysis consists of familiarization, the development of a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping and interpreting (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). First, familiarization happened by the analytical team members reading the respective national datasets in the original languages, as well as the first author reading the whole dataset in English. Then, parts of the material were identified where participants explicitly talked about migrant parents, home contexts, and home-school relationships. These were the sections that were then coded for the purposes of this article, even though familiarity of the entire FGD material informed our understandings.

Next, we developed a framework that allowed for meaningful analysis across the three countries' FGDs. The first author performed initial open coding by assigning verbatim codes to relevant data in order to define a framework that was grounded in the empirical material (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994), as well as inclusive and applicable to the entire material. These initial codes were then organized under either "role" or "strategy" as per the first research question of this study, after which the codes were reviewed in comparison with each other and

merged into subthemes and key organizing themes, resulting in a thematic framework (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Goldsmith, 2021). The codes and thematic framework were reviewed by each member of the analytical team in order to evaluate its appropriateness, applicability, and relevance in the respective countries, given the FGDs' different contextual, cultural, and language elements. Next, indexing and charting happened simultaneously through a systematic application of the framework on the entire material, as well as specifically for each country case. Comparing overall and country-specific findings, we noted some differences between the country materials, however, in our assessment, these differences were rather related to the specific FGD situations, teachers' individual perceptions, and diverging approaches that existed not only across the participating countries but also within one country. Therefore, we here opt for a shared description of the two key themes that emerged across the countries: (1) seeing parents in paradoxical roles; and, (2) attempting to collaborate in a context of constrains.

Next, we further analyzed both themes regarding how migrant parents, family relationships, and home environments were described. This level of analysis resulted in attributes denoting the educational, cultural-linguistic, familial, and psychosocial background of a parent and/or a family as a collective, and in relation to local parents, families, and school communities. This step of analysis pointed to two types of belonging: conditional belonging (when meeting the norms of desired familial and parental attributes, unbelonging when not meeting the desired attributes), and desiring plural belongings (fitting to the norm, even if different than the desired attributes, or accounts of wishes for changing structures towards greater inclusion). These findings on belonging are narrated throughout the narration of the key themes.

Findings

Portraying migrant families in paradoxical roles

The role of migrant families was discussed related to students' psychosocial and academic wellbeing, the latter including teaching-learning processes and teacher's work. Teachers recognized the importance of the family, and valued collaborations. However, migrant families were portrayed in opposing roles: either as challenging/a deficit or as supporting students' wellbeing and teachers' work. These value positions were created via describing migrant families using three types of descriptors: the individual backgrounds and capabilities of parents; broader family and home environments, and cultural characteristics of a family.

Individual characteristics of parents were portrayed by focusing on levels of formal education, parenting skills, language skills, employment status, and cultural-economic resources which teachers related to parents' opportunities, affinities, and capabilities to attend to student wellbeing. These descriptions reflected deficit accounts on migrant parents.

> "I would somehow imagine that it might be a little more common in our school that the students' parents at home don't have that kind of strength or ability to be such a caring adult." Psychosocial support staff member, Finland

In teachers' perceptions, these parental attributes were sometimes situated within the context of the new country. Teachers mentioned perceived clashes between parenting practices in parents' previous countries and the new society. Teachers' viewed these differences as parental deficit related to the language of the new country, values of democracy, and cultural-social practices of parenting in the new society.

> "Teacher 2: And they (*migrant parents*) are very open about that there are some things which they find very difficult. And there are some things that they do not know anything about.
>
> Teacher 1: And the Danish youth life.
>
> Teacher 2: Yes, how should they cope with it. Suddenly they cannot use their parenting strategies anymore here in Denmark." Teachers, Denmark

Teachers also described many migrant families' home environments and childrearing practices as challenging for student wellbeing. Such perceived family characteristics were, for example, "absent" parents (due to "only" one or no parent at home), traumatic and stressful experiences in the family due to migration (e.g., memories of fleeing from the country of origins, feeling anxious for family members abroad), and challenging family relationships in general. Importantly, many teachers mentioned the cases of unaccompanied children who did not have parents or other family members in the country. This physical absence of family was strongly seen as detrimental in student wellbeing. Through these teacher perceptions of family challenges, schools and teachers were often portrayed in the role of "parents" and "homes" (participants have used kinship metaphors to describe their work), and compensating for "parental shortcomings".

