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**«The impact of students' soft skills on successful school inclusion
at private elementary schools in Italy: a multiple case study»**

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Abstract

The impact of newcomers', as well as classmates' Soft Skills on successful school inclusion was explored by taking three already existent questionnaires from Zhou & Ee (2012), Furman (2018), and Scarupa (2014), all using the same theoretical framework of CASEL (2022), and adopting them to form a student and teacher questionnaire in a specific German primary school in Italy context. After priming the questionnaires, they were further adopted and then distributed to 11 third and fourth-grade classes ($n=249$) and their teachers ($n=11$) from two schools, measuring Social Management ($\alpha = 0.892$), Persistence ($\alpha = 0.731$), Mastery Orientation ($\alpha = 0.715$), and Emotional Competence ($\alpha = 0.643$). To control the Soft Skill dimension, the classroom climate was analyzed through an existing Sink & Spencer (2005) questionnaire with good internal consistency, measuring Cohesion, Competitiveness, Friction, and Satisfaction. Furthermore, Banerjee's (2022) sociogram tool was used to create a sociogram for each class. Additionally, the teachers' Communication Skills ($\alpha = 0.880$), Interaction ($\alpha = 0.734$), Inclusive Practices ($\alpha = 0.758$), and Leadership ($\alpha = 0.821$) were measured through 27 in-class observations using Du M rac & Corbucci (2022) Dimensioni e descrittori – Prova pratica EDUbadge SFP. Finally, the class teachers were interviewed, and the data was transcribed using MaxQDA. The interview data combined with each class-specific sociogram determined whether the newcomers were successfully included. Considering all results and triangulating the data, a statistically significant impact on inclusion success was analyzed using ANOVA, MANOVA, and T-tests: The Emotional Competence and Persistence skills of the newcomers and schoolmates, the Cohesion and Competition climate in class, and the Inclusive Practices of the observed teachers significantly impacted successful school inclusion. Finally, conclusions for teachers were drawn, and based on the findings, specific strategies for aiding successful inclusion at the two participating schools were proposed.

Keywords: *Classroom Climate; School Inclusion; Sociometric Overview; Primary School Soft Skills Questionnaire Validity; Teacher Competency.*

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Introduction

To each teacher, the well-being and successful inclusion of newcomers in class should be important because the quality of life is correlated to the quality of social relationships. Being excluded by others and not having many friends leads to a higher level of unhappiness and loneliness (Murthy, 2023). If a child does not feel he belongs in the class, the academic performance is lower, and less motivation to learn is present (Travers et al., 2010).

The idea and necessity for this research originated and developed slowly over the past ten years during the author's professional life as a primary school teacher in different German schools abroad, outside of Germany. Students arrive new to a class and are in a completely new environment. Despite various efforts on the teachers' side, such as welcoming programs and social games, difficulties in including some newcomers have always existed over the past few years. However, the inclusion process in some classes seemed to work much better than in others. From personal experience and subjective observation, the author could see that the character of the new students and the already present students in class played a crucial role in how well a newcomer was included or not included. Also, there seemed to be a strong correlation between the class teachers teaching didactics and the inclusion process.

Furthermore, it could be noticed that the overall behavior and academic attitude of the newcomers and the new classmates seemed to have affected the relationship between the students and each other. Especially in classes where the author could subjectively see those skills at a higher level, the newcomers were better included, and even though some new children were not the most social, some even aggressive, some very shy or without much knowledge of the language, somehow they still became well included. There were none or very few incidences or problems. What let the author finally take the step to start this research project were two new arrivals in one of his 3rd-grade classes. Despite using all his experience and trying various ways to include them in the class, nothing seemed to work. There were many difficulties throughout the year between the newcomers and the other

classmates. The class consisted of different “trouble kids” with a subjectively low level of the abovementioned skills.

To not let this be just a vague sense and feeling on the author's side, the author had to look at as many other classes in the specific socio-demographic context as possible to find out if there indeed is a correlation between the student's soft skills and successful school inclusion, what hinders the school inclusion, and which of those “Soft Skills” led inclusion to be successful. If a positive relationship exists between the students' soft skills and successful inclusion, explicit, time- and cost-effective interventions can be implemented. When inclusion problems appear, the teacher can intervene by merely focusing on those skills, which, through the results of this research, appeared to be the most important for successful inclusion. Time and resources can be put to use efficiently, and every time a new child comes into a class, their teacher knows which skills he or she needs to foster while at the same time having confidence and peace, that this has a high possibility of contributing positively to the inclusion of the new child.

There is a lot of already existing research available which covers school inclusion, as it is a very discussed topic (Booth & Ainscows, 2002; Erten & Savage, 2012; Lindsay, 2007; Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Santinello et al., 2011), also various factors which are hindering successful school inclusion have been identified and elaborated upon, namely the parental background (Travers et al., 2010), language proficiency (Nation, 2001) teacher competence (NCCA, 2007), teacher attitude (Erten & Savage, 2001; Soresi et al., 2013) and bullying (Armitage, 2021; Gini, 2008; OECD, 2006; Olweus, 1993; UNESCO, 2019). However, there is no available study regarding how and to what extent specific skills of the newcomer and his/her classmates impact the school inclusion process. Seeing that the literature does also not have any available studies done with third and fourth-grade students, neither regarding successful school inclusion in this specific German private primary school in Italy context nor regarding how and to what extent different soft skills are impacting the inclusion process, the author's research aims to fill this gap.

Chapter one: Literature review

1.1. Newcomers

First, the terms are clarified to understand the thesis underlying research, starting with “newcomer”. The definition from the Cambridge dictionary was used to clarify the scope of the research. A newcomer is “someone who has recently arrived in a place or recently become involved in an activity” (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2022). In the case of this research, newcomers are all those students who arrive new at the beginning or during the school year. The newcomers at the German schools in Italy can be from Germany or other countries, including Italy. Most students who arrive new at the start of the school year are born in Italy and have previously been attending an Italian school or are immigrants who recently moved to Italy, mainly because of the parents' change in work location. The background of the new arrivals during the school year is mostly not Italian, and most of the children moved to Italy because their parents found work there or were sent by their company. Especially for students from other countries, it is essential to have a good connection with the other students so they can be included. (Berry et al., 2006; Fandrem et al, 2010). However, for newcomers born and raised in Italy to be included well in the new class, interaction and relationships with their peers are just as crucial for successful inclusion (Panesi et al., 2020). Not matter if the new children are immigrants or born in Italy, if they do not get included well in their new school, being a place where they spend a significant amount of time and where they develop relationship skills (Ian et al., 2006), various negative mental and also physical problems can occur, not just during their time as a child, but up to the age of 50 years (Armitage, 2021).

1.2. School inclusion

Knowing the difference between inclusion and integration is mandatory, as those terms are often understood differently. Furthermore, different research findings relevant to the author's project are summarized. In addition, an inclusion tool called "The Index" is explained, and a brief outline of why it is important for the author's research is given. Lastly, the research context, which occurred at private German schools in Italy, will be explained.

1.2.1. Difference between inclusion and integration

The difference between integration and school inclusion must be outlined to clarify why the thesis title is worded the way it is. Generally speaking, integration is "the action or process of successfully joining or mixing with a different group of people" (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2022). However, in the school context, integration is referred to as integrating children with special needs into mainstream classrooms (Rodriguez & Garro-Gil, 2014). The term integration also includes a sense that the students must adopt to school without considering that the school adopts for the students to give a greater diversity to all they need (Ellis et al., 2008). Initially, the term inclusion has been identified with the same meaning as the integration of disabled students (Tajic & Bunar, 2020), which is why it can be confusing and a clarification must be made, also because the private schools where the research took place are not special education schools, meaning, that there are no disabled children integrated into regular classes. All the newcomers and classmates are children without special educational needs.

When looking at the literature, even though both terms seem to have the same meaning, in the latest years, "a considerable conceptual and theoretical development have taken place within this framework" (Tajic & Bunar, 2020, p.4), and many different viewpoints, on how the term must be defined were created. Even though most definitions agree on the point that when using the word inclusion, it suggests that the establishments must adopt to the newcomer, there are also many definitions of inclusion, which go into a different direction

because of “numerous interests in play in societal communication about inclusion” (Qvortrup, 2018, p.807). Erten and Savage see this variety of definitions, or lack of a commonly accepted definition, as a problem, as definitions range “from social justice to pure scientific objectivity” (Erten & Savage, 2012, p.223). Other writers also note this lack of consensus. Some see inclusion as a human rights issue, while others see it through the lens of either empirical or philosophical investigation (Erten & Savage, 2012). Furthermore, various scientific, political, ethical, and ideological definitions (Qvortrup, 2018) and views from a moral and educational perspective exist (Travers et al., 2010).

When going back to how inclusive education was founded and thought upon, one can see that 30 years ago, UNESCO initiated a commitment to inclusion in education in 1994. Also, many countries in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) had inclusion as one of the main points of their educational practice for nearly the same time (Qvortrup, 2018). UNESCO (2000) states that inclusion is a very compound process that looks at the differences and requirements of all learners within each class. The scope is to change teaching methods to treat all students equally (Boyle et al., 2020). Loreman, another researcher in the field, also uses UNESCO as a source for his definition of inclusion, adding that inclusion also envisions a feeling of belonging and learning together as a community (Erten & Savage, 2012).

When looking more deeply at the school context and globally, “however, it [inclusion in education] is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that responds to diversity amongst all learners” (Tajic & Bunar, 2020, p.4). In education, inclusion is furthermore defined as “welcoming all students, recognizing their multifaceted identities, and reconfiguring an educational space that capitalizes on everyone’s unique qualities, experiences, and strengths.” (Hamre, 2007, as cited in Travers et al., 2010, p.6) and implies that the school must adopt to all students and be flexible enough to give every child what they need (Ellis et al., 2008).

When considering the environment where the research took place, at private primary schools, the most appropriate definition would be from Brahm Norwich, Professor of

Educational Psychology at the University of Exeter. Norwich has been not “just” a researcher and publisher since 1973 but a schoolteacher and psychologist in the educational environment. In the author's opinion, Norwich can give a relevant and appropriate definition for this research through his year-long teaching and inclusion research at school. Having also included the dimension mentioned above of “individually relevant learning” (Norwich, 2000, p.10), he later framed the term:

“Inclusion is a systematic process which has a social meaning. It implies reconstructing schools to have the capacity to offer all students what they need. It is about participation, interaction, and social recognition” (Norwich, 2008, p.19).

Moreno and Rodrigez (2012), who also used Norwich’s (2008) definition in their research, elaborate that inclusion is not just having a kid sitting on a seat in a classroom. It is not just integrating them into the present education system but

“it is to think of him as an individual with particularities, with different needs, abilities, and goals. Therefore, it is the duty of society and especially of the educational system to provide every student with the opportunity to be herself / himself and to grow up both in academic and personal aspects” (Moreno & Rodrigez, 2012, p.79).

In conclusion, the correct term to use is inclusion. Since the study takes place in an educational environment, Norwich (2008) and Monero and Rodrigez (2012) defined it as how school inclusion is understood in the author’s research.

1.2.2. The Index for inclusion and its inclusive values

School inclusion must be considered a “complex phenomenon based on values such as equity, the right to education and participation of primary parents, teachers, and children (Laluvein, 2010, as cited in Soresi et al., 2013, p.199). This statement and also the, in Norwich's (2008) definition of inclusion mentioned that participation, interaction, and social recognition are some of the main pillars of Booth & Ainscow's (2002) “The Index”, which is a developmental self-evaluation tool. It involves change and is an

“unending process of increasing learning and participation for all students. It is an ideal to which schools can aspire, but which is never fully reached” (Booth & Ainscows, 2002, p.3).

The ideology of the Index was used as the author's basis for framing his research instruments because the response to “the Index” of schools throughout the whole of Europe was mainly positive and because of the thorough positive results of research done regarding the use and value of the Index up until the year of writing (Nes, 2009; Alborn & Gaad, 2014; Salceda & Ibáñez, 2015; Fernández-Archilla et. al., 2020; Pacetti et al., 2020; Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2021).

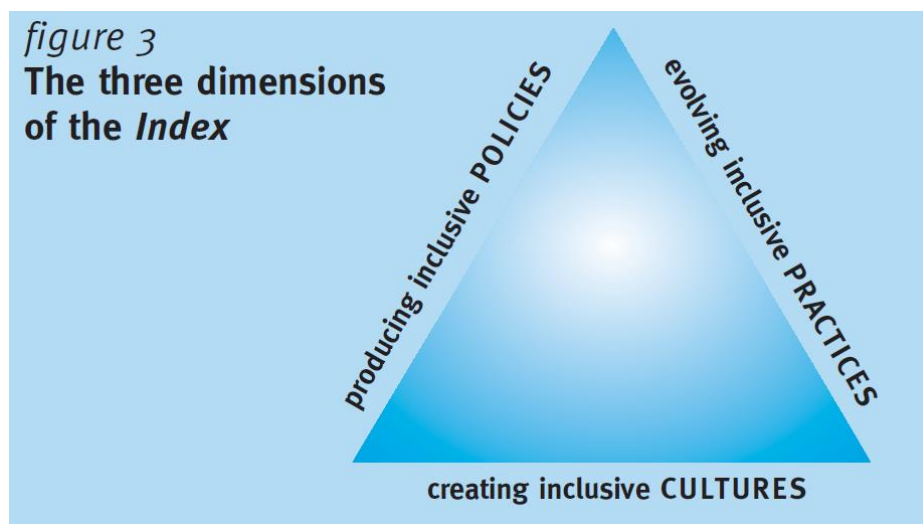
The Index was created in the UK over three years through the collaboration of teachers, parents, governors, researchers, and a representative, an expert in inclusive school development (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Since then, it has been reviewed a couple of times (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2006, 2011) and has taken a leading role in research about inclusion. UNESCO uses it to promote inclusion in developing countries. The EASOD, a project funded by the European Union's lifelong learning program that consists of a 20-person research team, also summarized the underlying inclusive values of the Index, thoroughly analyzing it and putting it into use in more than 10 European countries over four years. The Index has been translated into various languages, at the time of writing 33. Therefore, it is a widely known tool (EASPD, 2012), also used outside Europe, e.g., in Australia, New Zealand, or Hong Kong (Soresi et al., 2013). The Index supports an objective reflection

through self-reviews and evaluations. Booth and Ainscow (2002) write at the beginning of guiding the reader into the Index that to become more and more inclusive, all parts of the school should be looked at and possibly restructured. For this, they provide a set of materials and indicators stating:

"However inclusive a school is thought to be currently, the Index can be used to support the unending processes involved in developing learning and participation for all and reducing all exclusionary pressures" (Booth & Ainscows, 2002, p. 19).

The Index lists three dimensions, which are interwoven with each other and can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Note. The three dimensions of the Index. From *Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in school* (p.7), by T., Booth and M., Ainscow, 2002, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education. Copyright 2002 by Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.

At the bottom of the triangle is the dimension of inclusive cultures, which refers to creating a secure, accepting, and collaborative community for everyone. Everyone is “valued as the foundation for the highest achievements of all” (Booth & Ainscows, 2002, p.8). It strives to develop a warm atmosphere where everybody is stimulated to support and work together

with each other (EASPD, 2012). This dimension lets inclusive values be shared within the community (Soresi et al., 2013). The dimension on the left side, inclusive policies, provides concrete guidelines for all policy documents, focusing mainly on the admission processes and how accessible the school buildings are. It also includes the policies concerning new employees and how diversity is aided (EASPD, 2012). It aims to create “projects for the inclusion and participation of all interested parties” (Soresi et al., 2013, p.200). The last dimension on the right side of the triangle, inclusive practices, focuses on what concretely happens within a school, promoting the participation of every stakeholder, which lets them reflect and starts an evaluation process (EASPD, 2012).

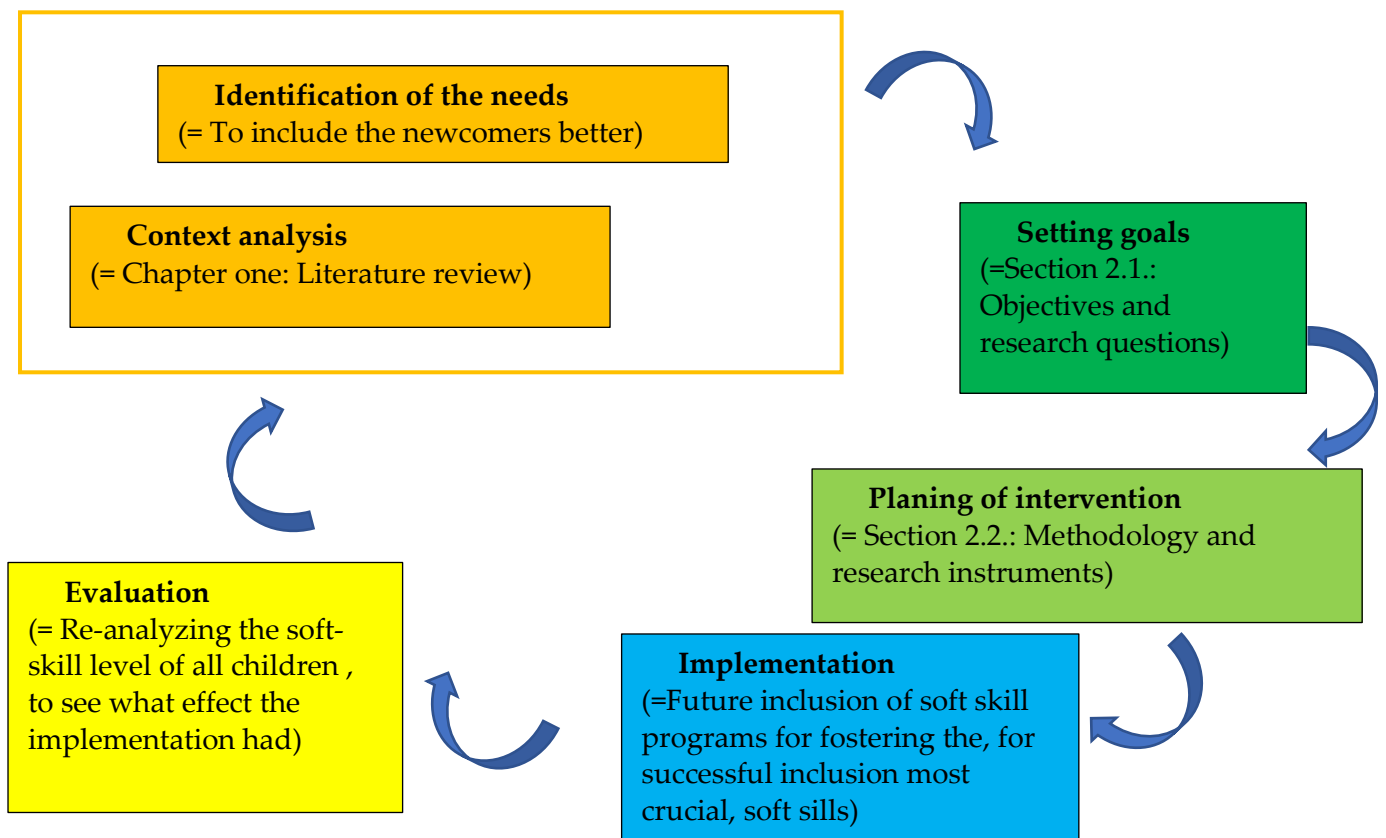
The Index also carefully summarizes many indicators for each dimension. To better understand the concept, under Dimension C, one of the indicators is “Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind”. For this indicator, Booth and Ainscow (2002) provide a set of 16 questions like: “Do curriculum materials reflect the backgrounds, experience, and interests of all learners? Do lessons reflect a range of interests for both boys and girls?” (Booth & Ainscows, 2002, p.70), and so on. This system of indicators for each dimension, each with a set of questions, allows all stakeholders to participate and work together on the inclusion process. The Index lies out 5 phases, which are:

“getting started” (establishing inclusive values and initiating the process in the school); “finding out together” (reviewing the school culture and integrating existing initiatives or interventions taking place in the school); “producing a plan” (creating action plans around prioritized areas, identifying supports and barriers); “taking action” (implementing the plan, activating supports and removing barriers); and “reviewing development” (rethinking support systems, further reflections and planning) (Soresi et al., 2013, p.201).

