JAPANESE LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN IN JAPAN: NEEDS, POLICIES, ACTIVITIES, PROBLEMS

Nagisa MORITOKI ŠKOF,[I] Kristina HMELJAK SANGAWA[II]

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ABSTRACT

Japanese Language Support for Migrant Children in Japan: Needs, Policies, Activities, Problems

The present paper presents an overview of the background of migrant foreign residents of Japan, with a special emphasis on recent legal reforms and ensuing changes in the status of long-term foreign residents in Japan. It presents the problems faced by migrant children whose native language is not Japanese, especially their difficulties in learning both Japanese and their mother tongue, and related difficulties in coping with everyday life and identity oscillations. It concludes with an overview of different approaches to problem solving which are being introduced by local organisations and spreading to the society at large, and which aim at multicultural coexistence in which immigrants are not seen as temporary guests but as members of society.

Keywords: Japanese migrant policies, multicultural coexistence, networking, language education, identity

IZVLEČEK

Japonska jezikovna pomoč za otroke migrante na Japonskem: Potrebe, politike, dejavnosti, problemi

Članek predstavlja migracijske tokove na Japonskem v zadnjih desetletjih, s poudarkom na spremembah v zakonski ureditvi in v statusu tujih prebivalcev, ki iz ureditve izhaja. Predstavlja probleme, s katerimi se srečujejo otroci priseljenci, ki jim japonščina ni materni jezik, njihove težave pri učenju japonščine in svojega lastnega jezika, težave v vsakodnevnem življenju in identitetna nihanja, ki iz tega izhajajo. Nadalje članek nudi pregled različnih pristopov k reševanju teh problemov, ki izhajajo iz lokalnih organizacij in se širijo v družbo, s ciljem doseči medkulturno sobivanje, v katerem priseljenci niso začasni gosti, ampak člani družbe.

Ključne besede: japonske politike do migrantov, večkulturno sobivanje, povezovanje, jezikovni pouk, identiteta

I PhD in Linguistics, Research Assistant, Department of Asian and African Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Aškerčeva 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana; nagisa.moritoki@guest.arnes.si.

II PhD in Linguistics, Lecturer, Department of Asian and African Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Aškerčeva 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana; kristina.hmeljak@guest.arnes.si.

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of increasing economic and industrial internationalisation, migrations have been increasing in Japan in the last decades, and at the end of 2010 there were 2,130,000 registered foreigners residing in Japan, amounting to 1.67% of Japan's total population (Ministry of Justice 2011). Although this percentage has slightly decreased after a peak in 2008, the number of foreigners residing in Japan has doubled in the last 20 years, and it is increasingly apparent that various issues related to foreigners in Japan have not been effectively dealt with.

The paper firstly presents an overview of the background of migrant foreign residents of Japan, with a special emphasis on recent legal reforms and the ensuing changes in the status of long-term foreign residents in Japan. Secondly, it presents the environment surrounding migrant children whose native language is not Japanese, and the problems they face, especially their inadequate acquisition of both Japanese and of their native language, and related difficulties in coping with everyday life and identity oscillations. By presenting problems surrounding migrant children in Japan and the measures taken by local communities, local governments and policy makers to cope with these problems, we wish to offer insights which may be relevant to acceptance mechanisms and educational support for migrant children in Slovenia, where globalisation is advancing apace.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MIGRATIONS TO JAPAN

Japan, the easternmost country in Asia, has a population of almost 127 million inhabitants on a territory slightly larger than Germany. Until the 1970s, the population of foreign nationals in Japan was rather homogeneous, with Koreans accounting for ca. 80% of the foreign population. Most of these were Koreans (or their descendants) who were brought to Japan as labourers during Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to the end of WWII, and decided to remain there after the end of the war.

1970s – Political refugees from Southeast Asia

The first major wave of immigrants to Japan after WWII was a wave of political refugees from Vietnam in 1975, which caught the Japanese government by surprise. At the time, Japan had not yet ratified the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and lacking a law on refugees, treated them as "shipwreck victims", accepting their entrance to Japan, but not encouraging them to permanently relocate there (Kawakami 2005: 2).