> "(…) if it's chaos at home because the mother may feel bad or you have injuries with you or post-traumatic experiences where at home the situation may be very difficult to be in."
>
> Teacher, Sweden

Migrant parents' childrearing practices were also seen as challenging for student wellbeing by teachers. Such were, for example, changing social relationships between children and parents in the new country, which teachers interpreted as switched parent-child roles within the family due to children requiring new language skills quicker than parents. Teachers spoke about family habits that they viewed as unusual in the respective countries, such as practicing less physically active hobbies or social activities as a family, and parents supposedly allowing less peer socialization.

Migrant families were often portrayed as conflicting teaching-learning processes and educational practices. This was formed via teachers' perceptions on parents' lacking familiarity with the curriculum, the type of educational values and goals affirmed in a new country, and parents' perceived "unrealistic" expectations regarding their children's

educational progress due to a different cultural-educational background. In these perceptions, parents seemed to be positioned in roles where they "pressured" students and teachers; and that, in teachers' views, negatively affected student wellbeing, and undermined collaborations with teachers.

> "(…) parents don't know the school system either. And in my experience, many of the students who comes here have great demands/expectations from home. One should have high grades. One has to become a doctor, have to become a lawyer; it is a failure not to enter the upper secondary school directly. Therefore, I think that parents need to be more educated in how our system works. What happens at school." Teacher, Sweden

Through these teacher views, school and family appeared as distinct separate worlds where schools were seen as providing "more adequate" learning and wellbeing opportunities for migrant students than their families, and worked against challenging family and home circumstances. The difference between home and school was also seen by teachers as a potential source of confusion and stress for students. Therefore, teachers saw migrant parents "in need for" education about the school system, values and norms in a new country, the language of the new country, and being open to integrate, so that parents can better support student wellbeing. Although schools emerged as safe havens for students and teachers as holding more legitimate knowledge than parents about teaching-learning and parenting in the respective local societies, teachers did not situate themselves as experts about wellbeing. They often expressed dilemmas about how to best support the wellbeing of migrant students, felt less prepared and little supported to provide assistance (see also Haggstrom et al., 2020; McDiarmid et al., 2021; RefugeesWellSchool, 2021).

Besides the descriptions of perceived shortcomings, migrant families were also seen as supportive and positively contributing to student wellbeing and teaching-learning. In these affirmative views, migrant families were described at the other end of "deficit", referring to,

for example, higher educational backgrounds of a parent, abilities and skills to care for children, openness to learning the language of the new country, and adjust family life to the new society, and generally, "good family relationships". Families in challenging situations were sometimes recognized in supportive roles for student wellbeing or "still meaningful" for students.

> "and yes, some of them (*students*) describe those family relationships as most important, even though there may be some challenges in those family relationships, so most of them also find those family relationships very important although the young person recognizes that there are those shortcomings and challenges, but still experiences them as meaningful." Psychosocial support staff member, Finland

Parents working together with teachers, appreciating teachers' work, being able and willing to relate to teachers for the sake of their children's wellbeing was also articulated.

> " (…) the parents are extremely grateful for what we do. We meet a lot of recognition with the parents and they are very happy, that their kids are in school and how we care for them." Teacher, Denmark

In summary teachers have attributed paradoxical roles to migrant families in student wellbeing: they were seen either as an obstacle that schools attempted to overcome for the sake of the student, or they were seen as supportive. This binary-making process occured via resorting to what teachers imaged to be "ideal" psychosocial, cultural-linguistic, educational and familial characteristics. Therefore, the norms of belonging emerged as conditional, via dichotomizing the educational, cultural-linguistic, familial, and psychosocial characteristics of a family, and particularly, a parent. Families who were deemed to be "supportive", and therefore, belonging to a new society and school community that strives for student wellbeing, were often described by a rather highly (formally) educated parental background, "willingness" and ability to learn a new language and adapt to a new society, "skilled" and

psychosocially “fit” to establish family relationships, childrearing practices and family activities as per teachers’ ideals. Families who did not meet these idealized characteristics where then predominantly seen as obstacles and problems, and thus, potentially unbelonging. Critical reflections on how idealized notions of a parent and a family are rooted in one’s own perceptions and dominant sociocultural views in a given country were rather absent.

When approaching migrant families through a deficit less, parents’ challenging situations were highlighted, but their potential resilience, coping strategies when facing difficulties, and knowledge about their children’s wellbeing remained largely unaccounted for. When approaching with an affirmatory lens, diverse parental backgrounds, family compositions, backgrounds, and practices were seen as *also* supportive and promoting student wellbeing. An awareness that migrant parents can experience psychosocial, cultural and socio-educational hardship, but at the same time, may be able to remain a source for student wellbeing was little, but did occur in the FGDs. These perspectives reflect the potential existence of conditions for plural belongings within an educational community.