Soresi et al. (2013) mention in this context also Hick (2005), who used the Index for his research about supporting the development of more inclusive practices. He concluded that

the Index allows the children to have the vocabulary needed to talk about inclusion and its central values, and it allows the school to act when an inclusion problem occurs, engaging all involved parties and benefiting all students (Hick, 2005, as cited in Soresi et al., 2013). The Index's creators finish their description by summarizing its main scope to make all participants more aware of inclusion by letting the principles upon which inclusive education is based be known and understood (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Regarding the concrete use of the Index for this thesis's underlying research, the author adopted a graphic that Pacetti has recently created (Pacetti et al., 2020), adding in brackets which of the author's research backbone correspond to the Index's theoretical framework.

Figure 2



Note. Index theoretical framework used for research backbone. Own work.

1.2.3. Inclusion in Italy

Soresi et al., 2013, a group of six Italian researchers in the inclusion field, state that the decisions in Italy leading to inclusion

“were not based merely on scientific grounds, but mostly in a line of reasoning where ethical, political, social and legal aspects were given priority over those of pedagogical, psychological or educational nature” (Soresi et al., 2013, p.190).

Regarding the general situation in Italian high schools, Norcia and Rissotto (2014) conclude their paper by saying that within the new class, the newcomer often has his place but often has a low level of interaction with the other students (Norcia & Rissotto, 2014). The author could observe the same at the primary schools he taught at, including those outside of Italy: Many newcomers were there, but with limited interaction, leading to the, in the introductory section described, need for this research.

Additionally, within the Italian educational context, other prominent researchers shed attention on the schools, which play a significant role in creating a feeling of shared belonging to a friendship network of individuals. Benigno et al. (2018) summarize that the interaction between peers is now accepted by many in Italy as a crucial part of successful inclusion. However, words like inclusion, participation, and social inclusion are seldom clearly defined.

That is why, firstly, to see the current situation of new arrivals in detail, a general overview of migrant children in Italy through data from Eurostat is provided in this chapter. Furthermore, a more detailed view of Italian public schools is given through data from MIUR. Lastly, the exact numbers of international students in Italian private primary schools are outlined through data from ISTAT. When observing those statistics, it must not be forgotten that each governmental department and institute has its own definition of who counts as a migrant or foreigner. Therefore, at the beginning of each section, a short description is made about which students fall into which category and why to avoid misinterpreting or drawing false conclusions.

1.2.3.1. Eurostat

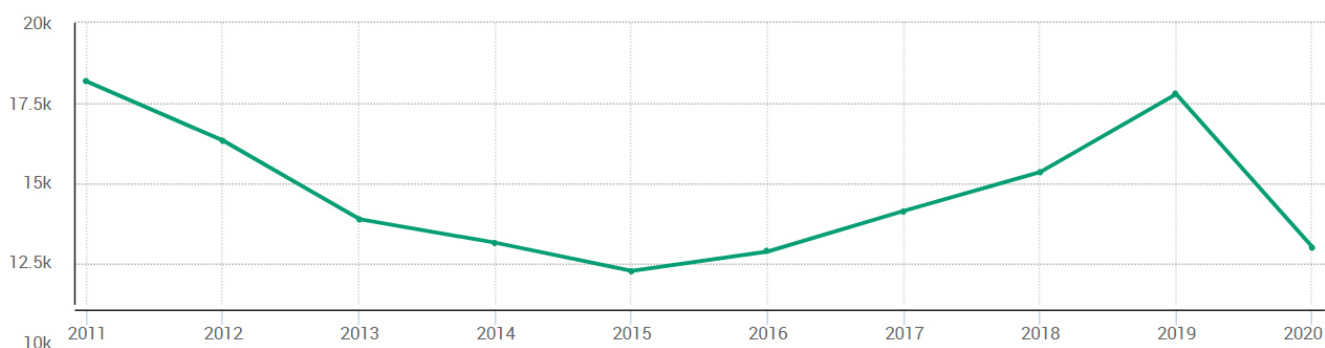
Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat, 2022). The definition of Eurostat about Immigration, and therefore also who is counted as a migrant child in their statistics, is as follows:

“Immigration: the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country” (Eurostat, 2022).

In other words, Eurostat’s statistics count all children as migrants who have migrated for one year or more, including those who migrated permanently from another EU or third country. Their data is based on “harmonized European data sources, such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-LFS)” (Janta & Harte, 2016, p.6).

Figure 3 shows the number of 5 to 9-year-old migrant children in Italy, starting from the year of 2011 to 2020.

Figure 3



Note. 5 to 9-year-old migrant children in Italy. From *Eurostat*. Copyright 2022 by Eurostat.

The exact numbers are seen in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1

↕ ↗	⌂	GEO	Italy ↕
TIME ↕			
2011			18 164
2012			16 321
2013			13 866
2014			13 128
2015			12 250
2016			12 856
2017			14 126
2018			15 339
2019			17 774
2020			12 995

Note. Detailed number of 5 to 9-year-old migrant children in Italy. From *Eurostat*. Copyright 2022 by Eurostat.

However, when looking at those statistics, it is unclear how many of those children are going to public or private schools. The statistics show the number of children each year who have migrated for one year or more and those who have migrated permanently. The number of children, including those between five and nine years old, appears to be low and on a downtrend.

1.2.3.2. MIUR

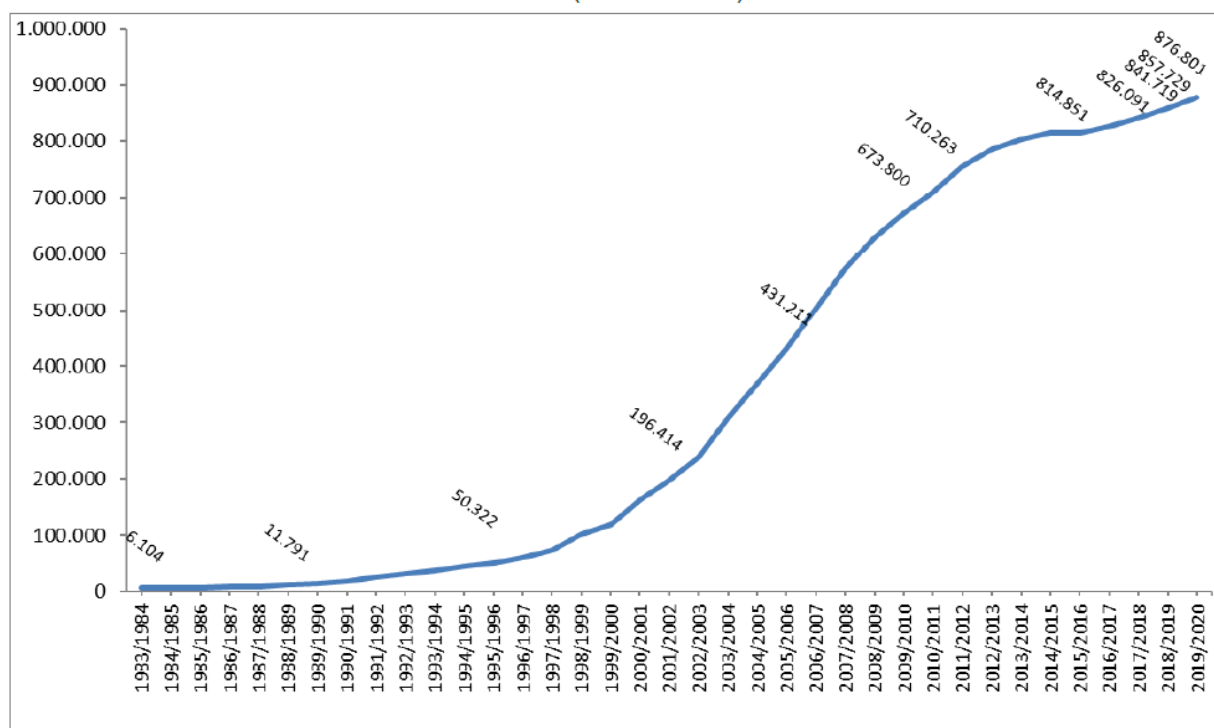
Further insight into the number of foreign students at schools in Italy can be gained using data from MIUR, the Italian Department of Education. In their statistics, all those who do not have Italian citizenship are counted as international students. Regarding their data, Norcia and Rissotto (2014) point to the dynamics of inclusion in Italian schools by stating the statistics from MIUR in 2014:

“Since the academic year 1996/1997 to 2010/2011, foreign students have grown from 59.389 (0,7% of the whole number of students) to 711.046 (7,9% of total)” (Norcia & Rissotto 2014, p. 93).

When looking at the website in 2022, the number of foreign students increased to 828.690 out of 8.106.952 students in all schools in Italy, meaning 10.2 % of the total number of students are currently foreigners (MIUR, 2022). In their latest published report from 2019 and 2020 this trend is visualized in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Grafico 1 – Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana (valori assoluti) - AA.SS. 1983/1984 - 2019/2020



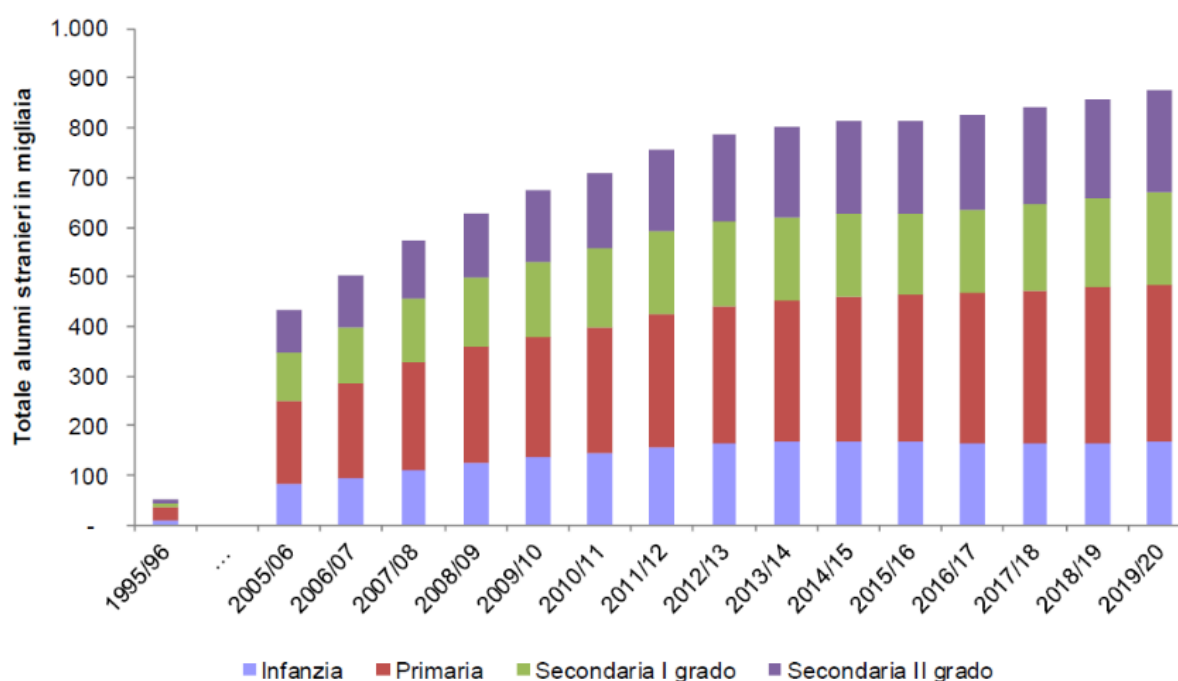
Note. Foreigners at all Italian schools. From MIUR. Copyright 2022 by MIUR.

However, these numbers include all schools up to “scuole secondarie di II grado”, not just primary schools. Nevertheless, one can see that the number of foreign students has drastically increased over time, and therefore also the need to include those children in schools successfully. Since the author's research will take place in primary schools, a closer look at the percentage of foreigners in primary schools is necessary.

Currently, the earliest available data on the Ministry of Education website dates back to the scholastic year of **2015/2016**. At that time, 289.710 out of a total of 2.741.638 primary school students were foreigners, **10.5%** of all the students. In the scholastic year of **2020/2021**, from a total of 2.517.152 students in all primary schools in Italy, 298.956 were foreigners. So, **11.8%** of all the children (MIUR, 2022). One can see a slight increase; however, the percentage of primary school students has only slightly changed over the last six years. The data, nevertheless, shows that 11.8% of students in primary schools are foreigners, which indicates a need for inclusion. In their latest report from 2019/2020, they made those numbers visible, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Grafico 4 – Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana per ordine di scuola – AA.SS. 1995/1996, 2005/2006 - 2019/2020

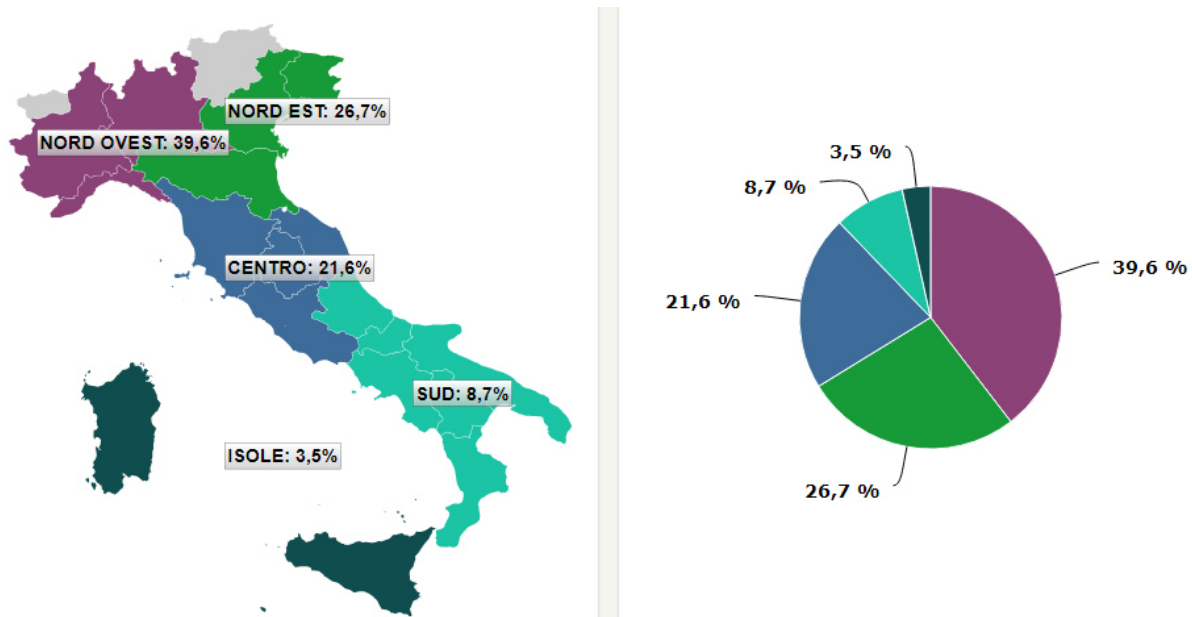


Note. Foreigners in the different Italian school systems. From *MIUR*. Copyright 2022 by *MIUR*.

Since all German schools are located in Rome, Milano, and Genoa, one needs to investigate the geographical situation furthermore, especially since in the regions of those cities, the

number of foreign students in primary schools is much higher, as seen in Figure 6, showing the percentage from a total of 298956 public primary school students.

Figure 6



Note. Foreigners at all public Italian primary schools in the different regions. From *MIUR*. Copyright 2022 by MIUR.

The detailed **2020/2021** numbers for the three cities are as follows:

- In Genoa, of the total 30469 primary school children, 4.714 are foreigners (**15.4%**).
- In Milano, from a total of 431168 primary school students, 77.969 are foreigners (**18.0%**).
- In Rome, from 188836, 22289 are foreigners (**11.8%**) (MIUR, 2022).

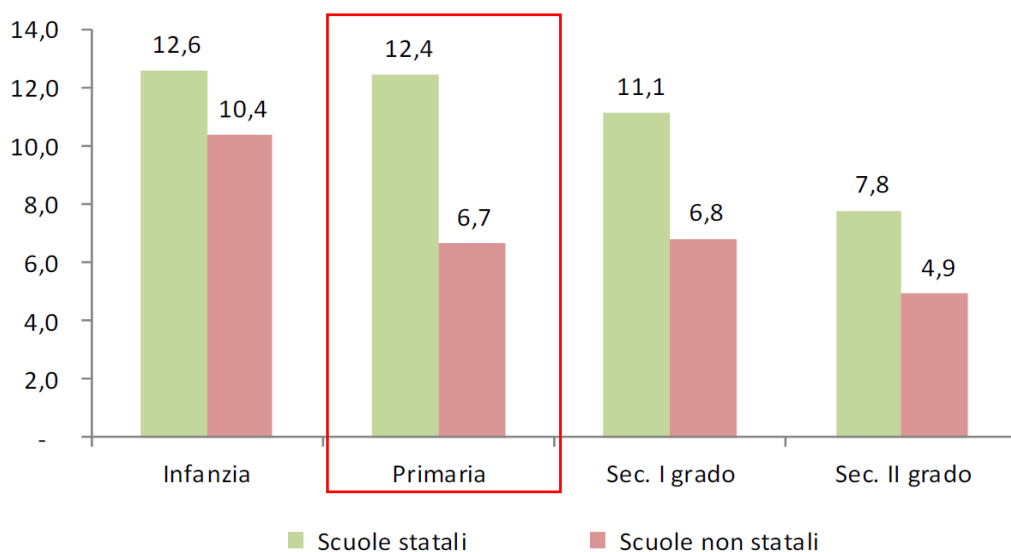
The data shows that in Genoa and especially in Milano, the percentage of foreign students in primary schools is much higher than the average in Italy. In contrast, the number of foreigners in Rome is around the country's average. These high percentages indicate that the number of newcomers in those cities is also higher than in other parts of the country. However, the statistics above from the Ministry of Education cover only Italian public schools, and one must not forget that the numbers do not show how long the students have

already been in Italy and might just not have applied for Italian citizenship. It could also be that they were born in Italy, know the language perfectly, and are included well in school.

The above-detailed data covers public elementary schools; however, the author's research occurred in private elementary schools. The only data the author could find about the target group is from MIUR's report of 2019/2020, illustrating in red the number of foreign students in private elementary schools, as seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Grafico 11 – Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana per ordine di scuola e gestione (per 100 alunni in totale) – A.S. 2019/2020



Note. Foreigners at private primary schools in Italy. From *MIUR*. Copyright 2022 by MIUR.

1.2.3.3. ISTAT

However, there is no available data from the Italian Ministry of Education regarding the exact situation in private elementary schools in the regions where the research was conducted. The only available data, including the regions, is from the ISTAT website and shows the exact numbers of enrolled students in private schools and the number of foreigners between 2010 and 2014. The ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics)

describes itself as a public research organization and is one of the leading statistics institutes in Italy. It operates independently and continuously interacts with the academic and scientific communities (ISTAT, 2022). In their statistics, just like in the one from MIUR, the foreign student population includes all those who do not have Italian citizenship, consisting of people who still have the nationality of their home country. As mentioned in the previous section, it may include people born in Italy. The earliest available data is from the year **2010**: In Lazio, 914 out of 27487 (**3.3%**) total enrolled students in private elementary schools were foreigners. Lombardia, 862 out of 39714 (**2.1%**), and Liguria, 153 out of 6187 (**2.4%**).

At the time of writing, the latest available data is from the year **2014**:

In Lazio, 936 out of 27 576 (**3.4%**) students were foreigners.

In Lombardia, 821 out of 40 406 (**2%**), and Liguria, 197 out of 6 123 (**3.2%**) (ISTAT, 2022).