Most refugees from Vietnam, and later Laos and Cambodia, did not themselves intend to remain in Japan, but rather tried to relocate to the USA, relying on relatives and acquaintances living there. Some of them, however, remained in Japan for different reasons, and the social environment surrounding them has changed in time. At the time of their arrival, they were reported in the media as people who needed to be rescued from "evil" Vietnam. In the first years, the Japanese government did not proactively promote their learning Japanese or searching for jobs, but gradually it became accepted that a strategy towards refugees needed to be developed, and in recent years they have come to be seen as members of society who should be accepted as such (Kawakami 2005: 3). More than 30 years have passed since these refugees entered Japan, and the problems they face have changed and varied, and now include not only problems related to learning Japanese while maintaining their heritage language, but also related to schooling, employment, social issues, care for the elderly and others, which coincide for the most part with the problems faced by other immigrants to Japan.

1980s and 1990s – Japan's bubble economy, waves of immigration and the Immigration control act

From the 1980s onwards, increased economic prosperity and a labour shortage in Japan attracted immigrants from economically deprived areas, and brought about several waves of economic immigrants to Japan, termed "newcomers" (ニューカマー *nyuukamaa)*[1] as opposed to the Koreans and Chinese residing in Japan since before WWII, termed "oldcomers" (Ōta 2000). The "newcomers" included large numbers of female labourers from the Philippines, Thailand (many of whom were hired as "entertainers" in the sex industry), Taiwan and Korea in the first half of the 1980s, male labourers from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Iran in the second half of the 1980s, and a wave of immigrants of Japanese descent, especially from Brazil and Peru, in the 1990s, while in the last decade, large numbers of nurses and social workers have come to Japan from the Philippines and Vietnam.

During the second half of the 1980s, at the peak of Japan's "bubble economy", Japan faced an acute labour shortage, and the Japanese government actively encouraged employers to hire foreign labourers. Many male workers were hired from Middle-Eastern countries, and although some of them were highly educated, they were hired to work mostly as unskilled labour force in the service sector, the automobile industry and other industries. Most of them entered Japan unaccompanied, intending to stay for a limited number of years while supporting their families in their native countries.

Because of the increasing labour shortage and Japan's ageing population, the government amended the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (出入国管理及び難民認定法 - *Shutsu nyūkoku kanri oyobi nanmin ninteihō*) in 1990, simplifying procedures for employing foreign nationals by introducing a new residential status of 'Long-Term Resident' (定住者 - *teijūsha*), and permitting foreign nationals of Japanese ancestry up to the third generation to work in Japan. As a result, many descendents of the Japanese nationals who emigrated to Brazil and Peru as part of government-sponsored collective emigration programmes which ran from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1950s migrated back to Japan in the 1990s. Having been accorded permission for permanent residency, many of them moved to Japan together with their families, settling in industrial areas around provincial towns in Japan.

'Farming brides' and health workers of the 21st century

In the last two decades, there have been two noticeable types of new immigrants, namely, 'farming brides' and healthcare workers (nurses and healthcare workers). The so-called 'farming brides' (農村花嫁 - *nōson hanayome*) are young women from the Philippines, China, Korea and other countries who are recruited by marriage agencies to marry Japanese farmers who are not able to find Japanese wives. The phenomenon has been noticed earlier (Knight 1995), but has been increasing since the turn of the century (Morgan, Hoffmann 2007), reflecting the problems of Japan's depopulating rural areas and the unpopularity of agriculture.

The increasing number of healthcare workers from the Philippines, Indonesia and other South-East Asian countries is also a result of the lack of labour force stemming from Japan's ageing population and the unpopularity of these professions, because of which Japanese agencies recruit healthcare workers en masse in neighbouring countries, to work as caregivers for the elderly or in hospitals. While healthcare workers mostly enter Japan unaccompanied, with the prospect of returning home after having earned enough savings, 'farming brides' migrate to Japan to stay there for life.

'Farming brides' face particular problems related to language and identity when raising their children in Japan. Being in a subordinate position as women and as foreigners, they are often not encouraged to nurture and transmit their identity to their children, but are expected to assimilate into the

1 The Japanese words in this article are transcribed according to the Hepburn romanization system.

society they have settled into. On the other hand, in rural areas where child-raising is seen as only the mother's duty, immigrant 'farming brides' may be left isolated with their children, raising them in their own language and habits in the first years of life. These children often experience linguistic and cultural barriers upon entering kindergarten or primary school with monolingual Japanese children. This is a problem that tends to be overlooked, since these children are Japanese nationals[2] and are therefore not included in surveys of immigrant children, but they do nonetheless experience problems similar to those of immigrant children when faced with unknown languages and customs upon entering school (Kojima 2001).