Attempting to collaborate in a context of constraints

Establishing platforms of communication and encounter

Teachers talked about the platforms they used, and activities they organized to communicate with migrant parents. These strategies were largely the same as their “usual” practices with any parent. For example, teachers used electronic systems and online platforms, phone calls, text messages, hard copy letters, or asked students to pass on information to their parents. Teachers also organized formal moments of encounter such as parent evenings, family interviews, conversations, and family visits. The main aim of these communications seemed to be to inform parents about school activities, the educational system, being a parent in a new country, student behavior and progress, and to start a dialogue about working together for the sake of the child.

> "Team meetings where we discuss how we can work together on this… have a small room where we can talk with one another… how is it that school… in which area can we work together… and in which topics would you like to learn more about… as parents now when you are living *here.*" Teacher, Denmark

At the same time, many barriers were noted in successfully communicating with migrant parents which teachers related to parents' attitudes, backgrounds and other circumstances (e.g., language barriers, "indifference" about collaborating with schools), the inadequacy of the format, and teachers' limited opportunities. Some online systems, for example, were seen as too complicated to use as migrant parents experienced technical issues with accessing digital platforms. It was also noted that parents received overwhelmingly negative messages throughout these platforms that did not set the tone for starting a positive relationship. Teachers noted that they also did not have much time assigned for family engagement responsibilities in their busy work schedules. Due to these barriers, many of the communication and encounter forms were seen as not reaching their full potentials, and still resulting in low parental engagement among migrant families.

Building personal relationships

Taking personal initiatives to build a positive, trustful relationship with migrant parents was another form of attempting to collaborate. Teachers took up informal conversations, organized extra meetings and visits on top of their mandatory requirements, and made several efforts to get closer to migrant families, and gain their trust. Teachers who shared a common language with families actively used these languages during communications, while some others tried to learn a few words in the languages of the families.

Teachers described building positive relationships as hard work both in terms of devoting time and emotions. Relationship building with migrant families was depicted as

requiring teachers stepping out of the traditional role of a teacher. Teachers attributed to this challenging work a feeling of worth and motivation in return, but also contemplated on the need to draw clear boundaries.

> "That somehow you know so much about the same family, if there are several children from this family and it may be that you have worked with the mother for at least ten years and seen the exhaustion in the mother and many things, but it also gives you a lot. That you have that trust and intimacy also gives you the means and strength." Teacher, Finland

> "And it can be difficult to find the balance. It can be too much. Then I have to say no. It would be different if it was a matter concerning their child. So sometimes I have to suggest that they ask somebody else. That could be issues regarding their housing situation. From my opinion it has to be somebody else who helps them it cannot be me. Maybe it is a good idea not mix it all up." Teacher, Denmark

Teachers identified many obstacles in establishing personal relationships. For example, while teachers mentioned trying to overcome language barriers, they also noted that this was not feasible for all families. Teachers also talked about the impossibility of collaboration with migrant parents who, in their view, were closed to relationship-building due to trauma. Teachers also reflected that they often did not know enough about family situations to start up meaningful collaborations, and were sometimes insecure about how to initiate conversations about sensitive topics that caused feelings of discomfort.

Mobilizing multiagency cooperations

Another strategy teachers talked about was reaching out to other professionals either to help building better connections between families and schools, or to link up families with services students might need. To facilitate communications and intercultural exchanges between families and schools, teachers elaborated on working with interpreters, language assistants, and cultural brokers. Teachers also relied on other teachers in school who spoke the

languages of the respective families. These professional cooperations were seen as crucial in bridging families and schools, and supporting students, parents and teachers to reach common understandings. While these cooperations were seen as highly effective and important in establishing smooth communication, teachers noted that this support was not always timely available, or that sometimes it was difficult to find language support for all families from different language communities.

> "And she (*cultural broker*) is absolutely vital in the collaboration between school and home. (…) so when there's a new family, then she tells them in their common language the school practices both for parents and for students. And if there is any ambiguity, or conflict, it is immediate, she can immediately intervene. She calls tens of dozens of homes every day and she is very very strongly motivated for the work she does." Teacher, Finland

Teachers also talked about their cooperations with youth mentors, social workers and child protection services. In teachers' views, linking up with these agencies was necessary in order to make sure families and children received appropriate social support. However, teachers observed signaling concerns to social services as instilling intimidation and conflicts with migrant families. Therefore, contacts with social services at times emerged as jeopardizing collaborations with migrant families and as mechanisms of distrust.