1.2.3.4. Summary

When analyzing those statistics, several things come to the surface. Firstly, the number of foreigners in all the private schools is much lower than in public schools, indicating fewer newcomers. Secondly, the percentage of newcomers at private elementary schools in Italy remained nearly the same from 2010 to 2014, whereas a higher increase can be seen at public schools. It needs to be mentioned again that all the numbers above do not reveal how long the children have already been in Italy or when exactly they arrived. The numbers only show their citizenship. It can be that they grew up in Italy but do not have an Italian passport. However, the numbers indicate nevertheless the up-to-date importance of inclusion. For the author's research, this means that even though the statistics from ISTAT about foreigners in private primary schools in Italy are ten years old, the probability of having newcomers at primary schools is much higher in those locations where the private German schools are located as observed by looking at data from MIUR (2022), giving increased importance to research inclusion, especially in those regions.

1.3. Challenges and barriers to inclusion

Most of the available literature covers the challenges of integrating children with special educational needs into mainstream classrooms. In the case of this research, however, where only children without disabilities are included, neither of the sources used below are about this group. All of the sources cover children without special needs.

1.3.1. Parental background

Travers et al. (2010) addressed difficulties and barriers to inclusion in an Irish state-funded pilot study research at six Irish schools. They found out that many immigrant children do not have the same educational success as their fellow students. This finding of smaller case studies like the one from Travers et al. (2010) is backed up by broader-scaled research of the OECD (2006), which is the head of the well-known PISA studies. Their Program for International Student Assessment clearly shows that students who immigrate to a new country have considerably lower school subject skills like mathematics and lower problem-solving skills (OECD, 2006). Since problem-solving is crucial for newcomers in school to handle different situations with their peers successfully, this is a vital aspect to consider because, at German schools in Italy, many new students immigrate with their parents from other countries. Another reason why this must be considered for the author's research is because the OECD (2006) report has already revealed that this crucial performance of the students varies depending on the destination country to which the students immigrated. The report presents different reasons for this phenomenon, one of which is the education of the student's parents.

Seeing the year-after-year development of the reports up to the, at the time of writing, newest OECD 2021, it is clear that not much has changed in this regard. The newest report even states, specifically Italy, in the international comparison:

“In Canada, for example, the share of tertiary-educated adults is high among native-born adults (56%), and is even higher among foreign-born adults (70%), regardless of their age at arrival in the country. In Italy, the opposite situation is observed: the share of tertiary-educated adults is generally low, regardless of whether they are native-born (21%) or foreign-born (13%) and regardless of their age at arrival in the country” (OCED, 2021, p.45).

Following this fact, this most certainly impacts the children in Italy, as research done in 2018 by the U.S. Education Department’s National Center for Education Statistics proves that 45% of those who could make it to public universities had parents with at least a college degree. The university dropout rate was double that of students whose parents did not finish higher education (US Department of State, 2018).

A continuously increasing number of research studies indicate that children with parents who display achievement-oriented behaviors, like reading together in books or focusing on good working morals, also pass it on to their children. They are likelier to take them to the library or enroll them in different after-school programs (US Department of State, 2018). This also makes the child more likely to have the same mindset. As a result, when looking at the author’s research case, the parents’ background must also be considered when analyzing the results. The author also witnessed those findings in the schools he taught. Despite being suggested by teachers to use additional material for the educational success of their children as well as psychologists and professionals for their social well-being, parents often think that it is the task of teachers to educate their children and to give them good social skills. Most of the parents with “normal” working jobs, to which the author suggested such support for their children during his teaching career at various German schools abroad, indeed do not provide or consider this help for their children.

Further research from Jensen (2009) shows that academic background and socioeconomic status impact family interactions and can lead to behavior problems, hindering successful inclusion. The research shows that parents from a low socioeconomic background struggle

more often with low self-esteem and depression, and their children are more likely to have the mentioned problems as well (Jensen, 2009).

To summarise the above-stated research, the parents' background has a substantial impact on how their children perform in school, not just academically but also socially, suggesting that for children of such families, the success rate of successful inclusion will most likely be lower.

1.3.2. Language proficiency

From the literature, it emerges that, for successful inclusion, the students must be able to communicate with peers and follow and understand the subjects taught at school (Eijberts & Ghorashi, 2017; Abendi, 2004). When the child is not able to communicate freely with other peers, it is not easy to form friendships with peers, which, according to Dyson et al. (2004), is also mandatory for social inclusion.

However, not just the students' language proficiency, but also their parents' proficiency can affect the inclusion process. From personal experience, many Italian parents who do not know German so well are often hesitant to contact the teachers because many teachers cannot speak their language. Other research done by McGorman and Sugrue (2007) shows similar observations and findings about language barriers among parents and how they affect the inclusion of their children in schools. However, this section merely focuses on the students' language proficiency because the parents could not be included due to the principals' regulations, which are elaborated in-depth in the methodology and study limitations section.

The importance of the students' language proficiency for successful inclusion is evident seeing what a minority language child in an Irish primary school interviewed by Travers et al. (2010) says:

“When you come to school first, you don’t have any English, and it’s very hard. People come up to you and talk to you and they don’t know why you can’t understand them. They say to you “what do you want” and you can’t answer them” (Travers et al., 2010, p.41).

When looking at other research about children’s language barriers in schools, Folse (2004) found that vocabulary deficiencies are the biggest problem in using a new language, and a low vocabulary knowledge results in major comprehension problems. According to Marulis and Neuman (2010), professors at the University of Michigan’s School of Education, who, like Folse, are researching vocabulary development, vocabulary is the “heart of oral language comprehension” (2010, p.300). Their research shows that it is mandatory to know enough vocabulary, allowing the new students to have fellowship with each other and to participate in class conversations.

At the schools where the research took place, word lists exist where the most frequent words in German are listed. All teachers must introduce those words to the children month by month. However, the research correlates to the author’s observations and personal view that there is often insufficient time spent to teach precisely these words, indicating a barrier to inclusion.

1.3.3. Teacher competence

When looking at inclusion, the professional training of the persons with whom the children spend the most time together must not be overlooked because how the students think about their teacher and the connection between them substantially impacts their school inclusion success (Travers et al., 2010). Another reason why the main teacher is so important can be seen in research about the well-being of students in 35 OECD countries:

“The need for schools to adopt a more holistic approach and to ensure that daily educational activities take adequate account of student well-being, especially regarding the social, psychological, and emotional dimensions of the student experience” (Panesi et al., 2020, p.2).

The children’s teachers cannot be excluded from the research because they are the primary stakeholders in developing the mandatory skills that allow for a “truly inclusive education” (Soresi et al., 2013, p.193). Teacher-related factors influencing positive inclusion are mainly strong leadership on the teacher's side, firm belief in the students, the order in the classroom, fostering essential skills, and productive observation of student success (Marzano, 2000). Erten and Savage (2012) add to Marzano’s findings by summarizing a body of research (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004; Pressley et al., 2001; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998), that teachers should use time-efficient instruction, present in a comprehensive way and give frequent feedback on the students learning. To ensure that all students are included, it is also necessary to create and maintain a warm school atmosphere on the teachers' side (Travers et al., 2010). A positive classroom atmosphere is also, for Erten and Savage (2001), essential for the successful inclusion of new children. They write that the teacher’s classroom management skills are crucial for a good classroom climate, successful inclusion, and the “emotional climate” (Raskauskas et al., 2010, p.3). Regarding this, Murphy et al. (2004) found that students gladly want to learn from teachers who are organized well, are long-suffering, care for children, and have respect for them (Murphy et al., 2004).

However, for such an inclusive environment to be created, according to Wehlage et al. (1989), there must first be several core values. Firstly, teachers need to accept personal responsibility for student outcomes. Then, they also need to support pupils who are not perfect continuously. At last, they need to be firmly convinced that all students can learn if they focus on the positive instead of the opposing sides and weaknesses (Travers et al., 2010).

The reality, however, according to Riley (2004), who did research at many schools related to student-teacher interactions, is many times different. Summarizing the utterings of

numerous students, he concludes that “many pupils find too many lessons arid and demotivating, forcing them into a passive learning role” (Travers et al., 2010, p.178). Riley’s (2004) findings correlate additionally with the Irish government-funded NCCA 2004, 2006, and 2007 reports (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). They share in their results which kind of teachers are disliked among students and therefore in opposition to successful inclusion. They summarize that teachers who do not include group discussions or practical activity, punish not individual children but the whole class, shout, blame them unjustly, and talk down on them are perceived as poor teachers. Also perceived as a bad teacher are those who “don’t explain things in class, whose pace of instruction is too fast, who set too much work, give out to, or ignore students, use an uninteresting style, rely heavily on the textbook, and who cannot maintain order in class” (Travers et al., 2010, p.60). On the other hand, teachers who students like expect only the best for the success of their students, and they always support students through regular positive feedback (Erten & Savage, 2001).

Tomlinson (2001) mentions yet another aspect regarding the competence of the teachers and successful inclusion. She found that effective teachers use differentiated instruction, which adapts their teaching methods based on the different students' learning styles (Erten & Savage, 2001). This is in correlation with the results of Vaughn et al. (2000), who found that all pupils benefit through various strategies and the adoption of teaching methods (Erten & Savage, 2001).

Therefore, the available research indicates that inclusion is less likely to be successful if such differentiated teaching is absent. Furthermore, teachers must use proven pedagogical methods for minority language children, a big part of the new students, to be successful (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). However, most teachers do not have sufficient training in working with children with a minority language (Chisholm, 1994). Kitchin (2006) even states that over 86 percent of the participating teachers had no training regarding minority language pupils (Travers et al., 2010). For minority language children, essential skills are developing reflective practitioner skills, comfortable interpersonal skills with pupils from

another culture, and being aware of the interwovenness culture has with language (Chisholm, 1994).

Even though all the research mentioned above covered schools where the primary language of instruction was English and the language at the schools where the author's research took place was German, the situation the author observed during his teaching work is similar. He and all the teachers he knows of have not received such training, and even though there is such additional teacher training provided in the framework of teacher improvement, few took such training at some schools. All the above summarized leads to the conclusion that when researching the successful inclusion of newcomers, the competence and skill of the teacher must not be neglected and indicates that for those newly arrived students who speak a minority language, there most likely is not a teacher, who is adequately trained for their needs. Therefore, the teacher's competence was observed through in-class observation, explained, and elaborated upon in Section 2.4.3.

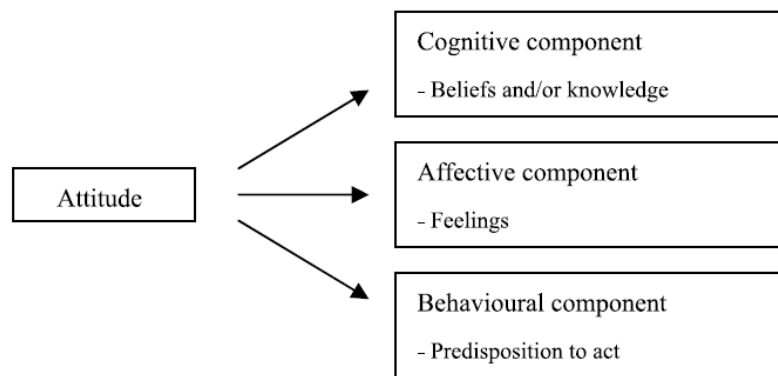
1.3.4. Teacher attitude

Attitude is described by social psychology in different ways. The broad definition, however, is the following:

“an attitude is an individual's viewpoint or disposition toward a particular ‘object’ (a person, a thing, an idea)” (Gall et al., 1996, p. 273).

This “individual viewpoint” can be divided into three parts: a cognitive, affective, and behavioral component (Boer et al., 2011).

Figure 8



Note. Attitudes of primary school teachers. From “Regular primary schoolteachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education: a review of the literature,” by A., de Boer et al., 2011, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(3), p. 334. Copyright 2011 by IJIE.

In addition to the three, in Figure 8 above visible attitudes of primary school teachers, most of the available research also covers the beliefs and concerns of the teachers. However, this research addresses mainly SEN (Special Educational Needs) children in “regular” classrooms, showing that the attitude of the teacher is one of the essential aspects when it comes to implementing inclusive education for SEN children (Shujahat et al., 2020) and makes it visible “that, for inclusive schools to develop and prosper, positive teacher attitudes and expectations are essential” (Butler & Shevlin, 2001, p.135).

Even though the author's research covers only the inclusion of “regular” children at private schools, the teacher attitudes towards including this group of students, coming from outside just like the SEN students, is believed to be of equal importance for their successful inclusion, because it was found out, that those teachers who have a positive attitude towards including newcomers, in general, had “more controlled learning environments compared to teachers with more negative attitudes to inclusion” (Monsen & Frederickson, 2004, as cited in Boyle et al., 2020, p.127). The teacher's attitude is critical because such a controlled learning environment is mainly the classroom, and “there is no inclusion without removing barriers and eliminating deficit-based approaches” (Uptin et al., 2012, as cited in Tajic & Bunar 2020, p.5). Boyle et al. (2020) conclude that the whole inclusion process starts with the teacher and that his role is vital for creating a classroom that fosters inclusion. The teachers

“are seen as key persons to implement inclusive education” (De Boer et al., 2011, p.331) and play a “crucial role” (Kurniawati et al., 2012, p.1430).

Soresi et al. (2013) researched teacher attitudes in Italy, including 235 teachers. Based on the responses, they were divided into four groups. They named the first group the *pessimists and disappointed* (35% of teachers). Teachers who resulted in this group see themselves as “unable to instill confidence and hope in other persons or even to face in an adequate modality difficult situations they encounter” (Soresi et al., 2013, p.194). They are passive emotion showers, tend to have a high resignation tendency, and frequently put their responsibility of adequately managing and overcoming difficulties in the class away from them (Soresi et al., 2013). 27% of the teachers fell under the *moderately supportive, optimistic, and realist* group, meaning they have sufficient self-efficacy beliefs about their work. 21% of the participants were very positive, optimistic, and resilient, but 17% of their participating teachers appeared, also in their students' view, as *definitely unsatisfied and pessimists*. They see themselves as weak in self-efficiency, incapable of supporting others who face real difficulties, and reflect on themselves as unable to promote hope and optimism (Soresi et al., 2013). The researchers describe this last group of active teachers as “a true and real threat for education and for inclusion” (Soresi et al., 2013, p.195).

In their opinion, it is clear that any student who faces teachers who fall under the *pessimists and disappointed*, or *definitely unsatisfied and pessimists* group will have difficulties learning, low motivation in improving themselves academically, less ability to control themselves, and are more chaotic (Soresi et al., 2013). According to their research in Italy, teachers' job satisfaction and progress in personal work goals predicted their life satisfaction. They “believe these findings are relevant given that in contexts characterized by higher levels of adult satisfaction, it is more probable that children experience high levels of quality of life” (Hoy, 2013, as cited in Soresi et al., 2013, p.194).

This conclusion of Soresi et al. (2013) is relevant to the author's research because if a higher level of teacher satisfaction leads to a higher probability of children experiencing a higher quality of life, it had to be included in the research design. Also, according to Ferrari et al.

(2013), teachers should show positive character traits, such as having living hope, being optimistic, and persistent, to “instill” these values in the students (Soresi et al. 2013), shedding light once more upon the importance of the teachers’ character, and therefore taken into consideration for the teacher interviews (Section 2.4.4).

1.3.5. Bullying

According to a broad longitudinal study, also conducted in Ireland, which tracked 8500 nine-year-old primary school students, many students, when they came new to school in their beginning year, mentioned being bullied. 42.1% of their peers suggested that working on reducing bullying is the best support for newcomers to be included in their class (McNamara, E., 2009). Since the author's research is about newcomers at school, a closer look at bullying must be taken because it is evident in the literature that there is a strong correlation between bullying and unsuccessful inclusion (Travers et al., 2010). Bullying is defined as

“when [a student] is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus, 1993, p.9).

Olweus, one of the most famous researchers in the field, explains his definition further by saying that there is always the prey, who cannot defend himself again against the person who bullies, stating that, before using the terminus bullying, there must be an imbalance of power present (Olweus, 2007). He is furthermore dividing the matter into two parts: physical and verbal bullying. Physical bullying is, for example, hitting or, in general, hurting somebody. Verbal bullying, on the other hand, is expressed through verbal violence, like continuous teasing or calling names. In addition, he observed that bullying can happen indirectly, e.g., by spreading nasty rumors or excluding others from playing together, and those being bullied cannot defend themselves (Olweus, 1993). One type of bullying that is also worthy of being mentioned is stigma-based bullying, which has its roots in prejudice

and discrimination towards the group the victim is part of, for example, his or her religion or ethnicity (Cocco et al., 2022). All types of the above-summarized bullying appear to happen equally frequently to boys and girls. However, twice as many males than females confess they bullied others (Pateraki & Houndoumadi 2001). Bullying among children mostly takes place in school, and more concretely,

“bullying occurs most in the classroom when the teacher is not there (45.1%), while in the field school (24.2%) and in the school cafeteria (16.1%). A small percentage but still showed the incident occurred is in place waiting for public transport/school (8.1%) and the corridors of the school (6.5%)” (Yoselisa et al., 2011, cited in Farah, 2016, p.29).

However, in these statistics, cyberbullying is not included. Nevertheless, since 90 % of those children who report being cyberbullied are also being bullied “traditionally”, few additional victims are created (Armitage, 2021).

1.3.5.1. Consequences of bullying

There are several reported adverse effects for all involved: Those who are being bullied, the bullies, bullies/victims, and the bystanders (Cocco et al., 2022). The severity of the side effects depends on the type of bullying, the frequency and severity, and the age of the children (Armitage, 2021). Direct bullying, or physical bullying, has been associated with common health problems in the victims. The percentage of developing such physical health symptoms is much higher than for children who are not bullied, leading to a clinical significance (Wolke et al., 2001). The victims in the Wolke et al. (2001) study, which included 2201 primary school children and their parents in 21 primary schools across the UK, showed repeated health issues, such as throat pain, flu, coughs, or loss of appetite. They found “significant differences between direct bullies, victims, bully/victims, and neutral children

and total physical health symptoms” (Wolke et al., 2001, p.198), as also another study including 1982 children aged 6 to 9 years with 1639 parents showed (Wolke et al., 2000).

The victims generally have low self-esteem and can also develop depression and anxiety, not just right after experiencing bullying, but also as a chronic and permanent illness, and are more likely to have less academic performance in school (Raskauskas et al., 2010). Victims also tend not to have a high level of well-being and increased psychological distress, which can lead to mental health problems like depression and suicidal thoughts as adults, as a recent longitudinal study in 83 countries showed (Tang et al., 2020), even from all adulthood depression causes, at the age of 50, 29% were attributed to being bullied by peers as a child and were connected to less healthy relationships, financial difficulties and a low quality of life (Armitage, 2021).

A higher possibility of bullied primary school children developing a psychotic disorder at 18 years, as well as experiencing trauma symptoms, came to the surface in another longitudinal study (Farah, 2016). Additionally, there are various educational consequences for children who are bullied regularly, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Table 3 Relationship between being frequently bullied and educational consequences ²⁰		
Consequence	Not frequently bullied (%)	Frequently bullied (%)
Feeling like an outsider (or left out of things at school)	14.9	42.4
Feeling anxious for a test even if well prepared	54.6	63.9
Skipped school at least 3–4 days in the previous 2 weeks	4.1	9.2
Expected to end education at the secondary level	34.8	44.5

Note. Consequences for bullied children. From “*Bullying in children: impact on child health,*” by R., Armitage, 2021, *BMJ Paediatrics Open* 5(1), p. 4. Copyright 2021 by BMJ.

When a child is bullied, the child’s feeling of belonging in the school environment is also lower, as well as the feeling of acceptance among other students. Bullied children have, on average, around 2.1% lower mathematics and 2.5% lower reading scores. Also, their main academic achievement was 2.7% lower when the child was bullied monthly and even 7.5% lower when it was bullied weekly (UNESCO, 2015).