PROBLEMS FACED BY IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

The problems being faced by immigrant children in Japan began to be noticed around 1990, when relatively large numbers of families of Japanese descent moved to Japan from Brazil, Peru and other South-American countries, and their children, who were not native speakers of Japanese, entered Japanese schools.

Japan's school system includes 9 years of compulsory education (6 years in primary school and 3 years in junior high school), 3 years of secondary and 4 years of tertiary education. The policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (文部科学省 - *Monbukagakushō*, hereinafter referred to as MEXT) is that education for minors of foreign nationality is not compulsory, but it is nonetheless guaranteed for those who wish it (MEXT 2008). Foreign minors (or their guardians) who wish to receive education in Japan are therefore allowed to participate in Japanese compulsory education for free, and receive a "guide to school attendance" (就学案内 *shūgaku annai*) from the local board of education when they are registered as residents, in contrast with the compulsory "school-attendance notice" (就学通知 *shūgaku tsūchi*) received by parents of school-age children of Japanese nationality. However, according to a survey of school-age children of foreign nationality conducted in Toyohashi city, Aichi Prefecture, in 1999, 25% of these children at primary school age (6 to 12) and 45.5% of children at junior high school age (13 to 15) did not attend school (Miyajima 2003: 161–162), while a survey conducted in an unnamed city in Kanagawa prefecture in 2001 revealed that 33% of foreign children at primary school age and 41% of foreign children at junior high school age did not attend schools (Miyajima 2003: 186). In another survey conducted by Toyota city in Aichi Prefecture, where most foreign residents are of Brazilian nationality, 36.6% of school-age children (6 to 15) did not attend public schools, but 24.1% attended private schools for Brazilian children organised by the minority itself, while 12.2% did not attend any school (Miyajima 2003: 195). School non-attendance is even more common among older children: while on average 97% of pupils graduating from junior high school in Japan continue their education in high school, and more than 50% of high-school graduates enrol in universities (MEXT 2012), a much smaller percentage of students of foreign nationality enrol into high school upon completing their compulsory education: only 55.0% in Toyohashi city, Aichi Prefecture, 66.7% in Ōta city, Gunma Prefecture, and 75% in Yokkaichi city, Mie Prefecture (Yamazaki 2009: 102).

There are also schools where children of other nationalities can receive education in their own native language, but such schools are limited to metropolitan areas with considerable concentrations of foreign nationals, and are few in number. Moreover, only some of them are officially approved by the Japanese government, they are not financed by the Japanese state and have high tuition fees (Gaikokujin shūjūtoshi kaigi 2006), so that few students can afford to enrol there. A further compounding factor is the parents' lack of information regarding schooling opportunities and regulations due to their limited proficiency with the Japanese language (Tsuchiya 2005: 265).

2 In principle, Japanese nationality is acquired by blood lineage, not by place of birth.

Lack of language competence and low academic achievement

The first problem faced by immigrant children when entering Japanese schools is that they do not speak Japanese fluently enough to understand the lesson contents, or even to communicate effectively with their schoolmates and teachers. In 2010 there were 18,365 pupils in Japanese primary schools, 8,012 students in junior high schools and 1,980 students in high schools who were considered "children of foreign nationality in need of Japanese language instruction", defined by MEXT as "pupils who are not able to communicate in Japanese about everyday matters or pupils who can communicate about everyday matters, but whose linguistic competence is not sufficient to successfully participate in learning activities, and need Japanese language instruction" (MEXT 2011b).

There are two governmental support programmes for these children: 1) supplemental Japanese language classes and 2) instructional support in the children's mother tongue. Teachers of Japanese as a second language are allocated by the Ministry to schools with pupils of foreign nationality, but only one third of their wages is covered directly by the state, while the rest is covered by local authorities, similarly to the wages of regular teachers. In 2008 there were 985 such government-sponsored teachers of Japanese as a second language in Japanese public schools, but only in areas with high concentrations of foreign nationals, while in areas where immigrant pupils are scattered in different schools, not all of them are assigned additional teachers. In these areas, local non-governmental organisations and volunteer groups try to compensate for the lack of teachers by organising their own support programmes within the schools.

MEXT also developed a curriculum of Japanese as a second language (JSL) in 2003 (MEXT 2003), which aims at helping teachers create flexible individual curricula for each pupil, not by offering separate language instruction classes and individual counselling for particular school subjects, but rather by integrating language and content support to fit the pupils' needs. In a school system where the Japanese language as a school subject is still termed "National Language" (国語 - *Kokugo*), this curriculum for immigrant pupils can be welcomed as an innovative first step towards multicultural integration.