> **"**Yes, it does not underline our collaboration, instead we are mistaken for being a part of the municipality. And they are quite afraid of that." Teacher, Denmark

Teachers also mentioned linking up families with health services and wellbeing programs. This included, for example, cooperating with health professionals at school (e.g. nurses, school psychologist), or providing information about external health services (e.g. teachers' asking

about medical check-ups, displaying information about mental health services via posters and flyers).

In general, teachers regarded these cooperations as highly important; however, they also noted that cooperations were not always smooth with these professionals, and that whenever a third party was involved, teachers' direct connection with families was interrupted. Broader issues with migration policies were also mentioned as negatively affecting collaborations and providing wellbeing support.

> **"**And because it feels like you are also missing the structures where you could guide the child to, because for those who have the negative decision it's just about getting them out. I can't book meetings for family counseling or get in touch with child psychiatry, because they just start preparing for the repatriation. So the things I would start with a native Finn, I would know what to do and where to call, but for them all I can do is like 'well, that's life*'."*
> Teacher, Finland

Needs for more inclusive strategies

Teachers' needs for a stronger, more effective, and timely collaboration within the school community, as well as with other services were articulated. They critically reflected on the steps schools should take in order to provide for a wider family outreach, more positive relationships with families, and thus, a better mechanism to support student wellbeing. Teachers also wished to change their outreach strategies in order to engage more families and provide sufficient information and resources that parents might need.

> "But if we do not adapt our communication strategy, we lose some of the parents from the beginning… some are able to get our messages… but we would lose others. And it is always up to debate whether one should make it easy for the parents or that is too much nursing… we are improving all the times." Teacher, Denmark

Teachers here mentioned more learning opportunities for both migrant families and school staff. Teachers suggested migrant parents to receive more volunteering and language learning opportunities at school, and school staff to learn more about communicating with migrant parents, and working with families who went through painful experiences.

In sum, in the theme "attempting to collaborate", the norms of belonging were formulated via two logics. First was, as also seen before, attributing value judgements about migrant parents in terms of their abilities and opportunities to collaborate which positioned them again in paradoxical roles. Those parents who were perceived by teachers as personally willing and linguistically, psychosocially and technologically equipped to communicate with schools were considered as being in a "better" position to collaborate with schools. Parents who had few resources at home, were potentially experiencing psychosocial challenges or did not yet speak the language of schooling were perceived in passive roles and as difficult to engage.

However, norms of belonging also emerged via critically reflecting on relational and organizational barriers within a school community. In this sense, migrant families were depicted as impacted by teachers' and schools' difficulties, lacking skills and structures to collaborate. These views pointed to a clear awareness, and an explicit wish or intent to reform school structures that allow for creating belonging to a collaborative school community among all families.

Discussion

This article explored home-school collaborations with migrant families for student wellbeing in some secondary schools in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. We analyzed the roles and strategies that constituted teacher-perceived home-school collaborations, and descerned what norms of belonging underpinned collaborative efforts.

Home-school collaborations in this study were described by an array of different efforts based on individual teachers' or schools' initiatives (Tett & MacLoad, 2020; Reynolds et al., 2015). However, barriers to collaboration at the level of parents, families, teachers and schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) and wishes for more equitable collaborations were also notable. Here we turn to discussing what these findings imply for equitable collaborations (Ishimaru, 2019), and the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davies, 2006) in the cases of migrant families.

Recalling the components of collaborative strategies in Ishimaru's (2019) approach, teachers in this study noted several relationship-building and some capacity-building activities. Relationship-building was centered in the figure of the teacher and the families with whom they worked. Culturally-specific mechanisms of relationship-building were also reported via working with cultural brokers and language assistants. However, in this study, these activities often seemed to remain at the level of individuals, focusing on informing, educating, and cherishing relationships with some parents and families, and have not yet necessarily reflected systemic capacity-building in which school practitioners equally learn, and structural changes are targeted. Similarly to some other studies (Bergset, 2017; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017), home-school collaborations were not represented as an educational practice embraced and enacted throughout the whole school, even though much hard work and efforts seemed to be undertaken by teachers. Teachers were also aware of the limitations of their organizational contexts, and critically reflected on the need for more inclusive strategies.