The research shows that primary school bullies experience adverse effects, especially in the future. Through developing an attitude that with violence, they can have what they desire, the percentage of criminal convictions as adults is four times higher than for those who are not bullies (Raskauskas et al., 2010). From the bullies, a big part are themselves also victims of bullying. Like the “pure” bullies, this group is more frequently hyperactive. It has “more internalizing problems than neutral children” (Wolke et al., 2000, p.990) and is “at the highest risk for behavior problems and related psychological symptoms” (Wolke et al., 2000, p.990). A study including nearly 10% of all Finish primary school children showed that this group

“had the highest rates of behavior disturbance, in particular externalizing and hyperactivity problems [...], bully/victims were 6- to 10-fold more likely to have been referred for psychiatric consultation than children not involved in bullying” (Wolke, 2000, p.990).

When bullying occurs in primary schools, it affects as well those who are not directly involved, like the bullies, bully/victims, or victims but who stand by and see others being bullied. Most do not intervene because of safety concerns or their social class status worries. Because those “bystanders” feel that they cannot do anything to stop the bully, a sense of bullying acceptance is slowly created, leading to a classroom atmosphere full of fear and less participation in school (Raskauskas et al., 2010). Further evidence from a study suggests that all the groups mentioned above, the bystanders, the students who bully, and those who are bullied, do not feel comfortable and less connected to school and their peers (Raskauskas, 2007).

1.3.5.2. Bullying worldwide

Various research reported already more than 20 years ago that 8% up to 46% of children are victims of bullying in primary schools (Wolke, 2001). According to a recent UNESCO (2019) carried out report on bullying worldwide, 22.8% of all children living in Central America are victims. In Europe and North America, this number is around 25.0% up to 31.7%, and in the sub-saharan Africa area, it reaches even up to 48.2%. However, the type of bullying differs in these regions (UNESCO, 2019). Newer studies suggest that those numbers are now, at the time of writing in the year 2022, significantly higher in certain countries because “verbal bullying increased over time” (Bjärehed, 2021, p.63), and an increase in childhood bullying, including all forms of bullying, can be observed (Armitage, 2021). In other research, the author could find reports that not just those who are victims but also the percentage of those who are bullies is increasing. The number of bullies in primary school ranges from 6.25% in Greece (Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001). It can constitute up to 26,5% in Ireland, as a nationwide study done with 20442 Irish primary school children shows (O'Moore & Minton, 2005).

Other research states that “in primary grades, bully-victims constituted about 30–50% [...] whereas in higher grades these proportions were considerably lower” (Solberg et al. 2007, p.441), indicating that especially in primary schools, bullying is an issue. As a result, the number of students who are not actively involved in bullying but are nevertheless negatively influenced is most likely equally increasing. However, comparing those studies across countries is difficult because of different methodologies and ways to identify students as victims or bullies. Nevertheless, studies carried out on a large scale show that “15–20% of students are frequently involved in bullying as perpetrators and/or victims” (Craig et al., 2009, as cited in Santinello et al., 2011, p.236).

The above-summarized increase in bullying tends to be the case only in certain countries, as bullying has decreased in nearly half of the countries included in research done by UNESCO. The research covered all years between 2002 and 2017. Out of 71 countries, 35 showed a decrease in bullying, 23 remained at the same bullying level, and in 13 countries,

the bullying increased (UNESCO, 2019). Despite the overall decrease in bullying, caused mainly by school intervention programs (Smith et al., 2003), the majority of the research points nevertheless to the conclusion that bullying is a significant barrier to successful inclusion, and especially in Italy, bullying tends to be especially frequent (Santinello et al. 2011).

1.3.5.3. Bullying in Italy

In Italy, it was found in 1996 that out of a sample of 1379 students,

“almost 40% of Italian primary (8–11 years old) and 28% of middle school pupils (11–14 years old) reported being bullied ‘sometimes or more’ while 20 and 15%, respectively, reported bullying others” (Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001, p.168).

In 1999, it was observed from a sample of 236 middle school students in Rome that “over half of all students had bullied others in the previous three months, and nearly half had been bullied” (Baldry & Farrington, 1999, p.423). Most of the victims were either hurt physically or being called nasty names. Others were also rejected, and rumors were spread about them (Baldry & Farrington, 1999).

However, “at the moment, there is no specific information regarding bullying among immigrant and Italian students in primary school” (Alivernini et al., 2019, p.227), which is an essential lack of information regarding the author's research since many newcomers at the German schools are not Italian. Based on this lack of information, Alivernini et al. (2019) took the sharp increase in international students in Italy over the last 15 years as an essential reason for their study on bullying in Italian primary schools. They summarize the research done by Alivernini & Manganelli (2016) and Alivernini et al. (2018), which showed that, compared to their peers, foreign pupils who live in Italy appear to be more socially excluded from their classroom peers and more oriented toward competition. Many Italian peers, on

the other side, show mixed attitudes towards newcomers, which affects their “relationships with pupils coming from different cultural backgrounds” (Alivernini et al., 2019, p.227). Their findings, based on data from randomly selected 26,670 Italian fifth-grade students, suggest that foreigners in Italy are more likely to be bullied as well as socially isolated (Alivernini et al., 2019). Additionally, Gini (2008) could see, through observing 246 Italian children from two public elementary and two public middle schools, a tendency of the bystanders to blame the victim for being bullied because

“by blaming others or circumstances, the individual self-exonerates his or her harmful conduct, preventing him/herself from feeling guilty” (Gini, 2008, p.336).

Their findings correlate with the Just-world-theory from Lerner (1970, 1980), who writes that everybody creates for himself a belief that the fate and fortune of people are a result of their character and the actions they do. People want to believe this because it gives them a mindset of safety and that they will not suffer undeservedly (Gini, 2008). According to this theory, to protect their sense of justice, the “bystanding” students can aid those bullied. However, they can also perceive that it is the fault of the child being bullied, that he or she is an evil, unworthy person whose suffering is righteous and, therefore, deserves it. Bystanders do this because it lets them create their safety zone by blaming bullied persons for their fate. This vicious circle leads to enormous adverse effects for the victims, who often end up believing that it is their fault and that they suffer justly (Gini, 2008).

1.3.5.4. Interventions to reduce bullying in primary school

There is an “urgent need to find more effective ways of combating bullying in schools” (Raskauskas et al., 2010, p.2). To prevent bullying from happening and efficiently intervene in case it does happen, it is primarily the school that needs to act because the interventions done by the school prove to limit and reduce bullying (Armitage, 2021). One such intervention is Olweus’ Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), a thoroughly worked out

intervention program created to minimize bullying and let all school-aged peers have a better relationship with each other (Olweus, 1993). However, this program was created more than 20 years ago and does not include methods against stigma-based or cyberbullying. More recent research suggests that peer monitoring can reduce school bullying. This method efficiently lets the students understand each other more and creates a sense of belonging to the school they visit (Alivernini et al., 2019). From a great variety of available peer support programs, it has been proven that befriending and peer mediation are incredibly effective because, after implementing these methods, bullying occurs less in school. At the same time, a sense of responsibility is created. Different countries and age groups showed that, through such peer support programs, a more social attitude and acting toward bullied children was observed (Gini, 2008).

Other research in Italy investigated how bullying is affected by those teachers who are being perceived as unfair by the students. It showed that the primary role in preventing bullying is the teacher's role in "discouraging bullying by providing models of behavior of fair treatment" (Santinello et al. 2011, p.242). The researchers confirmed that their findings are in line with the equity and social exchange theories from Adams (1965) and Homas (1962), saying that when unjust acts being done by others are perceived, dissatisfaction and distress are experienced, and this is passed on to others as a means of liberating oneself from this feeling of frustration. Their findings from 4386 students in 151 Italian schools prove those theories, showing that when students perceive their teacher as unfair, they are likelier to show bullying behavior towards others. It happens through a chain reaction when the teacher exercises power in a perceived wrong way, according to Wilkinson's (2005) "bicycling reaction". It represents somebody who, while riding a bicycle, is leading forward, being submissive to stronger ones, and pushing the pedal back, pushing those who are weaker down (Santinello et al. 2011). Just like Santinello et al. (2011) stressed the importance of good teacher role models, Gini (2008) also indirectly points out the importance of the teacher role for a positive classroom and school atmosphere because

“students’ perception of and attitudes toward bullying, their sense of community, and their perception of school atmosphere (i.e., level of democracy, system of rules, moral norms) are important to explaining children’s negative behaviors” (Gini, 2008, p.335).

Therefore, educators must create a moral school atmosphere where the teacher focuses on good behavior without any violence while at the same time leading the children to be social with one another and aid their peers when in need (Gini, 2008). Because a significant body of research has shown that how students perceive this atmosphere is affecting their actions inside and outside their educational environment as well as their mindset towards their classmates, students should be taught to perceive the moral atmosphere more precisely for addressing behavioral and interpersonal problems, instead of only exclusively trying to improve the moral skills, since this does not lead to a change in the students behavior (Gini, 2008). The teachers should train the student's emotional skills and implement activities to increase moral sensibility and empathy because those skills are observed to be weak with bullies. Different resources are available for teachers, e.g., video material or role-play activities (Smith et al., 2003). The researchers suggest using classroom exercises, which let the students learn to understand victims’ and bullies’ feelings and what moral thoughts they have who are not actively involved but are experiencing somebody who is being bullied. The primary way of teaching should be through group activities; in this way, the students can reflect on how they would react in various bullying situations (Gini, 2008). Cooperative, group-based learning activities should be implemented whenever possible, with teachers planning their lessons with positive peer interaction in mind, because it has been “shown to significantly reduce bullying and its associated emotional problems while enhancing student engagement and educational achievement” (Armitage, 2021, p.5).

Additionally, Smith et al. (2003) did a meta-analysis and condensed the results by providing concrete successful methods in various studies. One of the methods is to improve the playground areas of the schools because most bullying cases in primary schools happen outside the classrooms, e.g., at the playground or in the yard (Smith et al., 2003). Another

helpful method is to use assertiveness training for victims or potential victims so that children can learn how to handle such situations without being passive and aggressive. One such training is the “No Blame Approach” created in the United Kingdom. It is a problem-solving approach where a support group for all children directly involved in bullying is formed, including those who stand by. This “bystander” group is the most important one, as it can aid in resolving bullying (Smith et al., 2003). It has been found during a 2-year study that there was an “immediate success in 80% of cases and delayed success in 14%; in only 6% of cases did the victim report continued bullying” (Smith et al., 2003, p.592). Similar to this approach is the creation of bully courts or tribunals, where pupils are chosen to, like in a courtroom, listen to the evidence and have the power to impose different punishments for the bullies and bystanders. This method was very effective at some schools, with bullying reports decreasing from 70% to 6%. However, some literature on bully courts does not find this approach effective (Smith et al., 2003).

The interventions mentioned above, however, are less effective against stigma-based bullying. Because prejudice is the main root of this type of bullying (Palmer & Abbott, 2018), interventions developed for targeting the reduction of stigmas should be used instead when stigma-based bullying appears. Some examples of such activities would be activities that promote inclusive social norms and a positive outgroup attitude (Cocco et al., 2022). Since bullying takes place nearly every time where there is no adult present, children must spend as little time without supervision as possible to minimize the possibility of bullying occurring (Farah, 2016).

1.4. Soft skills and their measurement

The previous section identified challenges and barriers to inclusion and described their importance for the author's research and study limitations. Now, the current literature regarding soft skills and their measurement is summarized. There are many ways to measure soft skills. The most common methods are child observations, peer evaluations, teacher and student interviews, and rating scales completed by parents, teachers, or children (Scarupa, H.J., 2014). The measurement of the students' soft skills should be "culturally equivalent, ecologically valid (generalizable to the setting), and linguistically accessible across subgroups" (O'Conner, 2017).

Furthermore, a significant number of different questionnaires exist. However, each of the soft skills is often named differently in each study, has a different scope, and does not fit the primary school context. That is why, in this chapter, three chosen institutions and research teams that did research in the primary school age group are introduced. They all have the same underlying theoretical framework of CASEL (2022) and created their questionnaire to measure soft skills. Their questionnaires served the author as a base for creating his own questionnaires for the specific German primary school in Italy context, described in the methodology section (2.3).

1.4.1. Need for soft skill development

In the last 30 years, much research has been conducted on soft skills, proving that

"social and emotional skills play a central role in shaping student achievement, workplace readiness, and adult wellbeing" (Chien, Harbin et al. 2012; Delale-O'Connor, Farley et al. 2012; Guzman et al. 2014, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.1).

These skills influence academic careers and future lives tremendously (West et al., 2020). To survive in a social world, children must acquire social and emotional skills (O'Conner, 2017). Successful relationships are deemed one of the “most significant developmental achievements throughout childhood” (Larke, 2006, p.38). For the development of those skills, the school has a strong impact because the children spend a significant amount of time there, making the educational environment “an important socialization forum in which to develop skills of initiating and maintaining relationships with peers and adults” (Larke, 2006, p. 38). When a child feels comfortable in school and has a positive emotional well-being, he is engaged more academically, feels more connected, and his sense of belonging to school increases. It will likely have less drug use and incidences of violence in the future (US Department of Education, 2016). Furthermore, through soft skill training programs in schools, the student's learning skills are also improved, and more and more teachers realize a strong connection between social skills and how well the children progress in their school careers (US Department of Education, 2016). Furthermore, acquiring social skills, especially self-control and cooperation competencies, is, in teachers' eyes, “critical for success in the classroom” (Meier et al., 2006).

Studies done in Europe, like the one done by Selimović et al. (2018), also confirm this. Using their highly reliable survey at 17 Bosnian primary schools, including 1639 students, a statistically significant connection between academic achievement and social skills was found, with female students having significantly higher social skills in 80% of all subscales (Selimović et al., 2018). The available research mainly covers social and emotional skills and how they develop, suggesting that the development of these skills heavily depended on the “informal interactions between adults and students and between students and their peers” (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, as cited in US Department of Education, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education did a meta-analysis regarding those informal interactions, concluding that they matter the most for developing social-emotional skills. However, what happens inside the classroom also impacts the positive development of those skills, given that the teachers provide the environment and possibility for their students to acquire and put those skills into action (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

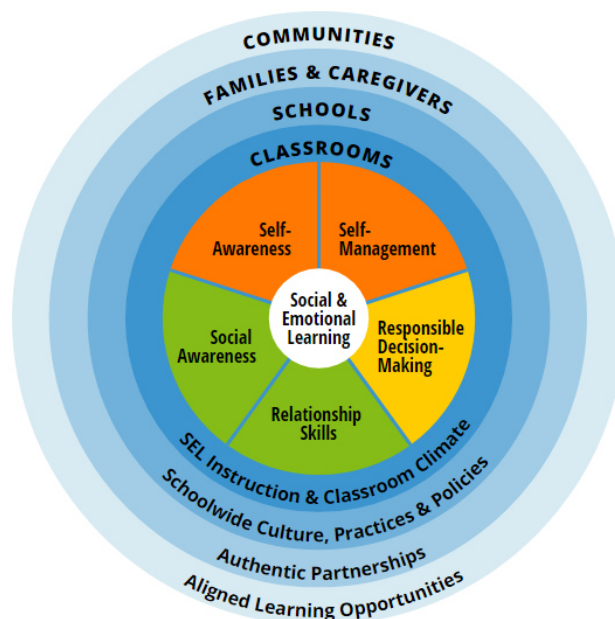
1.4.2. CASEL framework and evidence-based effects of Soft Skill programs

The leader in the field of Social Skill learning is the CASEL Foundation. Based on the information on its website, CASEL initiated its work in 1994 to provide science-proven soft skill development programs, including those for all schools and ages up to the end of high school (CASEL, 2022). They are working together with researchers, policymakers, and more than 40 US state education agencies to

“ensure high-quality, evidence-based programs, [...] envisioning all children and adults as self-aware, caring, responsible, engaged, and lifelong learners who work together to achieve their goals and create a more inclusive, just, and equitable world” (CASEL, 2022).

In their, over the years created, framework, five domains are determined: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management, and responsible decision-making. These soft skill dimensions are illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9



Note. CASEL Soft Skill Dimensions. From CASEL. Copyright 2022 by CASEL.

According to CASEL, the self-awareness competencies consist of awareness of feelings and thoughts and their influence on actions (CASEL, 2022), and the skill is generally described as including all skills that have to do with realizing the strengths one has, as well as understanding how those strengths and weaknesses affect academic achievement (Zhou & Ee, 2012). Relationship skills are the ability to create positive connections with one's peers and other groups (CASEL, 2022). Self-management, which is related to the capacity to manage one's emotions and impulses (Zhou & Ee, 2012), is described by CASEL (2022) as being able to control behavior and emotions in various challenging situations. Responsible decision-making consists of the competence to think about various factors before deciding for the well-being of others in a way that situations can be dealt with responsibly without causing harm to others (CASEL, 2003). Some years later, they adjusted this description, defining Responsible decision-making as the “ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations” (CASEL, 2022). Social awareness consists of reading other people’s emotions, understanding their well-being, and appropriately behaving toward them (Zhou & Ee, 2012). According to CASEL, it is the ability “to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts” (CASEL, 2022).

The methodology chapter of the thesis elaborates further in-depth on how the theoretical framework from CASEL and their five soft skills domains were considered for framing the categories of soft skills in the author’s teacher and students’ questionnaire. Their five domains have been used widely in the field, and based on a significant amount of meta-analysis and research they conducted themselves, CASEL states that it is evident that soft skill development programs have long-term and global benefits for children in different cultural contexts. When reviewing 82 school-based soft skills intervention programs involving 97,406 students from kindergarten up to high school, there was a strong connection between high levels of social and emotional skills in school and, after 18 years, greater well-being (Taylor et al., 2017). Because 38 of the interventions happened outside the US, including every demographic group, conclusions were drawn that those programs

contribute positively to children from various backgrounds and locations (Taylor et al., 2017). However, they are most effective when “designed with a specific context or culture in mind” (CASEL, 2022). In a 2017 report done by CASEL and Civic, another US-located foundation, including the surveys of 884 Pre-K to 12 public school principals in addition to 16 superintendents and 10 district-level research and evaluation specialists who were interviewed (DePaoli et al., 2017), it was found that the majority of all principals wish that teacher should have more training in soft skills development, in order to be able to use researched based methods for letting soft skills increase in their students (CASEL, 2022). In their updated report two years later, over 90% of principals agree that soft skill development is mandatory and “developing students’ social and emotional skills is a critical aspect of students’ in-school experience” (CASEL, 2022).

Further research through a large meta-analysis involving 213 studies with over 270,000 children (Durlak et al., 2011) shows that academic achievement is 11% higher in children participating in such intervention programs. The pupils “showed improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school” (CASEL, 2022). In another study, including over 1200 primary and secondary school teachers across the US, around 90% of all teachers “agreed that promoting soft skills would improve students’ academic achievement” (Hamilton & Doss, 2020, as cited in CASEL, 2022). Various other large-scale meta-analysis review studies were done by other researchers in the field, including 213 studies (Durlak et al., 2011) and 82 follow-up studies (Taylor et al., 2017) that focused on the results gathered after carrying out soft skill development programs in schools agree with these findings, showing the positive outcomes of these programs: After the soft skills program was carried out, the academic performance increased in 27% more children. 24% showed better behavior toward others and lower stress in school (CASEL, 2022). Additionally, they state that a very recent systematic review from the Early Intervention Foundation (2021) proves that the soft skills interventions “enhance young people’s social and emotional skills and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in the short term” (Clarke et al., 2021).

When looking at what students themselves are saying, the literature shows that soft skills development does not receive the attention it needs. Even though high school students see the positive impact of soft skill training, they believe that their schools should offer more (DePaoli et al., 2018). Additionally, young people at all school stages expressed their opinions, showing that soft skill development integration was very beneficial for their well-being and those of others (Jones, 2020, as cited in CASEL, 2022). Especially since the Covid pandemic began and had a strong influence on schools worldwide, separating students from each other physically and therefore putting their social interactions with each other on hold, more than half of all nationwide participating 1200 US teachers (56%) in the most recent annual Educator Confidence Report believe that integrating soft skill learning programs in their classroom will be one of great importance, and most critical after the pandemic (HMH, 2021, as cited in CASEL, 2022). This mindset of teachers regarding soft skill training programs does not just exist in the US after the Covid outbreak but was strongly present already before among 80% of educators, including 14 other countries, where a total of 80% of 762 surveyed educators believed that “positive emotions are critical for academic success, and emotional well-being is crucial for developing foundational literacies and communication skills” (Holzapfel, B., 2019, as cited in CASEL, 2022). The public opinion of American citizens is also in line with this, as a study conducted in 2021 by the McGraw Hill Foundation shows. Out of 1588 random-sample telephone interviewed parents in the US, 82 % mentioned soft skills to be of great importance for children and that the schools should assist them in fostering those skills of their children, especially the skills which have to do with relationship management and problem-solving persistency.