Socialisation problems

Both linguistic and cultural gaps can result in socialisation problems for immigrant children, preventing them from building interpersonal ties in their school environment. Misunderstandings or lack of knowledge about the rules governing school life in Japan, such as conventions on how to greet teachers, how to interact with schoolmates, rules about children's cleaning their own classroom or distributing meals, as well as different value systems stemming from the different cultures may lead to friction and frustration (Tsuchiya 2005: 265). When this cultural gap is accompanied by a linguistic gap, because of which children cannot effectively communicate and explain their intentions, situations of conflict may arise, such as when a child does not know how to ask classmates for a pencil, and can end up in a fight. A multimedia learning site with translations into Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, English, Vietnamese and Cambodian has been sponsored by MEXT to help children learn not only the Japanese language, but also common rules and conventions in primary schools (*Nihongo shidō kyōzai kenkyūkai* 2000).

Socialisation problems are also addressed by the teachers of Japanese as a second language mentioned in the previous section, and by local volunteers who act not only as language instructors, but also as counsellors. Bilingual teachers of Japanese who understand the immigrant children's native language often also act as intermediaries between the school and the children's parents, who turn to them when having troubles interacting with the school.

Socialisation problems stemming from linguistic and cultural barriers sometimes result in absenteeism, and in extreme cases in the formation of juvenile gangs of truant children. In the wake of Japan's economic recession in the last decade, children's socialisation problems have been exacerbated by the

weakened social position of their parents, for example if their parents lose their jobs or have to work unreasonably long hours as temporary workers, situations in which children can see no prospects for their own future.

Identity building

Children who accompany their parents away from their country of origin, without a clear idea about where they are going to be living few years later, or even having experienced multiple migrations, may have wavering perceptions about their own identity. Being perceived as 'foreign' by the Japanese environment surrounding them, having to switch languages between school and home, not being able to adequately express themselves in either of their two environments, these children experience multiple pressures and need help in building their own language to have the power to think and live their own way, as language and identity building are tightly interrelated (Kawakami 2007: 86). In a survey of newcomer children of Filipino descent and their choice to attend high school, Tokunaga (2008) stresses the importance of interpersonal relationships in their identity formation. Indifference towards identity issues or a refusal to reflect on one's identity may be signs of identity loss.

Schools with immigrant children try to cope with problems of identity loss or identity-related distress through counsellors and teachers who speak the children's native language. There are reports of schools organising learning activities about the immigrant children's country of origin, and having these children prepare presentations about their own country or culture for their classmates, both in order to encourage immigrant children to reflect about and become conscious of their own identity and roots, and also to foster mutual understanding between immigrant children and their Japanese classmates. Unfortunately, however, such activities are left to the discretion of individual teachers and are not included in the official curriculum.

THREE APPROACHES TO PROBLEM SOLVING

The previous section presented an overview of problems faced by immigrant children. These problems are largely shared by their parents and adult immigrants in general, but while children's problems are usually noticed in the educational institution they attend, the problems of adults who do not belong to any institution tend to be overlooked, leading to isolation due to insufficient or late countermeasures. In some areas of Japan, especially provincial towns with large immigrant populations, various attempts are being made at solving such problems. These attempts may be grouped into three types of approaches: movements towards multicultural coexistence, reconsiderations of Japanese language education, and local cooperation. Let us consider them in turn.

Towards a "society of multicultural coexistence"

As mentioned earlier, the number of foreign residents in Japan doubled from the end of the 1980s to 2000. The basic stance of the government of Japan during this time has been to "control" (管理 *kanri*) immigrants, as suggested by the diction of the law regarding foreign immigrants: "Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act". However, as the number of foreign long-term residents in Japan increases, it becomes increasingly clear that it is not reasonable to "control" foreign residents, nor impose Japanese ways of behaviour on them.

Lacking a consistent national approach to the growing number of foreign residents, local governments started coordinating their own policies and activities in order to solve problems faced by foreign

residents. One of the first declarations stressing the need for multicultural coexistence was the "Hamamatsu Declaration" (浜松宣言 - *Hamamatsu sengen*) (Gaikokujin shūjūtoshi kaigi 2001), adopted by the Committee for Localities with a Concentrated Foreigner Population, a committee initiated by Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture which also includes 13 cities from the neighbouring Aichi, Nagano and Gunma prefectures, an area with car and motorbike manufacturing plants and other export-targeted industry with large numbers of immigrant workers. The declaration calls for the "coexistence" of Japanese and foreign residents, and outlines the problems related to the education of immigrant children and social welfare for immigrants.