In terms of roles in collaborations, we have found paradoxical images of migrant parents and families in teachers' views. This dichotomy somewhat corresponds with Reynolds and colleagues' (2015) study where teachers' tendency to see parents at the two extreme ends of engagement was also noted. What we add here is that this binary-making process occured via resorting to dominant views on psychosocial, cultural-linguistic, educational, and familial

belonging to a collaborative school community. As elsewhere, we have also found a strong deficit approach to migrant families and parents (Heidbrink, & Statz, 2017; Kim, 2009; Matthiesen, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2015). While previous studies highlighted teachers' deficit views on parents' in terms of educational and cultural-linguistic background, knowledges and skills, we note that in the context of wellbeing, this is coupled with views on the psychosocial profile of a parent and of a family. Consequently, when thinking about roles, the findings of this study echo rather traditional collaborations (Ishimaru, 2019), as we have detected very few role positions where migrant parents were seen as equally knowledgeable, and able to take up leadership roles in home-school collaborations.

When considering home-school collaborations as political processes (Ishimaru, 2019), through which the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davies, 2006) manifest, we identified two key processes: the establishment of conditional belonging and desires for plural belonging. The findings of this study showcase complex and often contradictory norm-making processes that characterize home-school collaborations in the context of student wellbeing. They reveal that starting up collaborative engagement activities does not necessarily reflect equitable change, when being rooted in unchanged norms of belonging that define migrant families as the "pathologized" "culturally-linguistically Other" (Guo, 2018; Heidbrink & Statz, 2017).

Through the descriptions of "problems", migrant parents were portrayed as non-belonging to local societies where migrant parents' childrearing practices, family circumstances and educational-societal values were seen as largely differing from those of teachers and local societies (Guo, 2018). Specifically, teachers referred to democratic values of parenting and schooling (e.g., a child's freedom, autonomy and opportunity), or openness to dialogues, which seemed to define the properties of teachers' preconceived notions of education, and ways of being a parent and family (Bergset, 2017; Danielsen & Bendixson, 2019). Disagreements between how teachers and parents see each other's roles and the goals of collaboration may

hinder the development of meaningful forms of educational and wellbeing supports for students (Schneider & Arnot, 2018).

On the other hand, there was an awareness that migrant families can be supportive of student wellbeing even if their backgrounds and ways of being a family did not meet dominant ideals. Similarly, when reflecting on strategies, there was an awareness of schools failing parents in not fully being able to establish effective ways of communication and relationships with all parents. These views point to teachers' wishes or awareness for creating norms of plural belonging in educational discourses as well as structures.

Thus, we importantly show that home-school collaborations are platforms for both the reproduction of "hierarchies of belonging" (Kaptani et al., 2019) specifically via perceptions of "fitness" of a family and parent, and contain prompts for plural belongings via seeing parents in supportive roles and wishing for more inclusive strategies. Although the enactments of home-school collaborations rather reflected traditional collaborations, we also identified intents for equitable collaborations. These wishes and intentions cannot be undermined as they may form springboards for continuing the "journey" towards equitable collaborations (Ishimaru, 2019, p. 379).

Conclusions

In this article, we explored teacher-perceived home-school collaborations through the lenses of equity and belonging. Our work provided insights from Denmark, Finland, and Sweden to critically reflect about the rhetorics of collaboration - often claimed in educational research and policy, as well as in wellbeing interventions and programmes in schools – and the particular difficulties migrant families may experience in 'becoming collaborative'. We correspond with other studies (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Kim, 2009; Matthiesen, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2015) in highlighting that teachers' idealized notions of a parent and a

family, and organizational and structural constraints in schools may still undermine migrant families' opportunities to participate in schools' wellbeing efforts as knowledgeable partners.

This study carries several implications. First of all, a fundamental shift is necessary in how school practitioners think about family diversity and families' roles in student wellbeing. Forms of collaboration that explicitly address teachers' views and understanding on a 'family', 'parent', and 'wellbeing' would be particularly needed in fostering plural belonging and equitable collaborations. Secondly, strategies that reposition parents as knowledgeable, respected partners about wellbeing and learning would be worth to be sought (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013; Guo, 2018; Ishimaru, 2014, 2019). More efforts could be put into initiatives that both provide information to parents about the new country's educational systems, language and culture, and whereby school staff also learns about migrant families' backgrounds (Ishimaru, 2019), how they understand parenting and wellbeing and what sort of support they may need, just like any family (Iruka et al., 2014).

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Declaration of interest

None

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