Even though all this research clearly shows the need for soft skill development programs in schools, many educators have financial concerns about the benefits of investing in such programs, which are often connected with the need for more excellent resources on the side of the schools. However, cost-benefit research from Columbia University suggested: “an average return on investment for six evidence-based programs of 11 to 1, meaning for every dollar invested, there is an \$11 return” (Belfield et al., 2015, as cited in CASEL, 2022).

1.4.3. CASEL-based questionnaires

Below, the three questionnaires, which served the author as a base for creating his own, are introduced.

1.4.3.1. Scarupa (2014) from Child Trends

Child Trends is one of the world's leaders in soft skills. In the US, it is the foremost institute that measures the well-being and development of children. In 2014, they developed a questionnaire explicitly for primary school students and teachers, where soft skills can be measured and analyzed over time. After an extensive literature review of their research team, they selected criteria for narrowing down the skills. Their scope was to use those skills in their questionnaire, which, based on solid evidence in prior studies, let the children have a better academic future while at the same time can easily be taught. Their main focus lies on children in the primary school age group; therefore, all their material is created with younger children in mind (Scarupa, H.J., 2014). Five primary skills were determined after a second literature review, and additional feedback was gathered through interviewing well-known professors and leading experts in the field and teachers. Their skills align with the CASELS theoretical framework. Their student questionnaire is visible in Table 3.

Table 3

		Not at all like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	A lot like me
1	I can wait in line patiently.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I sit still when I'm supposed to.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I can wait for my turn to talk in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I can easily calm down when excited.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I calm down quickly when I get upset.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	I can do even the hardest homework if I try.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I can learn the things taught in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I can figure out difficult homework.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	If I solve a problem wrong the first time, I just keep trying until I get it right.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	When I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I always work hard to complete my school work.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	I do my schoolwork because I like to learn new things.	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	I do my schoolwork because I'm interested in it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	I do my schoolwork because I enjoy it.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Note. Child Trends student questionnaire. From *Measuring Elementary School Students' Social and Emotional Skills* (p. 34), by H.J., Scarupa, 2014, Child Trends. Copyright 2014 by Child Trends.

Their teacher questionnaire is illustrated in Table 4 on the next page.

Table 4

		NONE OF THE TIME	A LITTLE OF THE TIME	MOST OF THE TIME	ALL OF THE TIME
1	Worked on tasks until they were finished.	1	2	3	4
2	Kept working on an activity that was difficult.	1	2	3	4
3	Waited in line patiently.	1	2	3	4
4	Sat still when s/he was supposed to.	1	2	3	4
5	Waited for what s/he wanted.	1	2	3	4
6	Focused on tasks until they were finished.	1	2	3	4
7	Worked well with peers.	1	2	3	4
8	Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive.	1	2	3	4
9	Was thoughtful of the feelings of her/his peers.	1	2	3	4
10	Cooperated with peers without prompting.	1	2	3	4
11	Understood the feelings of her/his own peers.	1	2	3	4
12	Resolved problems with peers on her/his own.	1	2	3	4

Note. Child Trends teacher questionnaire. From *Measuring Elementary School Students' Social and Emotional Skills* (p. 31), by H.J., Scarupa, 2014, Child Trends. Copyright 2014 by Child Trends.

1.4.3.2. SECQ (2012)

Another researcher, who developed a questionnaire based on CASEL's five domains specifically for primary school children and used it in four studies in Singapore primary schools, referred to Soft skills as Social Emotional Competence and named their questionnaire the SECQ, which

“intends to assist school practitioners and evaluators in assessing elementary and secondary students' level of SEC and to subsequently identify those areas deemed in need of improvement” (Zhou & Ee, 2012, p.31).

They came to the same conclusion as the author after reviewing the existing literature:

"In practice, dozens of other instruments exist that measure one or more aspects of Social Emotional Learning. However, the availability of tools that accurately cover all areas of this model is extremely limited” (Zhou & Ee, 2012, p.30).

Not much has changed since their article was written in 2012; even though many tools are available, they cover only one or two of CASEL's soft skills, mainly the social and emotional skills, but not altogether. Zhou and Ee (2012) took the CASEL framework, identified the main characteristics of each soft skills dimension, and analyzed various scales. They included soft-skill professionals like local scholars and experts from the Ministry of Education in Singapore. After trying out the SECQ and conducting their research, which included 444 fourth graders and a replicated model with 356 secondary school students, they concluded that their questionnaire is a helpful addition to existing tools that measure social and emotional skills in children. It is highly internally consistent (Zhou & Ee, 2012). Their questionnaire, containing five items for each of the CASEL's five domains, went in the same direction as the author's research, meaning not just looking at social and emotional skills but focusing instead on effective measurement of a wide variety of soft skills. As a

conclusion, their items served in part for the author's teacher and students' questionnaire, described more in-depth in the methodology section.

Table 5

Construct	Items
Self-awareness	[SA1] I know what I am thinking and doing. [SA2] I understand why I do what I do. [SA3] I understand my moods and feelings. [SA4] I know when I am moody. [SA5] I can read people's faces when they are angry.
Social Awareness	[SoA1] I recognise how people feel by looking at their facial expressions. [SoA2] It is easy for me to understand why people feel the way they do. [SoA3] If someone is sad, angry or happy, I believe I know what they are thinking. [SoA4] I understand why people react the way they do. [SoA5] If a friend is upset, I have a pretty good idea why.
Self-management	[SM1] I can stay calm in stressful situations. [SM2] I stay calm and overcome anxiety in new or changing situations. [SM3] I stay calm when things go wrong. [SM4] I can control the way I feel when something bad happens. [SM5] When I am upset with someone, I will wait till I have calmed down before discussing the issue.
Relationship Management	[RM1] I will always apologise when I hurt my friend unintentionally. [RM2] I always try and comfort my friends when they are sad. [RM3] I try not to criticise my friend when we quarrel. [RM4] I am tolerant of my friend's mistakes. [RM5] I stand up for myself without putting others down.
Responsible Decision-Making	[RDM1] When making decisions, I take into account the consequences of my actions. [RDM2] I ensure that there are more positive outcomes when making a choice. [RDM3] I weigh the strengths of the situation before deciding on my action. [RDM4] I consider the criteria chosen before making a recommendation. [RDM5] I consider the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy before deciding to use it.

Note. SECQ Questionnaire. From “Development of the social emotional competence questionnaire (SECQ),” by M., Zhou and J., Ee, 2012, *The International Journal of Emotional Education*, 4(1), p. 42. Copyright 2012 by The International Journal of Emotional Education.

1.4.3.3. Furman (2018)

The author could additionally find a third, specifically for primary schools created, questionnaire from one European researcher named Dr. Ben Furman, who, together with two teachers, adopted the solution-focused approach (SFA) created in the 1980s by Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer, with the scope to help children “overcome social-emotional and behavior problems” (Furman, 2004, 2010, as cited in Niu & Niemi, 2020, p. 3098). The SFA is guided by the preferred goal, outcomes, and future and focuses on building supportive relationships while using childrens’ existing strengths to achieve this (Niu & Niemi, 2020). Many researchers found the SFA to be very effective and “especially useful for altering behavior” (Cepukiene & Pakrošnis, 2011; Corcoran & Pillai, 2007; Franklin et al., 2012; Gingerich et al., 2012; Gingerich & Peterson, 2013; Kim & Frankin, 2009; Stobie et al., 2005, as cited in Niu & Niemi, 2020, p. 3111).

Furman adapted the SFA and named it the Skillful-Class method, which aims to help teachers aid their students in acquiring social-emotional and self-management skills (Niu & Niemi, 2020). His method focuses not on talking about the child's problem but on learning the underlying skill through emphasizing the community where the children learn from each other. Besides the main theoretical elements of the SFA, Lev Vygotsky's social culture theory underlies Furman's approach. The Russian psychologist argues that “social interaction precedes development” (Vygotsky, 1980, 1978, as cited in Niu & Niemi, 2020, p. 3099), meaning that according to Vygotsky, the social community where the child is part of or environment where it grows up, is of tremendous importance for the child's cognitive development and will affect the thought processes of the child (Vygotsky, 1978). Furman's Skillful-Class approach has been tested in over 30 countries within the last 30 years, showing evidence-based, continuous positive outcomes (Chirkina et al., 2020). Grounded on the data collected in those studies over the last decades and using a separate study where finished primary school teachers were interviewed to state and elaborate on frequent problems with children, Furman summarized these most frequent problems and framed them into explicit, learnable soft skills for the children. He identified those skills that are the most crucial for children in elementary school age, covering the emotional, social, and self-management

dimensions (Niu & Niemi, 2020). The determined skills seem to address the childrens' problems accurately, and Furman's skillful class approach has been found very effective in another study with 22 finish and 18 chinese primary school classes (Niu & Niemi, 2020). After the approach had been carried out, students acquired self-management and social-emotional skills, whose absence previously led to problems, and significant changes in the social bonds between the students, teachers, and parents could be seen. It changed not just the outward social behavior but also the attitudes of all the groups. The students became "more positive, solution-focused, and goal-oriented," and the teacher's work "became easier" (Niu & Niemi, 2020, p.3111). Because the results were similar in Finland and China, there is evidence that this method can be equally applied to other cultures and continents (Niu & Niemi, 2020).

Because of Furman's approach's positive impact, his underlying "most needed" skills were considered for the author's research and partly served to create the teacher and students' questionnaire. In Table 6 and Table 7, one can see Furman's identified skill set. The methodology section explains how his skillset contributed to creating the questionnaires.

Table 6

Table 1. Most needed social-emotional and self-management skills in primary schools identified by primary school teachers in Finland (Furman, 2018)

Collective skills for the whole class	1	We (I) can pack my school bag.	Self-management Skill
	2	We (I) can get homework done.	Self-management Skill
	3	We (I) can raise our (my) hand (s) before speaking.	Self-management Skill
	4	We (I) can listen to teachers' instruction.	Self-management Skill
	5	We (I) can calm down to focus on learning.	Self-management Skill
	6	We (I) can solve most conflicts or disagreements among ourselves.	Social-emotional Skill
Individual skills for each student to decide which skill he/she would like to learn. Several students can have the same skill.	1	I can wait for my turn.	Self-management Skill
	2	I can listen to others without interrupting them.	Social-emotional Skill
	3	I can speak in front of others.	Self-management Skill
	4	I can stay on task.	Social-emotional Skill
	5	I can stay calm when I make a mistake or fail.	Self-management Skill
	6	I can accept losing in games.	Social-emotional Skill
	7	I can help others.	Social-emotional Skill
	8	I can stick up for others.	Social-emotional Skill
	9	I can move around calmly and safely.	Self-management Skill
	10	I can eat neatly and calmly without disturbing others.	Self-management Skill
	11	I can ask for help when I need it.	Social-emotional Skill
	12	I can shift from one activity to the next activity.	Social-emotional Skill
	13	I can respond to others' teasing with humor.	Self-management skill
	14	I can apologize to others.	Social-emotional Skill
	15	I can ask for things nicely.	Social-emotional Skill
	16	I can encourage others.	Social-emotional Skill
	17	I can have the courage to ask to join others' activities.	Social-emotional Skill
	18	I can be proud of my accomplishments.	Social-emotional Skill
	19	I can remember to thank others.	Social-emotional Skill
	20	I can appraise (give compliments to) others.	Social-emotional Skill
	21	I can calmly accept "No" from others.	Social-emotional Skill
	22	I can recognize when to say "No" to others.	Social-emotional Skill

Note. Furmann Questionnaire. From *"Teachers support of students' social-emotional and self-management skills using a solution-focused skillful-class method,"* by S.J., Niu and H., Niemi, 2020, *The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 27(1), p. 3098. Copyright 2018 by Furman.

Table 7

Table 3. Teachers' perception of students' six skills before and after the Skillful-Class intervention.

Questions to be answered by teachers	Scale from 1 to 5 1= poorly, 5= excellently
1. The students can pack their school bags.	
2. The students can get homework done.	
3. The students can raise their hands before speaking.	
4. The students can listen to teachers' instruction.	
5. The students can calm down to focus on learning.	
6. The students can solve most conflicts or disagreement among themselves.	

Table 4. The teachers' perception of the relationships among students, teachers, and parents before and after the Skillful-Class intervention

Questions to be answered by teachers	Scale from 1 to 5 1= never, 5=always
1. The students are helpful towards each other.	
2. The students encourage and support each other.	
3. The students are able to do group work.	
4. The students are friendly towards each other.	
5. I like to enter my class and be with my students.	
6. It is easy for me to get the students excited about things.	
7. When students have problems or difficulties, we find solutions.	
8. I praise, encourage and thank my students.	
9. I get along with my students' guardians.	
10. I feel that the guardians like me and appreciate my work.	

Note. Furmann Questionnaire. From *"Teachers support of students' social-emotional and self-management skills using a solution-focused skillful-class method,"* by S.J., Niu and H., Niemi, 2020, *The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 27(1), p. 3105. Copyright 2018 by Furman.

1.4.4. Soft skills derived from CASEL

This chapter introduces the soft skills used for the author's created questionnaires based on CASEL and the preferred ways of measuring each skill is outlined based on Scarupa (2014), who looked at all skills and discussed about various measurement options. The reasons for slightly renaming some of CASEL's skills outlined in this chapter are given later in the methodology section.

1.4.4.1. Self-control

The general definition of self-control is as follows:

“Self-control, sometimes called self-regulation, refers to the ability to manage one's emotions and behaviors, inhibit negative responses, and delay gratification” (Bandy & Moore, 2010, as cited in Delale-O'Connor, et al., 2012, p.3).

Regarding children in primary school, this means that they can deal with different situations by knowing and controlling their feelings and actions. The researcher mentions that the most significant part of this skill is the ability to control impulses. Concretely, this means that the children can rule over their immediate feelings and will to fulfill their desire instantly, e.g., even if they very badly want to yell out in class, they do not do it but put up their hand instead and wait for their turn (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012). The available literature proves that students with a high level of impulse control do not get in trouble as quickly as their peers and have more confidence in interacting with other students. On the other hand, however, when a child has a low level of impulse control, it is more aggressive and less social, and the chances for drifting away into criminal actions later in life are higher (Delale-O'Connor, et al., 2012). Having a high level of self-control leads to a higher possibility of academic achievement since it lets primary school children focus for a more extended period on exercises; they will not give up, even if they might not be able to solve

them right away. High self-control also leads to higher academic performance, especially in mathematics and reading (Delale-O'Connor, et al., 2012).

There are ways in which self-control in young children can be measured, mainly by conducting interviews with parents and teachers and letting the children take part in different tests or activities (Scarupa, H.J., 2014). One of the more popular methods is the “marshmallow test” from Mischel, et al. (1972). Each child got one marshmallow, with the promise to receive another one, but only if they did not eat the first marshmallow before the 15 Minutes were over. The time was measured, which determined their level of self-control. Additionally, the teacher or parents of the child were asked to observe the child periodically, which was an excellent way to measure the changes over time (Scarupa, H.J., 2014). However, the main hindrance of this approach is the necessity of using much time and personal resources to carry out observations like the marshmallow test, especially when such research is being done on a larger scale. Secondly, when it comes to measuring this skill over time, those methods are not suitable. The above-stated was the main reason for Child Trend’s decision to use questionnaires as the primary data collection method using the “Child Self Control Rating Scale” for primary school children as a base for measuring self-control (Kendall & Wilcox, 1979; Rorhbeck, et al. 1991). They explain the benefits of surveys, like the possibility of measuring changes over a more extended period and the use of fewer resources compared to observing the children. At the same time, they point out that many self-control surveys are long and have over 30 questions, which can be overwhelming for children (Scarupa, H.J., 2014).

1.4.4.2. Persistence

Persistence is:

“the capacity to maintain concentration on a task, question, set of directions or interactions, despite distractions and interruptions” (Delale-O'Connor, et al., 2012, p.4).

In primary school, this means staying on task longer and trying to solve an exercise even without success. Children with a high level of persistence acquire reading and mathematics skills more quickly, are less worried, and do not point the finger as often at others when difficulties come (Delale-O'Connor, et al., 2012). Like with measuring self-control, persistence can be measured mainly through observing the children after different tasks have been given to them and utilizing surveys. Regarding younger children's persistence level, Scarupa, H.J. (2014) mentions various research that has been conducted on this matter. The primary method is often to have them step by step work on challenging tasks and observe if they work on it to the end or how long they can overcome (Lufi & Cohen, 1987; Duckworth et al. 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.7). However, there are several negative aspects to this approach. One is, again, the amount of time needed for conducting such research, and another is that they do not fit for measuring persistence over a more extended period, but only punctually. This was the main reason why Child Trends decided to use survey questions for measuring this skill while at the same time ruling out the use of commonly available surveys, as they are mostly long, include too many questions, and are created with high school-aged children in mind (Scarupa, H.J., 2014).

1.4.4.3. Mastery orientation

Elementary school children with a high mastery goal orientation report higher levels of well-being (Yi et al., 2020). A high mastery orientation means that students have the internal wish to foster their skills and synchronously learn and improve in new exercises. They are not learning because somebody else tells them to do so or promises a reward, but they enjoy learning new things. Children with this competence are not disappointed when they make mistakes. Instead, they learn from them because they believe their intelligence is not engraved in stone but can increase through their efforts. A high level of mastery orientation is proven to let them achieve higher test scores compared to the students who put themselves in a box, believing that intelligence cannot be increased (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012). Mastery orientation skills must be explicitly measured because they happen inside a child. In order to understand the motivation behind the children's task, outward observations will not be sufficient to have precise results. As a conclusion to this fact, Scarupa, H.J. (2014) excluded teacher surveys for assessment.

Several researchers in the past have tried already to measure this skill, partly through outward observations while the children had to complete different exercises and partly through interviews, where only the child and interviewer were present (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.7). An already developed and widely used resource is the Dimensions of Mastery Questionnaire DMQ. It is available in different versions, depending on the age group of the children it should address, ranging from six-month-old toddlers to 19-year-old adolescents. This Questionnaire is a tested and proven tool for measuring mastery orientation; however, for administering it, much work needs to be done priorly by one adult for each child (Morgan et al., 2009, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.7). As a conclusion, questions in the form of child questionnaires are the preferred way of measuring this dimension.

1.4.4.4. Academic self-efficiency

Self-efficacy “is the belief in one’s ability to accomplish a task and the understanding that actions one takes will influence this task’s outcome” (Delale-O'Connor, L. et al., 2012, p.6). Children in primary school have the firm belief that they can accomplish an exercise, making it a mandatory skill for being successful in their academic career not just in primary school but also beyond, because, depending on how high the level of self-efficiency is, they put more strength and time into the tasks they need to do. This skill has a strong connection with the persistence domain and determines how well the child can face difficulties or setbacks during different tasks in school. When a solid self-efficiency level is present, the child has a deep confidence in his or her ability to finish their tasks. Children with a high level of academic self-efficacy are more likely to have literacy/reading and mathematical success, finish their homework, behave better in class, and have higher grades (Duckworth et al., 2012; Liew et al. 2008; Phan. 2012, as cited in Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012, p.6).