Similar aims are advocated in the "Common Declaration for the Promotion of Multicultural Coexistence and Society Building" (多文化共生社会づくり推進共同宣言 *Tabunka kyōsei shakai zukuri suishin kyōdō sengen*) (Aichi et al. 2004) adopted by Aichi Prefecture, Gifu Prefecture, Mie Prefecture and Nagoya City. The declaration calls for mutual understanding and respect of Japanese and foreign residents, for active involvement of foreign residents in local life, building a society of coexistence through the cooperation of residents, non-governmental organisations, businesses and local governments. Other declarations and local movements followed, all of them stressing the importance of cooperation among local governments, businesses, Japanese and foreign residents, aimed at "coexistence" (共生 - *kyōsei*) with foreign residents. In other words, these declarations and initiatives mark the beginning of a new approach to the increasing number of immigrants, in which foreign residents are not seen as "guests" who need to be "controlled", but as members of local society.

In the wake of these movements, in 2005 the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (総務省 - *Sōmushō*, hereinafter referred to as MIC) established the "Study Group for the Building of Local Communities" (地域社会作り研究会 - *Chiiki shakai zukuri kenkyūkai*) and adopted a "Program to Support Multicultural Coexistence" (多文化共生推進プログラム - *Tabunka kyōsei suishin puroguramu*), aiming at a "society of multicultural coexistence" (多文化共生社会 - *Tabunka kyōsei shakai*) (MIC 2006). This program advocates cooperation among local communities, the government and businesses towards communication support, livelihood support (including housing, education, working environment, health, social welfare, disaster prevention etc.), towards building local communities in the spirit of multicultural coexistence and towards the development of a system for the promotion of multicultural coexistence. In this program, foreign residents are not considered as mere workforce to be exploited or as potential criminals, but as "residents" (生活者 - *seikatsusha*), and are expected to live with others as members of a single society.

Changes in Japanese language education policy

Following MIC's publication of the "Program to Support Multicultural Coexistence", the Cabinet Secretariat (内閣官房 – *Naikaku kanbō*), an agency of the Japanese central government which coordinates ministries and agencies, published the interim report "Dealing with the Problems of 'Foreign Residents as Cohabitants'" (『生活者としての外国人』問題への対応について - '*Seikatsusha to shite no gaikokujin' mondai e no taiō ni tsuite*) (CAS 2006), which brought about the implementation of measures for the support of Japanese language education at the local level.

In 2007, the "Japanese Language Education Subcommittee" (日本語教育小委員会 - *Nihongo kyōiku shōiinkai*) was established at the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which highlighted the need for Japanese language competence for long-term foreign residents. This subcommittee's report (JLES 2008) highlighted the need for the government to clearly define the strategic role of Japanese language education in the context of foreign resident support and social integration, and the need for local governments to concretely define the needs of foreign residents learning Japanese and develop a framework within which volunteer or professional Japanese language teachers can effectively support language learning. Moreover, noting that Japanese language support for foreign residents is largely carried out by

local volunteer groups and that foreign residents also often turn to them for advice on different aspects of everyday life, the report calls for the development of a comprehensive support system, connecting not only Japanese language teachers, but also healthcare workers, social workers, educators and other professionals.

It is clear from these programs and reports that the Japanese government is becoming aware of the need not only for Japanese language education support for foreign residents, but also of the need for a more comprehensive support in developing social literacy that can enable immigrants to act as full-fledged members of society.

The white paper prepared by the "Commission for the Enhancement of Primary Education for Pupils of Foreign Nationality" (初等中等教育における外国人児童生徒教育の充実のための検討会 - *Shotō chūtō kyōiku ni okeru gaikokujin jidō seito kyōiku no jūjitsu no tame no kentōkai*) of the Ministry of Education (MEXT 2008), includes guidelines for the education of teachers of Japanese as a second language and teacher-counsellors, including the description of courses on Japanese language education and education for international understanding to be taken by university students in teacher training courses. The paper also gives guidelines for in-service teacher training courses on international understanding. Education and counselling of immigrant children, which had been carried out on an ad-hoc basis up to this point, was thus officially acknowledged at last and included in the education system as part of the curriculum for future teachers, who need basic knowledge regarding multicultural education in order to be able to effectively fulfil their role in a multicultural classroom.