Similar aspects to measuring children’s academic self-efficiency must be considered to measure mastery orientation skills. Since the child’s motivation is internal, educators might not have sufficient knowledge to rate this skill correctly because observing the child is not fitting, allowing only conclusions about the outward behavior and not giving insight into what the child believes (Phan, 2012, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.8). When it comes to measuring academic self-efficiency with primary school children, one can find in the literature mostly the use of face-to-face interviews, where the child is asked to talk about the homework they did and why or why not the child believes that it can do different exercises (Scarupa, H.J., 2014). However, as with the other soft-skills, the interviews are unsuitable for measuring the differences over a more extended period and come as “single-dose”. They take much time, as the interview questions comprehensively cover the students’ academic self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.8). Therefore, as the literature suggests using surveys to measure academic self-efficacy, the author used the same approach for this soft-skill dimension.

1.4.4.5. Social competence

Social competence refers to many skills that allow the student to have a good relationship with peers and contribute well in group work (Rose-Krasnor, 1997; Smith & Hart, 2004, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.5). The Child Trends writer narrowed down the definition of the term and framed the base characteristics to frame their questionnaire questions. It is the skill of the student to

“1) take others’ perspectives, 2) work well with peers to accomplish a task, 3) resolve problems in ways that maximize positive consequences and minimize negative consequences for the student and her/his peers, and 4) behave appropriately according to the situation and social norms” (Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.5).

Various research has shown that this soft skill affects success in school because it is mandatory for learning inside the classroom (Ladd et al., 2006). It allows the children to have beneficial coworking with their peers and teachers, forms the way they think about school, and improves their academic outcome (Smith & Hart, 2004; Ladd et al. 2006; Valiente et al. 2007, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.5).

Different grading systems are used to measure this skill. In those rating systems, the level of acceptance between students is determined and analyzed because this suggests how high the social competency is. Another option for measuring social skills are so-called peer nominations. Herby, a map of the “social network” within the class is created by letting each child write down how well they like each of their peers using a Likert scale, writing down their friends, which students they like the least or the most (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Ladd, 1999; Smith & Hart, 2004, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.9). However, even though this method gives a clear view of the social structures inside a class, it requires much effort from the interviewers and much time when the data is analyzed. It is not always sure if the social skills are indeed how the map shows since acceptance among students is also affected by other aspects (Scarupa, H.J., 2014).

Another way to measure social skills is by introducing different scenarios to students and analyzing how they would resolve those situations. However, there are several downsides to this, one being that this research method is time and resource-intensive for both the researcher and the student. Surveys are available that are less stressful and easier for the students to fill out. However, students tend to respond in a biased and socially desirable way, meaning that they are not honest and want to appear better in the eyes of others (Webster-Stratton & Lindsay, 1999; Wheeler & Ladd, 1982; Rubin, 1983; Walker & Henderson, 2012; Dereli-Iman, 2013, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014 p.9).

Even though there exist these limitations mentioned above, several structured surveys for teachers and parents compensate for some of these issues, like, for example, the Social Competence Scale, consisting of only 25 questions and showing a high level of internal consistency with children aged 4 to 7 throughout the whole US and from various social-ethnographic backgrounds (CPPRG, 1995, as cited in Scarupa, H.J., 2014, p.9).

Scarupa, H.J. (2014) concludes his literature research by saying that based on the outcome of studies done with such surveys, teachers can rely on the results while at the same time keeping the effectiveness and work-load at a high level. The author followed this example, using teacher and student questionnaires to measure all soft skill dimensions.

Chapter two: Methodology and research design

In the first chapter, important terms were defined, how the Index led to the author's research approach was explained, and an overview of the situation in Italy was given. Additionally, aspects that are hindering successful inclusion were identified and elaborated. Lastly, the CASEL (2022) soft-skills framework was introduced, existing questionnaires that use the CASEL framework were introduced, previous research done in the primary school's context was looked upon, and the specific soft-skills and the ways in which they can be measured were described.

2.1. Objectives and research questions

The main objective of this research is to explore the impact of students' soft skills and successful school inclusion in German primary schools in Italy. The author wants to find out how the specific soft skills of the newcomer and those of the classmates impact the school inclusion process. By determining if a positive relationship exists between the students' soft skills and successful inclusion, explicit, time- and cost-effective interventions can be done as a follow-up to this research. When inclusion problems appear, the intervention can be done by merely focusing on those skills which, through this research in the specific socio-demographic context, appeared to be the most important for successful inclusion. If unsure, the teacher can also re-use the questionnaires to determine the social skill level of each student and, therefore, can focus only on single students' soft skill development or do activities with the whole class in case a specific soft skill is low at a class-wide level. The broader objective is to, in the long term, create a better and more welcoming environment for newcomers, contribute to the soft skill development of all students in general, and improve the well-being of all children.

2.2. Methodology and research instruments

In this chapter, a description of the different ways undertaken to gather the data is outlined because a "lack of methodological information limits our trust in a study's outcomes, but also limits the richness of our growing understanding of the methodological challenges related to such complex areas as inclusive education" (Nind et al., 2004, p.259). Grunder-Gandhi (2007) writes that mixed methods designs are the preferred research method to understand inclusion and how it takes place inside schools deeply. Mixed methods design means that qualitative and quantitative research methods answer the research questions. Newby (2010) also suggests using a mixed methods approach, as this is fitting for looking at "complex issues" like social exclusion or changes in attitudes (Erten & Savage, 2012). Because of this suggestion from the literature, the mixed methods approach was used for the author's research since analyzing and documenting soft skills, as well as looking at how those skills influence successful inclusion, is a complex issue and the reliability is higher with a "multiple-instrument, multiple-source, multiple-construct and multiple-context assessment" (Zhou & Ee, 2012, p.37).

The method for measuring the social skills of all students was quantitative, through a student questionnaire and a teacher questionnaire. The questionnaires were created adopting the three in Section 1.4.4. introduced questionnaires that all use the CASEL (2022) theoretical framework, namely Scarupa, H.J. (2014), SECQ (2012), and Furman (2018).

The classroom climate was observed using an existing student questionnaire with high internal consistency from Sink and Spencer (2005) to control the soft skill dimension. Additionally, the sociometric situation in each class was looked at by using Banerjee's (2022) sociogram tool, creating a "Sociogram", where each child is asked to name three students it likes to play most with and three with whom it likes to lay least. The sociogram for each class was necessary because researching students should not be done by merely focusing on the outcomes of the student but on looking at the correlation between the learning environment and the child (Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Lindsay, 2007).

Finally, because teacher competence (section 1.3.3) and teacher attitude (section 1.3.4) impact soft skill development as outlined in the literature section, the teachers were observed during their teaching using du M rac & Corbucci (2022) *Dimensioni e descrittori – Prova pratica EDUbadge SFP* Linkert scale observations. It was chosen because the Index’s *Dimension C, Evolving inclusive practices* described in Section 1.2.2, correlates in many ways with the items in the observation sheet. Dimension C can be seen in Figure 34 in the appendix as a reference. To enrich the teacher-didactics observation results further and to see the inclusion success at the end of the year according to the class teacher, qualitative data was gathered through teacher interviews, using the Index (section 1.2.2) to frame the interview questions. This approach is in line with Erten and Savage (2012), who summarized the findings of many prominent inclusive education researchers, concluding that “evidence collected through surveys and observations can be used to reinforce qualitative case study results” (Heath et al. 2004; Lindsay, 2007; Mackenzie, 1983, as cited in Erten & Savage, 2012 p.228). The results and triangulation of all data reverting to the research questions can be seen in the subsequent results and interpretation chapters.

2.3. Measuring soft skills: Creation and validation of a new soft skills questionnaire for the German private elementary school in Italy context

The author aimed to create and validate a new German-language soft skills questionnaire for children aged 8 to 10 at German private schools in Italy, derived from existing English questionnaires that all use the CASELS (2022) framework. The author had to create his own questionnaires to measure all those soft skills in the particular socio-demographic context based on the CASELS theoretical framework and previous research done in the field, which is important for successful school inclusion. Creating new questionnaires was necessary because, as described in the literature review, most existing questionnaires using the framework are made for high school students and measure only one or two skills. The author chose the questionnaires from Zhou and Ee (2012), Furman (2018), and Scarupa, H.J. (2014) because all use the CASELS (2022) skills, and they were also created with younger students in mind. The teacher and student questionnaire layout was taken from the Scarupa, H.J. (2014) questionnaire, mainly because the layout and response options are suitable for children between 8 and 10. Some items from Scarupa, H.J. (2014) were excluded, adopted, or moved to the teacher's questionnaire, using items from Furman (2018) and the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire from Zhou and Ee (2012). There were various reasons for this. One was that the wording of the Scarupa, H.J. (2014) questionnaire is, based on the author's ten years of experience as a primary school teacher, sometimes inadequate for young students to understand.

Additionally, some questions that children tend to respond to in a non-genuine way were moved to the teacher questionnaire. Finally, the items were grouped based on previous high Cronbach's ratings and translated into German. A first draft questionnaire was prime-administered, adopted, and distributed at both schools. The detailed creation process and adoption can be seen in the following sections.

2.3.1. Determining the final soft skill dimensions

The final soft-skill dimensions were self-control, persistence, mastery orientation, academic self-efficiency, social competence, emotional competence, and responsible decision-making. Most of the terms were taken from Scarupa, H.J. (2014) because those skills align with the CASEL (2022) framework; they are just named slightly differently and differentiate some of CASEL's skills into smaller subskills. For example, CASEL's domain "Self-management" refers to the same skill as Child-Trend's "Self-control", "Mastery orientation" and "Academic self-efficiency" terms. CASEL's "Relationship management" also describes the same as Child Trend's "Social competence". CASEL's "Self-awareness" and "Social awareness" domains were combined by the author and named "Emotional competence". This was done not to create too many soft-skill categories that are closely related and describe the same soft skill. Another reason for combining those two domains was to avoid having too many questions on the teacher surveys, mainly because it was stated as mandatory by the principals to reduce the workload for the teachers wherever possible for the research. CASEL's (2022) Responsible decision-making skill was initially excluded due to concerns about the reliability of the children's answers. However, the skill was later included in the final questionnaire because of requests from the participating teachers.

3.3.2. Creation of draft questionnaire

The detailed adoption process for the initial draft questionnaire is outlined in Table 8 and Table 9 on the following pages.

Table 8

Original Items from Scarupa, H.J. (2014) Children Questionnaire	Final items for piloting (changed parts in blue)	Reason behind adoption	Measured Soft skill ○
These questions are about different ways students may behave in school. Please mark the box that best describes you. - I can wait in line patiently. - I sit still when I'm supposed to. - I can wait for my turn to talk in class. - I can easily calm down when excited. - I calm down quickly when I get upset. These next questions are about how well you feel you can do your schoolwork. Mark the box that best describes you. - I can do even the hardest homework if I try. - I can learn the things taught in school. - I can figure out difficult homework. These next questions are about how you get your schoolwork done. Mark the box that best describes you. - If I solve a problem wrong the first time, I just keep trying until I get it right. - When I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time. - I always work hard to complete my schoolwork. The last set of questions will ask you how you feel about school. Please mark the box that best describes you. - I do my schoolwork because I like to learn new things. - I do my schoolwork because I'm interested in it. - I do my schoolwork because I enjoy it. <u>Response Options:</u> Not at all like me, A little like me, Somewhat like me, A lot like me	These questions are about different ways students may behave in school. Please mark the box that best describes you. <u>It is easy for me to sit still in the classroom.</u> ● - I can calm down quickly when I get upset. ● - When I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time. ● - If I solve a problem wrong the first time, I just keep trying until I get it right. ● <u>Revised Introduction</u> <u>This set of questions will ask you how you feel about school.</u> - I do my schoolwork because I like to learn new things. ● - I do my schoolwork because I'm interested in it. ● - I do my schoolwork because I enjoy it. ● <u>Revised Introduction</u> <u>These next questions are about how well you feel you can do your schoolwork.</u> <u>I can always get my homework done.</u> ● <u>I can learn the things taught in school.</u> ● <u>I can pack my school bag by myself.</u> ● <u>My desk is always in order, with all the material ready for the lesson.</u> ● <u>Revised Introduction</u> <u>These next questions are about how good you understand yourself.</u> <u>I understand my own moods and feelings.</u> ● <u>It is easy for me to understand why people feel the way they do.</u> ● <u>I can have the courage to ask to join others' activities.</u> ● <u>I understand why people react the way they do.</u> ● <u>Response Options:</u> Not at all like me, A little like me, Somewhat like me, A lot like me	1: Added and adopted from Zhou and Ee (2012) because the context is the school, and some children might answer with how they are at home in mind. Introductions are shortened to let children not be overwhelmed. 5+6+7: Kept because Cronbach's alpha is 0.83 in Child Trends research. 8+9+10+11: Added from Furman's (2018) skillset for a higher Cronbach's alpha measuring Academic self-efficiency (Child Trends has 0.65) 12+13+15: Added from Zhou and Ee (2012), to measure emotional skills, which the Child Trends Questionnaire lacks. 14: Same item as in the teacher's questionnaire, but added also into the student questionnaire because the teachers do not always see everything	Persistence, Self-Control, Social competence, Academic self- efficiency, Mastery orientation, Emotional competence

Note. Adoption process of initial student questionnaire. Own work.⁷¹

Table 9

Original Items from Scarupa, H.J. (2014) Teacher Questionnaire	Final items for piloting (changed parts in blue)	Reason behind adoption	Measured soft skill ○
Please answer the following questions for each of your students. Please think about the student's behavior in the last QUARTER or SINCE the last reporting period. If this is the first report of the year/program, think about the student's behavior since she or he has been in your class. On a scale from 1 to 4, how well do each of the statements describe the student's behavior? Would you say 1-NONE OF THE TIME, 2-A LITTLE OF THE TIME, 3-MOST OF THE TIME, or 4-ALL OF THE TIME? 1. Worked on tasks until they were finished. 2. Kept working on an activity that was difficult. 3. Waited in line patiently. 4. Sat still when s/he was supposed to. 5. Waited for what s/he wanted. 6. Focused on tasks until they were finished. 7. Worked well with peers. 8. Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive. 9. Was thoughtful of the feelings of her/his peers. 10. Cooperated with peers without prompting. 11. Understood the feelings of her/his own peers. 12. Resolved problems with peers on her/his own.	<u>Revised Introduction</u> Teacher survey for students: (Class, name, surname) On a scale from 1 to 4, how well do each of the statements describe the student's behavior? 1. Worked on tasks until they were finished. ● 2. Asked for help when he/she needed it. ● 3. Kept working on an activity that was difficult. ● 4. Waited in line patiently. ● 5. Can wait for his/her turn. ● 6. Can raise his/her hand before speaking. ● 7. Resolved problems with peers on his/her own. ● 8. Worked well with peers during group tasks. ● 9. Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive. ● 10. Accepted losing in games. ● 11. Initiated conversation with peers in informal situations. ● <u>Response Options:</u> None of the time, A little of the time, Most of the time, All the time	The Introduction was adopted to clarify to which student the questionnaire belongs. It was made shorter because the rating is self-explanatory through the scales. Because the data will be gathered only once, the original instructions, observing the skills change four times a year, are not needed. 2: A recent study highlights that self-awareness about when help is needed and asking from peers is crucial for including new children (Sarti et al., 2019). 8: Moved to teacher questionnaire because children tend to respond not in a genuine way 5+6+10+11: Taken from Furman (2018) because his skillset is mentioned to be of crucial importance.	Persistence, Self-Control, Social competence

Note. Adoption process of initial teacher questionnaire. Own work.

After the questionnaires were created, they were translated into German and prime-administered to 6 primary school classes at school A. The data of 117 students and 6 teachers provided sufficient data for a Principal Axis Factor analysis, determining Cronbach's alpha for each subcategory/soft skill with SPSS and regrouping some items for the final questionnaire. The exact details are written in the participants and procedure section 2.5.

2.3.3. Reasons for adaption after piloting

Cronbach's alpha of the primed questionnaire showed acceptable-good reliability for the different categories, with subscales where the alpha ranges from 0.7 to 0.9 and is considered good quality (Kline, 2000). However, surprisingly, the alpha for measuring Mastery orientation resulted in $\alpha=0.495$, despite being translated word by word and used without any changes from Scarupa, H.J. (2014), which states an alpha of $\alpha=0.83$ in his research. The draft questionnaire also revealed a meager score of $\alpha=0.128$ for Academic self-sufficiency, despite being at $\alpha=0.83$ in the Scarupa, H.J. (2014) research. One reason for this low rating could be that younger students "tend to overestimate their capabilities" (West et al. 2020, p.296) or that the children might have understood something different when reading the questions in German. As a result, all those questions were rephrased for the final questionnaire, illustrated in detail in Figure 10 and 11 on the following pages.

However, the shallow score for Academic Self-sufficiency led to the exclusion of those questions and a further quest for a reliable set of questions that measure this skill. Upon further research regarding items based on CASEL's framework and reliability for testing academic self-efficiency in primary school children, the author added three items from the US CORE Districts SEL survey (2021) measuring Academic Self-efficiency. The CORE districts consist of 8 school districts, including around 1800 schools, over 1 million students, and 56700 educators in California, USA (CORE, 2021). A waiver from the U.S. Department of Education led them to "develop a measurement system that includes survey-based measures of Soft Skills and school culture and climate alongside traditional academic

indicators” (West, 2020, p.280). For creating their surveys, they also used the CASEL (2022) framework and focused on children of primary school age. CASEL's “Responsible decision-making” domain was initially excluded when creating the pilot questionnaire. On the one hand, it was to lower the workload for the teachers, who had to fill out 11 questions for each child. On the other hand, the dimension was excluded because of the tendency of children to answer underlying questions, e.g., “I say no to a friend who wants me to break the rules.” in a socially desirable way, therefore making the data not genuine (Dereli-Iman, 2013). However, on request and curiosity of many teachers after the piloted questionnaire, the Responsible decision-making questions were included in the final questionnaire, using questions from AUSTINISD (2016) Social and Emotional Learning Skills Survey, despite the possibility that the children were not honest. The AUSTINISD items, based on the same CASEL (2022) framework, were found to be reliable in their Spring 2016 report, where the survey was given to 74871 students.

2.3.4. Detailed adoptions for the final questionnaire

Figure 10

Self Control: $\alpha = 0.662 \Rightarrow 0.710$

Teacher survey
- Waited in line patiently. - Can wait for his/her turn. - Can raise his/her hand before speaking.
Student survey
- It is easy for me to sit still in the classroom. I can calm down quickly when I get upset. ($\alpha = 0.710$ when deleted $\Rightarrow$ Excluded in final survey) I prepare myself for the lesson when the teacher comes. I can wait in line patiently (added same item as in teacher qu.)

Persistence: $\alpha = 0.706$

Teacher survey
- Worked on tasks until they were finished. - Asked for help when he/she needed it. - Kept working on an activity that was difficult.
Student survey
- When I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time. - If I solve a problem wrong the first time, I just keep trying until I get it right. I can always get my homework done. ($\alpha = 0.706$ when added to Persistence)

Academic self-efficiency: $\alpha = 0.128 \Rightarrow$ new α to be determined

Student survey
I can learn the things taught in school. $\Rightarrow$ Excluded in final survey I can pack my school bag by myself. $\Rightarrow$ Excluded in final survey My desk is always in order, with all material ready for the lesson. $\Rightarrow$ Moved to Self-Control and rephrased to "I prepare myself..." I can always get my homework done. $\Rightarrow$ Moved to Persistence I can earn an A in my classes. (Added using CORE, 2021) I can do well on all my tests, even when they're difficult. (CORE, 2021) I am confident of learning what the school offers me. (CORE, 2021)

Added: Responsible decision making: $\alpha =$ to be determined

Student survey
- Before I make a decision, I think what might happen. (Added using AUSTINISD (2016) items based on CASELs framework) - I know what is right or wrong. (AUSTINISD, 2016) - I say "no" to a friend who wants me to break the rules. (AUSTINISD, 2016)

Mastery orientation: $\alpha = 0.495 \Rightarrow$ new α to be determined

Student survey
- I do my schoolwork because I like to learn new things. Rephrased: I do the schoolwork because I like to learn new things. I do my schoolwork because I'm interested in it. Rephrased: I want to learn the topics in school. I do my schoolwork because I enjoy it. Rephrased: I am improving myself to become better. Added: I gladly study hard to get a higher grade.

Social competence: $\alpha = 0.674 \Rightarrow 0.755$

Teacher survey
- Resolved problems with peers on his/her own. - Worked well with peers during group tasks. - Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive. - Accepted losing in games - Initiated conversation with peers in informal situations.
Student survey
I can have the courage to ask to join others' activities. ($\alpha = 0.755$ when deleted $\Rightarrow$ excluded in final survey)

Emotional competence $\alpha = 0.645 \Rightarrow \alpha = 0.73$

Student survey
- I understand my own moods and feelings ($\alpha = 0.730$ when deleted $\Rightarrow$ Rephrased: I know why I feel the way I do. - It is easy for me to understand why people feel the way they do. $\Rightarrow$ Rephrased: I know why others feel the way they do. - I understand why people react the way they do. - Added from SECQ: I understand why I react the way I do.

Note. Adoption process for the final questionnaire. Own work.

The ultimate soft-Skill dimensions and items of the final questionnaire are illustrated in Figure 11.

2.3.5. Final questionnaire items

Figure 11

Teacher survey

- Waited in line patiently.
- Can wait for his/her turn.
- Can raise his/her hand before speaking.

Student survey

- It is easy for me to sit still in the classroom.
- I prepare myself for the lesson when the teacher comes.
- I can wait in line patiently.

Self Control

Teacher survey

- Worked on tasks until they were finished.
- Asked for help when he/she needed it.
- Kept working on an activity that was difficult.

Student survey

- When I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time.
- If I solve a problem wrong the first time, I just keep trying until I get it right.
- I can always get my homework done.

Persistence

Student survey

- I can earn an A in my classes.
- I can do well on all my tests, even when they're difficult.
- I am confident of learning what the school offers me

Academic self-efficiency

Student survey

- I do the schoolwork because I like to learn new things.
- I gladly study hard to get a higher grade.
- I want to learn the topics in school.
- I am improving myself to become better.

Mastery orientation

Teacher survey

- Resolved problems with peers on his/her own.
- Worked well with peers during group tasks.
- Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive.
- Accepted losing in games
- Initiated conversation with peers in informal situations.

Social competence

Student survey

- I know why I feel the way I do.
- I know why others feel the way they do.
- I understand why people react the way they do.
- I understand why I react the way I do.

Emotional competence

Student survey

- Before I make a decision, I think what might happen.
- I know what is right or wrong.
- I say “no” to a friend who wants me to break the rules.

Responsible decision making

Note. Final questionnaire items. Own work.

2.4. Measuring successful inclusion

The previous chapter introduced how the research instrument for measuring the children's soft skills, a questionnaire for the teacher, who had to fill out one questionnaire for each student, and a student questionnaire measuring seven subscales/soft skills, was created, piloted, and adopted.

The following chapter is resorted to the factors impacting the soft-skill development to keep the soft-skill dimension under control. The literature review in section 1.3 described the classroom climate, the sociometric reality in each classroom, and the teachers' teaching didactics and attitudes. The ways they were measured in the authors's research are outlined below.

2.4.1. Classroom climate

The classroom climate was analyzed using an existing questionnaire from Sink & Spencer (2005), showing good internal consistency. The questionnaire can be seen in Table 10 on the next page. No changes were made, as the items were framed with younger students in mind and, based on the author's experience as a primary school teacher, are clear and fit very well for the younger age group.

Table 10

Item	Description	Component			
		Cohesion	Competitiveness	Friction	Satisfaction
5	Everybody is my friend	.78			
10	Some students are not my friends	.77			
15	All students are close friends	.67			
20	All students like one another	.66			
25	Students like each other as friends	.43			.21
18	Some students always try to do better than others		.69		
8	Most students want their work to be better than friend's		.66		
13	Some students feel bad when they don't do as well as others		.63		
23	Few students want to be first all the time		.62		
3	Students often race to see who can finish first		.58		
22	Students in my class fight a lot			.85	
2	Students are always fighting with each other			.82	
12	Many students in my class like to fight			.79	
21	Class is fun				.79
11	Students like my class				.77
1	Students enjoy schoolwork				.66
16	Some students don't like class	-.21			-.53
6	Some students are not happy		-.23		.36

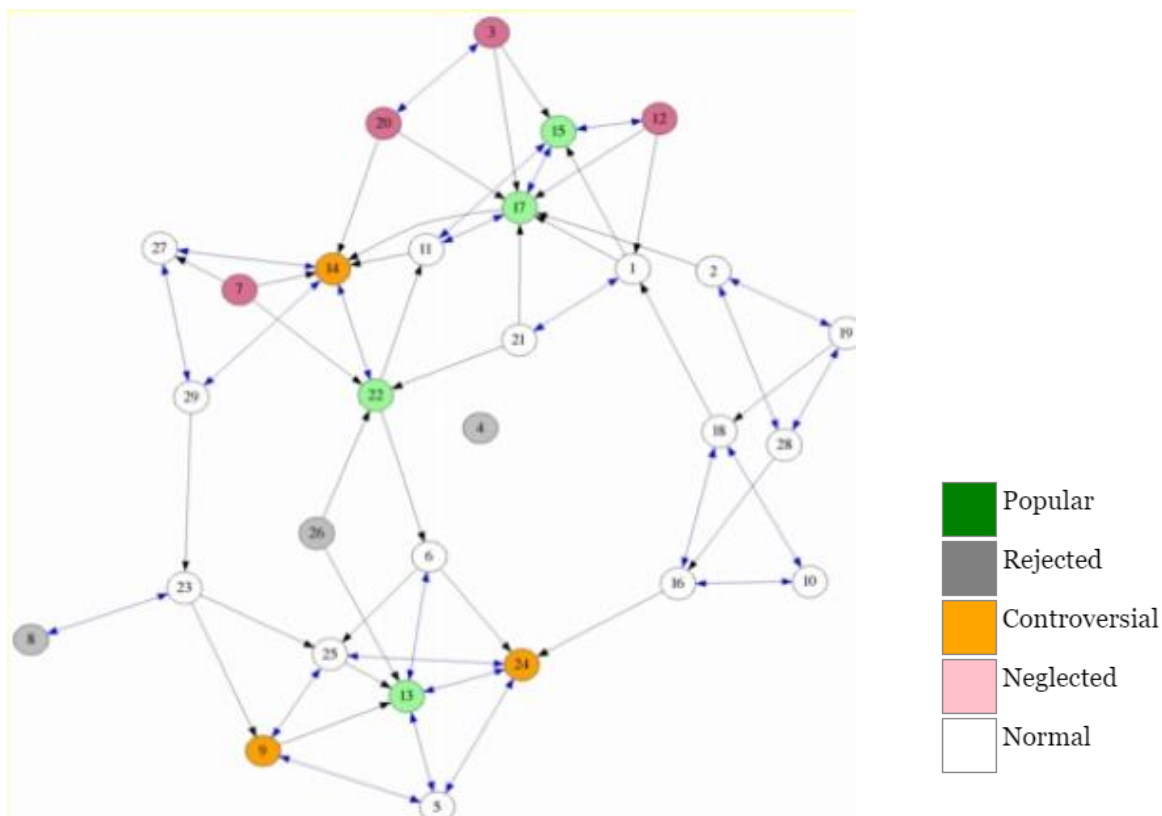
Note. Classroom climate measurement. From “My class inventory-short form as an accountability tool for elementary school counselors to measure classroom climate,” by C.A., Sink and L.R., Spencer, 2005, *Professional School Counseling*, 9(1), p. 43. Copyright 2005 by PSC.

2.4.2. Sociometric situation

The students' relationships with each other were made visible by creating sociograms. Sociograms are helpful for teachers to understand the student's social bonds inside their classroom, giving an overview of children who are excluded and seeing the different friend groups. To measure the sociometric situation in each participating class, the children wrote down three names of their peers they like most to play, and three whom they like least to play with.

Robin Banerjee (2024), a Professor of Developmental Psychology, created a tool to visualize the children's answers to those questions. The author used his tool for visualizing the sociometric situation in each class. An example taken from his website can be seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12



Note. Sociometric situation example. From *University of Sussex*. Copyright 2022 by Robin Banerjee.

The arrows in the image represent the children the students named, and the colors show their status in the classroom. Popular students mean that at least four other students have named them as friends with whom the student likes to play the most. Rejected means the contrary, being mentioned by at least two other children as least liked to play. Controversial means that an equal number of students like to play with the child and do not like to play with him or her. Neglected shows that very few students wrote down the name. A normal rating means that there is always one corresponding mention, meaning two children named each other, and the child is not mentioned as being disliked by more than one child.

2.4.3. Teacher observation

Because of a lack of time and resources on the author's side, the teacher observations were only possible at one of the two participating schools, at school A. An existing observation sheet from du Méric and Corbucci (2022) was used to observe the teachers. From the original teacher observation sheet, eight items were removed from the 23 items and regrouped based on SPSS principal factor analysis. The results of the final Cronbach's alpha were Communication ($\alpha = 0.880$), Interaction ($\alpha = 0.734$), Inclusive practices ($\alpha = 0.758$) and Leadership ($\alpha = 0.821$). The final observation sheet is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11

OBSERVATION SHEET	Never				Always
Comu1Listens to the pupils without anticipating/overstating their answers.	1	2	3	4	5
Comu2Organizes his speech coherently and logically.	1	2	3	4	5
Comu3Is open to points of view that differ from the own view.	1	2	3	4	5
Comu4Communicates empathically (tries to understand other people's way of thinking and if he can't accept it, doesn't make value judgments, generalize, or project your thoughts).	1	2	3	4	5
Comu8Communicates fluently, linking topics and fields of study.	1	2	3	4	5
Inter1Encourages mutual respect and positive relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
Inter2Encourages cohesion and inclusion within the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
Inter3Intervenes sensitively in the event of discomfort, misunderstanding or conflict.	1	2	3	4	5
Prac1Offers activities that stimulate interaction, active experimentation and teamwork.	1	2	3	4	5
Prac2Diversifies the activities proposed with a view to individualization, personalization, and inclusion.	1	2	3	4	5
Prac3Leaves room for autonomy of thought and action (stimulates the pupils to seek solutions on their own in a critical way).	1	2	3	4	5
Lead1Makes students participate in some decision-making processes.	1	2	3	4	5
Lead3Motivates the students and helps them build self-confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
Lead5Appreciates student contributions and progress.	1	2	3	4	5
Lead7Inspires, engages and challenges students.	1	2	3	4	5

Note. Teacher observation sheet. From “*Narrare humanum est - Percorsi Open badge di narrazione per l’ambito educativo e formativo*,” by E.R. du Mérac and M., Corbucci, 2022, in A. La Marca & A. Marzano (Eds.) *Ricerca didattica e formazione insegnanti per lo sviluppo delle Soft Skills. Atti del convegno Nazionale SIRD*, p. 386. Copyright 2022 by Pensa MultiMedia srl.

2.4.4. Problem-centered teacher interviews

Because of the, in the literature review outlined importance of the childrens’ main teacher and because “the quality of inclusion depends especially on those who are members of a particular school context, i.e., teachers, parents and children, their attitudes and beliefs” (Soresi et al. 2013, p.188), the author chose to do an interview since the class teacher spends

the most time with the children. However, various ways of conducting an interview exist, like the exploratory expert interview, used to collect data about “unknown or hardly known fields” (Döringer, 2021, p. 266) or the systematizing expert interview, gathering data from experts in a structured and comprehensive way to achieve “a high level of data comparability” (Döringer, 2021, p. 266). There is also the theory-generating expert interview. It focuses on developing theoretical frameworks and stresses “inductive theory development based on empirical data” (Döringer, 2021, p. 267).

However, most of these approaches mainly use inductive coding for analyzing the data. The data from the experts is gathered, and afterward, codes are generated from it to answer the research questions. However, for this research, there is not just the necessity to generate codes from the teachers' views about the inclusion process because some codes are already predetermined through the research questions. Therefore, the interview approach is not solemnly indicative but rather a combination of both deductive and inductive. Because of the specific requirements needed for answering the research questions, which also foreshadow the creation of additional codes, the author decided to use the Problem Centered Interview, according to Witzel (1982, 2000). The problem-centered interview (PCI)

“is a theory-generating method that tries to neutralize the alleged contradiction between being directed by theory or being open-minded so that the interplay of inductive and deductive thinking contributes to increasing the user's knowledge” (Witzel, 2000, p.1)

and

“qualitative face-to-face interview method that draws upon central principles of qualitative research such as openness, flexibility, and process orientation” (Döringer, S., 2021, p. 268).

The PCI is commonly used in sociology, political science, and pedagogics as a research method of a qualitative nature (Döringer, 2021).

It starts with a pre-interview questionnaire, where the interviewee is confronted with the topic. In the case of this research, it was done by informing the teachers about the topic and scope of this research as well as through the soft-skills teacher questionnaire, which the teachers filled out for each child before the interview, letting a familiarization with the topic take place. The following phase consists of a preformulated introductory question to let the interviewee speak freely and a general exploration through a narrative example about daily life to loosen blockades (Witzel & Reiter, 2012). After the general introduction, more precise and ad hoc questions are asked, where the focus is not forming a question-and-answer process but having a natural conversation (Döringer, 2021). The specific ad-hoc questions during the conversation are based on the Index indicators of Dimension C and are guided by a mainly deductive approach (Döringer, 2021). The PCI has a dialogic-discursive structure, where, after letting the interviewee talk for some time, a gradual shift takes place. The interviewer slowly guides the thematic topics (Mey, 2000). Because the PCI suggests being used in combination with questionnaires while at the same time focusing on the teachers' views and giving the author the freedom to talk about specific topics, it was used as research method for looking at successful school inclusion of newcomers.

2.4.5. Deductive and inductive coding

The interviews were transcribed word by word and then inserted into the coding program MAXQDA. Using deductive and inductive coding, the tool allowed the author to stay organized and analyze all qualitative data efficiently. As described in the previous section, the analysis started with deductive codes based on the research questions. Then, it was looked inductively for other codes that could be derived from the transcribed interview data to give more insight into the newcomers' successful school inclusion, teacher competence and attitude.

2.5. Participants and procedure

In this chapter, detailed information about the participants for each, in the previous two sections described research instrument is given, and how it was measured is explained.

2.5.1. Teacher and student soft skill questionnaires

The first draft of the soft-skills questionnaire was primed at school A in June 2022 using six classes (n=117). The draft questionnaires were filled out by 57 male students and 61 female students (mean age=9.07). Based on the analysis using SPSS, and with the scope of high internal consistency, the student and teacher questionnaires were improved and subsequently distributed between March and April 2023 at school A and school B. In the final study, a total of 11 third and fourth-grade classes (n=249), with 123 male students and 126 female students (mean age=8.98), as well as their teachers (n=11), participated.

The teacher questionnaire was given to the teachers before handing out the children questionnaire to familiarize them with the subject matter of the research, which is necessary for Witzel's (2000) problem-centered interview. Each teacher filled out a questionnaire for each of her students in class. The pupils filled out the children's questionnaire whenever the class teacher had time throughout the school day. Even though the language of instruction and subjects are all in German, most students have German as their second language, which is why some teachers explained the items one after another and verified in case there were comprehension difficulties. Others did not explain it because of a lack of time. However, if the children had questions about the meaning of an item in the questionnaire, all teachers explained it to them.

2.5.2. Classroom climate und sociometric situation questionnaire

The questionnaires for the students, measuring the classroom climate and sociometric situation in each class, were given to each teacher shortly after they had finished filling out their questionnaire about each of their students' soft skills. They let their children fill it out whenever they had time between April and May 2023. Data from a total of n=194 of the 249 students was collected because the teachers of class 3 and class 10 had no time to hand out the second questionnaire.

2.5.3. Teacher observations

A total of 27 observations were made at School A. The teachers were observed during the second semester of the scholastic year 22/23 whenever the author and a student doing a teacher-training internship had time. The second observer was used as an aid so as not to let the results be biased. The author made 11 observations, and the internship student made 16. Before entering their lessons, the teachers were asked about a fitting time. Google Forms collected the data with iPads during all classroom settings, including group work, introductory lessons, and teacher-centered lessons. The child observations only occurred at School A because the author had no time or resources to visit School B regularly.

2.5.4. Teacher interviews

A total of 10 of the 11 participating teachers could be interviewed. The teacher of class 6 at school B was on a spontaneous school trip during the interview day and did not respond upon further request to do the interview online. The results section shows how this affected the results of class 6. The teacher interviews at School B were done on the 17th of March. The interviews at School A were done within the week after, between the 20th and 24th of March. By this time, the children and the class teachers had completed the questionnaire.

Because Witzel's (2000) problem-centered interview included a pre-interview questionnaire, the time was fitting since all teachers could be confronted with the topic about the relationship between students' soft skills and successful inclusion before the interview was conducted. The interviews took place mainly in the teachers' classrooms after school finished and during leisure time when the author and the teacher had no lessons. All the interviews were recorded and lasted between 15 and 30 minutes.

The interviews were transcribed with MaxQDA and ordered into nine categories, illustrated in Table 12 with the percentage of the total transcribed material from both schools.

Table 12

	Percentage
Inclusion process	32.28
Strategies for successful inclusion	13.92
Challenges and Issues	12.03
Student and parental background	10.76
Academic performance and language skills	8.23
Understanding issues of questionnaire and sociogram feedback	6.96
Social dynamics in the classroom	5.70
Teacher background and didactics	5.70
Factors contributing to successful inclusion	4.43

Note. Percentages of transcribed material. Own work.

Chapter three: Results

This chapter presents the results of the soft-skills children and teacher questionnaires, the classroom climate questionnaire, the sociometric situation in each participating class, the in-class observations of their teachers, and the interviews with them.

3.1. Soft skills

The analysis of the final questionnaires with SPSS 25 showed only four factors instead of the original seven. After removing three from the 11-item teacher questionnaire and ten from the 20-item children questionnaire, some items were regrouped, and Social Competence and Self Control were combined and renamed to “Social Management”.

The final soft skill dimensions and Cronbach’s alpha were Social Management ($\alpha = 0.892$), Persistence ($\alpha = 0.731$), Mastery Orientation ($\alpha = 0.715$) and Emotional Competence ($\alpha = 0.643$). The final items and factors can be seen in Table 13 on the following page, where values below .035 are suppressed.

Table 13

	1	2	3	4
MAST1 I do the schoolwork because I like to learn new things		.802		
MAST2 I gladly study hard to get a higher grade.		.660		
MAST3 I want to learn the topics in school.		.711		
MAST4 I am improving myself to become better.		.709		
EMOT1 I know why I feel the way I do.				.653
EMOT2 I know why others feel the way they do.				.573
EMOT3 I understand why people react the way they do.				.517
EMOT4 I understand why I react the way I do.				.724
EMOT5 I know what is right or wrong.				.606
PERS1 Worked on tasks until they were finished			.784	
PERS2 Asked for help when he/she needed it.			.784	
PERS3 Kept working on an activity that was difficult.			.573	
SOCI1 Waited in line patiently.	.694			
SOCI2 Can raise his/her hand before speaking.	.824			
SOCI3 Resolved problems with peers on his/her own.	.860			
SOCI4 Worked well with peers during group tasks.	.762			
SOCI5 Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive.	.765			
SOCI6 Accepted losing in games.	.794			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Note. Final Soft Skill Dimensions and their Cronbachs alpha. Own work.

Further results using ANOVA analyses showed a significance ($F(2, 237)=8.55$; $p<0.01$) of the Emotional skills between the different age groups, age 8 ($M=2.93$), age 9 ($M=3.05$), and age 10 ($M=3.28$). The Mastery Orientation skill was significantly different between the genders ($F(1, 242)=9.44$; $p<0.01$), where males had a lower level of this skill ($M=3.13$ compared to females $M=3.35$). This skill was also significantly different ($F(1, 242)=12.04$; $p<0.01$) between third ($M=3.36$) and fourth grade ($M=3.11$). The gender difference was additionally found with Social Management ($F(1, 224)=17.90$; $p<0.01$), where males resulted much lower ($M=3.16$) compared to females ($M=3.51$). Furthermore, significant differences in all skills among the different classes emerged. Emotional Skills ($F(10, 223)=2.01$; $p<0.01$),

ranged for some classes from M=2.80 to other classes having M=3.40, for Mastery orientation ($F(10, 223)=2.75$; $p<001$), from M= 2.97 to M=3.55, for Social Management ($F(9, 216)=3.20$; $p<001$), from M=3.00 to M=3.72, and for Persistence ($F(9, 216)=2.72$; $p<01$), from M= 2.93 to M=3.54. The Social Management and Persistence skill in Table 14 is missing for Class 2, because the teacher did not fill out the questionnaires.