Local collaboration

A point that has been particularly stressed with regard to the inclusion of foreign residents and pupils of foreign nationality is collaboration at the local level, i.e. in the areas where immigrants live. This collaboration between local Japanese and foreign residents, non-governmental organisations and businesses is aimed at creating a system within which support for long-term residents is offered when needed, by developing a "dynamic process of constant and recurring building and re-building of relationships" (Tokui 2008: 4). At the local level, diverse efforts are being carried out by volunteer organisations:

1) Japanese language teaching support;
2) livelihood support, learning support, career counselling;
3) support in immigrants' mother tongue;
4) support for the creation of local networks of foreign residents;
5) building of mutual understanding between the majority (Japanese residents) and the minority (foreign residents).

Language teaching offered in official government programs is not sufficient, since it only reaches pupils regularly enrolled in schools, and is therefore being supplemented with learning activities organised by volunteer organisations. These activities are usually accompanied by counselling on everyday matters, such as guidance on how to obtain health care or social welfare support, how to deal with natural disasters, how and where to dispose of garbage etc. At the same time, both tertiary education institutions and local organisations offer courses of the immigrant's languages for Japanese supporters and educators. Local volunteer organisations are also involved in the creation of networks of foreign residents, who tend to become isolated in areas where they are mostly surrounded by Japanese. In recent years, local governments and institutions have started educating and employing coordinators whose task is to support both Japanese residents and immigrants in their efforts to understand each other's situation and wishes. This marks an important shift from unilaterally supporting foreign citizens to promoting multicultural coexistence and mutual understanding by all members of society (Noyama 2008: 41).

The last effort mentioned above is essential for multicultural coexistence, and it rests on the conviction that multicultural coexistence is impossible without a change in perception by the Japanese majority (Morimo 2009: 25). These activities aim at bringing both Japanese and foreign residents closer to each other, not viewing the Japanese as supporters and foreigners as supportees, but rather both as cohabitants.

CONCLUSIONS

Policies and activities related to foreign immigrants have changed in Japan in the last few years. While the first policies were aimed at compensating for what foreigners lacked when immigrating into Japan, recent policies and activities have started to consider foreign immigrants as residents of Japan, on an equal basis with the Japanese, at least on a declarative level. Numerous administrative offices have started producing information not only in Japanese but also in Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, English and other languages. Compared with the attitudes displayed towards the Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s, who were accepted as an emergency measure but not encouraged to stay, this can be seen as considerable progress.

Such a change in attitude towards immigrants can be seen as part of a more general change in the attitude towards minorities such as the physically handicapped, the elderly and other weaker members of society. This new attitude, aimed at building a society where all its members can coexist, is being shaped at the local level and is being propagated to society at large.

To conclude, we would like to particularly highlight three points that may be relevant to Slovenia and its growing population of migrant children.

The first is the importance of language education and support for both languages migrant children need to use: the majority language of their environment and their mother tongue. Being able to express oneself in the language of the local majority is a necessary condition for social inclusion of children and adults alike, but all the more so for children who need to use this language as the main medium of learning and socialisation at school. At the same time, supplementary instruction in the children's own mother tongue for each subject is conducive to better achievement, as has been reported in both Japanese schools (Kiyota 2004) and in Slovenia (Vižintin 2009). Language support programmes aimed at children and parents together have been reported to be particularly effective (Knez 2009). Although the Slovenian government has started to develop policies for the inclusion of migrant children into the school system, their implementation is not yet satisfactory (Vižintin 2010). Teachers who understand the migrant children's mother tongue and are aware of linguistic and cultural differences can help not only migrant children integrate into school and society, but also help promote intercultural understanding and have a positive impact on majority children as well.

The second point to be emphasised here is the importance of avoiding isolation by establishing a system that aims at comprehensive social inclusion of both children and their parents (Satō, Kumagai 2011). Social inclusion of adult migrants facilitates the inclusion of migrant children in their school environment, which in turn reinforces their parents' participation.

Finally, efforts by the government, educational institutions and local communities should be coordinated in order to maximise their effect. Coordinators with a good understanding of both the majority culture, educational and administrative systems and also of the backgrounds of migrant children and their families can help coordinate governmental and community efforts towards inclusion and dialogue, not only to help migrants integrate into society, but also to offer a richer perspective to society as a whole. These are areas where the government can form and implement policies that can guide society as a whole to move towards coexistence.

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