Table 14

Mean

Classes	EMOTIONAL	MASTERY	SOCIAL M.	PERSISTENCE
1	2.91	3.26	3.73	3.55
2	3.06	3.47		
3	2.89	3.49	3.29	3.31
4	2.92	3.33	3.46	2.99
5	3.04	3.55	3.29	3.29
6	3.19	3.13	3.53	3.42
7	3.40	3.27	3.42	3.43
8	3.15	2.98	3.01	2.93
9	3.22	3.07	3.07	3.03
10	3.02	3.06	3.52	3.35
11	3.12	3.13	3.12	3.14

Note. Mean comparison Soft Skills in each class. Own work.

Significant results between male and female participants were found for Mastery Orientation ($t(242)=3.07$; $p<001$) and Social Management ($t(224)=4.23$; $p<001$).

Table 15

Soft Skill	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
MASTERY	Male	121	3.14	.57	.05
	Female	123	3.36	.56	.05
SOCIAL	Male	113	3.17	.68	.06
	Female	113	3.51	.53	.05

Note. Gender comparison with Mastery Orientation and Social Management. Own work.

Furthermore, a significant difference was found between the third and fourth grades regarding the Emotional Skill ($t(242)=2.76$; $p<001$) and Mastery Orientation skill ($t(242)=3.47$; $p<001$).

Table 16

Soft Skill	class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
EMOTIONAL	third grade	135	3.00	.56	.04
	fourth grade	109	3.18	.46	.04
MASTERY	third grade	135	3.36	.55	.04
	fourth grade	109	3.11	.57	.05

Note. Class Comparison Emotional Skills and Mastery Orientation. Own work.

A further T-Test analysis of the Soft skills also showed a significant difference between the Emotional Skills of the schools ($t(242)=2.38$; $p<05$).

Table 17

Soft Skill	school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EMOTIONAL	A	108	3.17	.55	.05
	B	136	3.01	.49	.04

Note. School comparison with Emotional skills. Own work.

In addition, a MANOVA multivariate analysis was conducted on the Soft Skills. There was a significant difference of the Emotional Skill when the variables of newcomer, gender, and grade were considered jointly with Wilk's $\Lambda = .946$, $F(2,235) = 6.65$, $p<005$, partial $\eta^2 = .054$. A separate ANOVA was conducted for each dependent variable, with each ANOVA evaluated at an alpha level of 0.25. There was a significant difference between male and

female newcomers in third and fourth grade on Emotional Skills when compared to the non-newcomers $F(1,214) = 15.74$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .069$, Means visible in Table 18.

Table 18

Dependent Variable	Newcomer	gender	grade	Mea n	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
EMOTIONAL	Newcomer	Male (n=12)	third grade (4)	3.24	.23	2.78	3.69
			fourth grade (8)	2.83	.18	2.46	3.18
		Female (n=11)	third grade (6)	2.76	.19	2.37	3.14
			fourth grade (5)	3.67	.29	3.08	4.25
	No newcomer	Male (n=110)	third grade (50)	2.91	.06	2.78	3.04
			fourth grade	3.22	.07	3.07	3.36
		Female (n=116)	third grade	3.09	.06	2.96	3.22
			fourth grade (58)	3.20	.07	3.03	3.32

Note. Multivariable analysis of newcomer, gender, and class with emotional skill. Own work.

There was furthermore a significant difference in the Emotional Skill when considered jointly on the variables Newcomer and Classes with Wilk's $\Lambda = .860$, $F(18,202) = 1.75$, $p < .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .073$. There was a significant difference between the newcomers and their classmates in the different classes regarding the Emotional Skill $F(9,202) = 1.864$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .077$ with newcomers in classes 1, 9, 10, 11 having lower Emotional Skills compared to their classmates. In Classes 2, 3, 6, and 8, the newcomers have higher Emotional Skills than their classmates. The exact Means are visible in Table 19 on the next page.

Table 19

Dependent Variable	Classes	Mean Newcomer	Mean Classmates	Mean Male	Mean Female
EMOTIONAL	1	1.50	2.94	2.98	2.84
	2	4.00	3.01	2.53	3.48
	3	3.10	2.86	2.87	2.92
	4	3.00	2.91	3.08	2.75
	5	3.10	3.03	2.91	3.14
	6	3.40	3.18	3.20	3.18
	7	3.40	3.40	3.36	3.47
	8	3.60	3.13	3.26	3.06
	9	2.50	3.29	3.19	3.27
	10	2.60	3.08	2.84	3.14
	11	2.87	3.17	3.02	3.31

Note. Emotional Skill Menas. Own work.

3.2. Classroom climate

As described in 2.4.1, Sink & Spencer (2005) questionnaires were used, showing good internal consistency. As explained before, the lower the score, the higher the underlying climate. Comparing the Means showed the results, visible in Table 20, for the classroom climate in each class.

Table 20

Classes	COHSUM	FRICSUM	SATISUM	COMPESUM
1	7.68	5.91	8.41	8.14
2	10.16	5.26	9.00	7.37
4	8.38	6.00	7.95	8.24
5	9.39	5.83	9.04	8.09
6	6.62	5.86	7.57	7.67
7	8.78	5.74	8.65	7.91
8	8.83	6.17	9.50	7.25
9	9.27	6.00	9.00	7.73
11	8.22	4.83	9.06	8.50

Note. Mean comparison of Classroom Climate in each class. Own work.

The T-Test on the Classroom Climate results showed a significant difference between the schools and the Cohesion Climate ($t(191)=4.13$; $p<001$), with school B having a significantly higher level of Cohesion ($M=7.90$) compared to school A ($M=9.17$).

Table 21**Group Statistics**

Classroom climate	school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
COHESION	A	105	9.17	2.04	.19
	B	88	7.90	2.20	.23

Note. School Comparison with Cohesion. Own work.

Significant differences between males and females were also found with Cohesion ($t(191)=2.62$; $p<05$) and Friction ($t(191)=2.81$; $p<001$). As displayed below, males have significantly higher Cohesion ($M=8.19$) and Friction ($M=5.47$) than females.

Table 22

Classroom climate	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
COHESION	Male	98	8.19	1.99	.20
	Female	95	9.01	2.33	.23
FRICTION	Male	98	5.47	1.48	.15
	Female	95	6.06	1.45	.14

Note. Gender Comparison with Cohesion and Friction Climate. Own work.

Furthermore, it showed the third and fourth grades significantly different levels of Cohesion ($T(191)=2.35$; $p<05$), with the fourth graders having a higher level ($M=8.19$).

Table 23

Classroom climate	class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
COHESION	third grade	107	8.93	2.33	.22
	fourth grade	86	8.19	1.96	.21

Note. Class Comparison with Cohesion. Own work.

3.3. Sociometric situation and inclusion

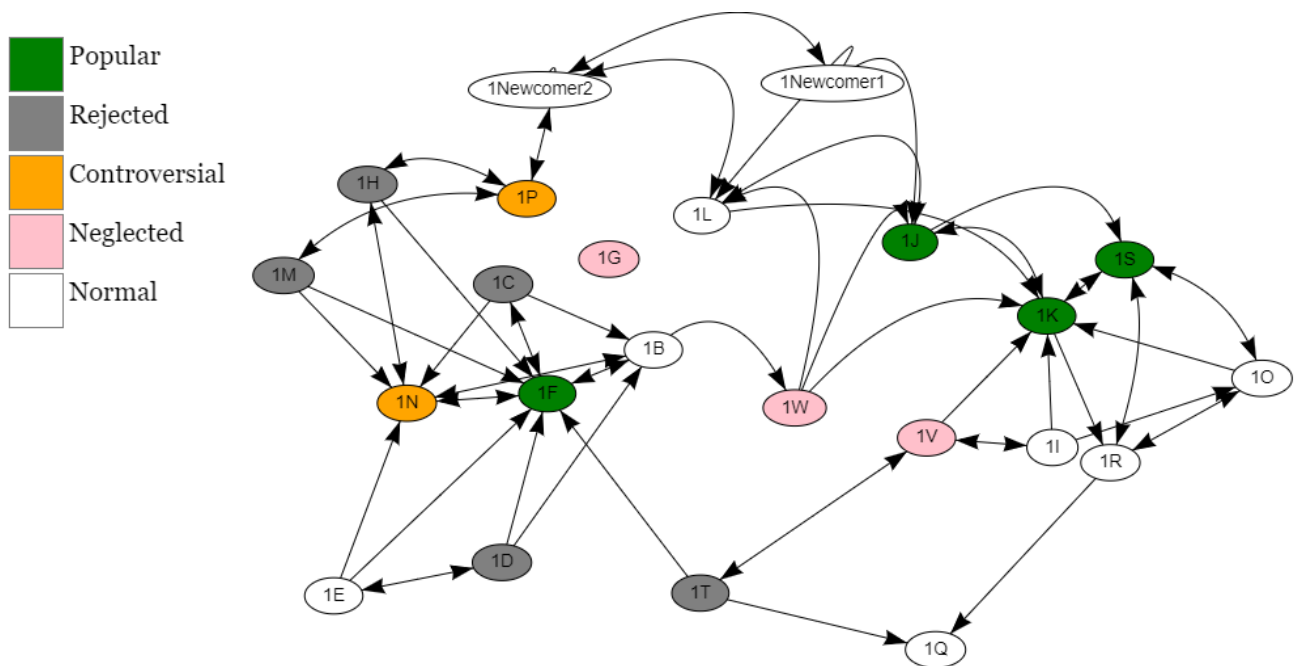
The results of the sociometric situation of each class are visualized in this section in combination with part of the interview data about the inclusion process of the new children. This was done to confirm the class's visible sociogram with the teachers' opinion, letting the below-pictured sociograms represent the reality of the class more reliably.

The illustrations for Least liked and Most Liked are only shown for the first class and then described in written form for the following classes in order to not overload this section while at the same time giving the reader an overview of what data served for describing the

sociometric situation of the following classes where the focus lies primarily on the newcomer. Class 3 and 10 did not fill out the sociometric questionnaire. Therefore, only a summary of the teachers' opinions regarding their inclusion is presented.

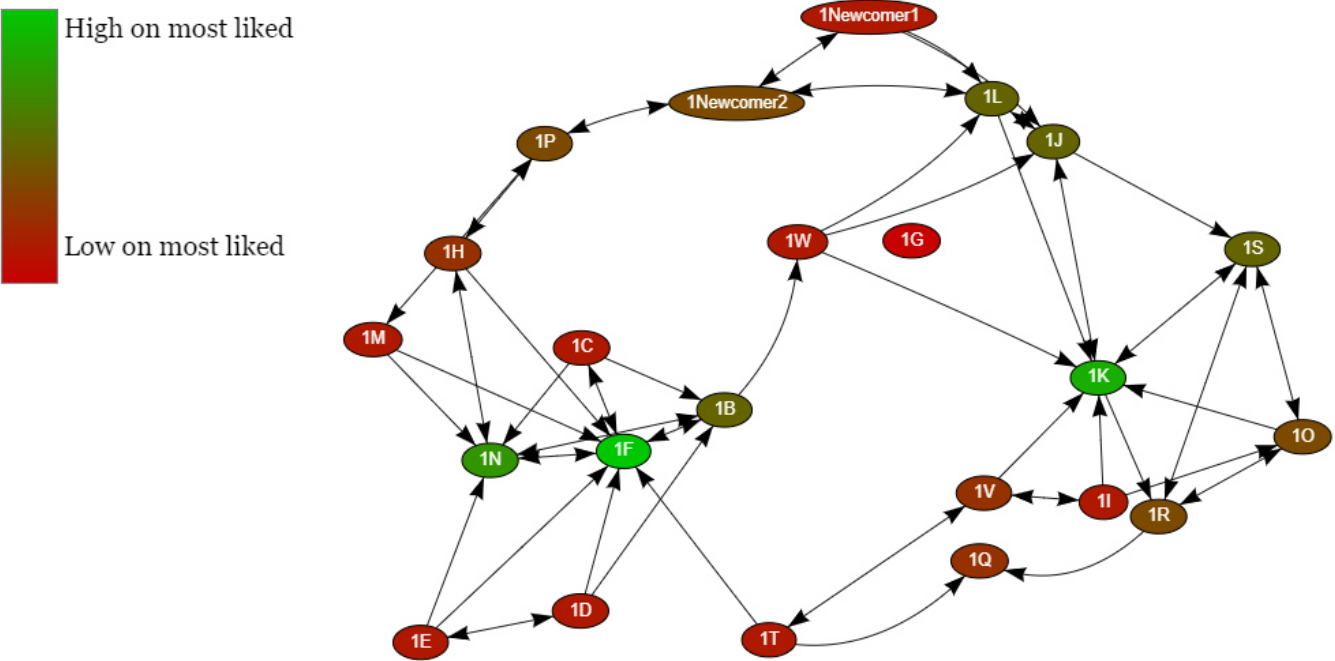
3.3.1. Class 1

Figure 13



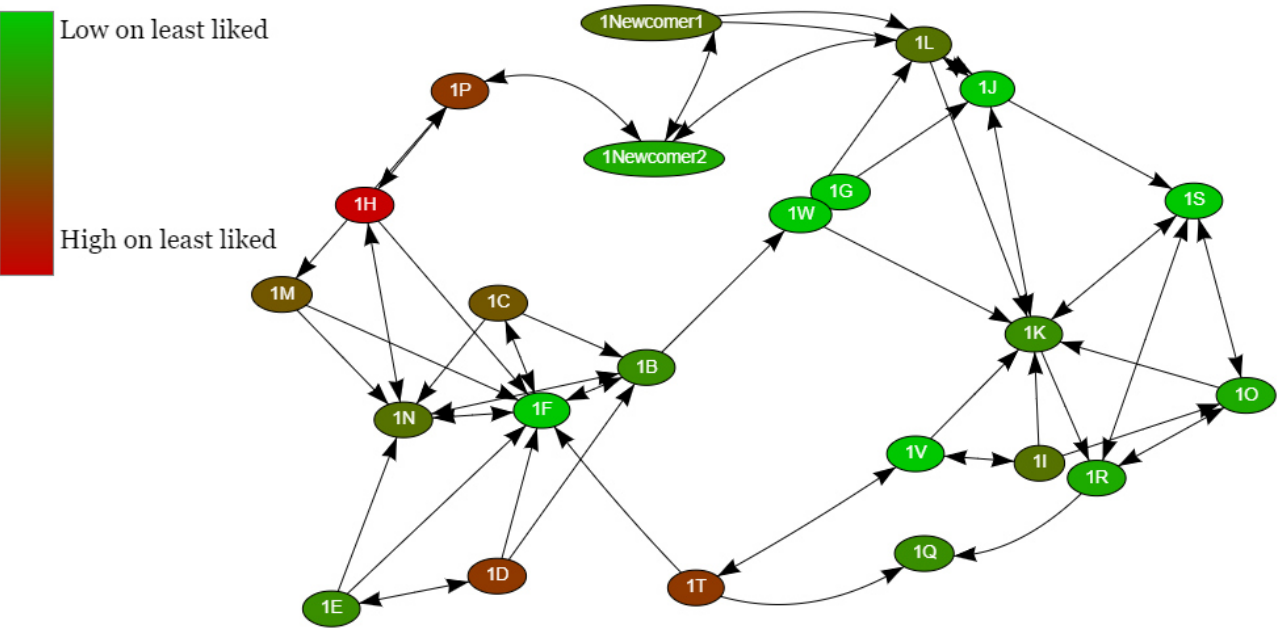
Note. Sociometric situation of class 1. Own work.

Figure 14



Note. Most liked children of class 2. Own work.

Figure 15



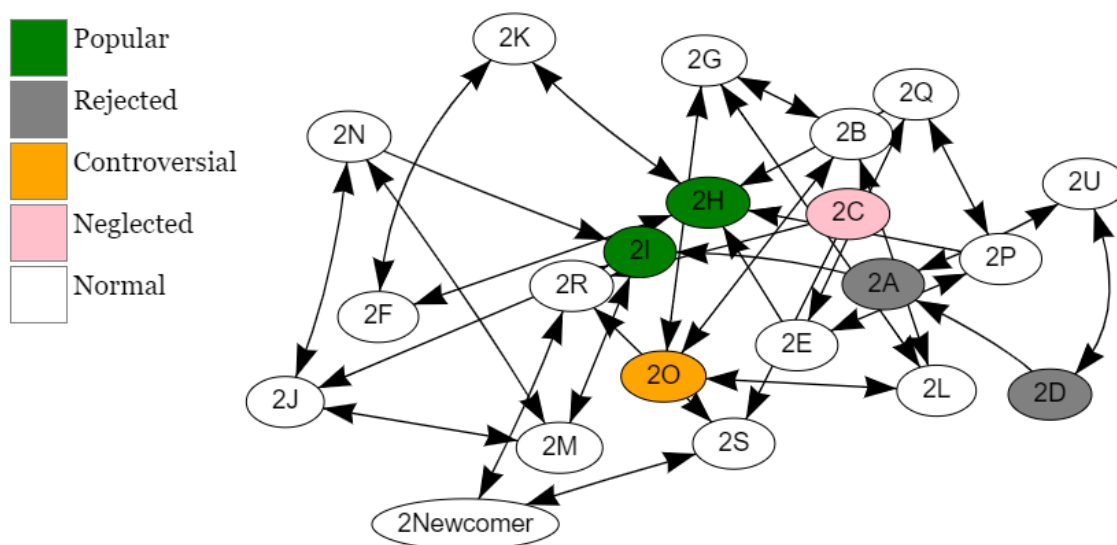
Note. Least liked children of class 2. Own work.

Newcomer1 and Newcomer2, both eight years old and female, have a normal status within the class and are friends. Newcomer2 has two other corresponding play buddies (1P and 1L) in the class, who also mentioned her as a favorite child to play with. They are both low on least liked and low on most liked.

According to the class teacher, Newcomer1 is well included, even though she is supposed to be in 5th grade because of her age. She speaks French as her mother tongue and comes from America, having visited a different school system there, so the teacher decided to let her have one year as a “buffer period for catching up with her German”. Character-wise, she is easily stressed, and the teacher mentioned that it was the best decision to keep her in fourth grade because she is still very childish, and the 5th grade “would have been too overwhelming for her”. She feels good in her new class, has many friends, and does not cause any problems. Regarding Newcomer2, the teacher mentioned that from the beginning, she had found Newcomer1 to be a friend, and they always played together. The German level of Newcomer2 is excellent, but “you could not read anything she wrote” because her writing was “catastrophic,” and she is generally chaotic. However, that did not prevent her from being well included; she has no issues with the other children and gladly comes to school.

3.3.2. Class 2

Figure 16



Note. Sociometric within class 2. Own work.

The Newcomer in class 2 is female and nine years old. She has a normal social status within the class. She had two corresponding play buddies (2R and 2S) when taking the survey. She scored low on least liked and average for most liked. This result corresponds with the class teachers' opinions, saying that "she could connect quickly to the girl's group in the class" and stating the same friends as visible in the sociogram, mentioning that "right from the start she was with them". However, during the after-school program, she was excluded at the beginning of the school year because her friends did not stay for the afternoon. After some months, however, it "resolved itself, and she is welcome now with the other girls," letting her be glad in the afterschool program, and there are no more problems. "Everything is fine now with Norah" is also due to her father being German, letting her have no problems understanding the lessons.

3.3.3. Class 3

In class 3, there are two newcomers. Newcomer1 is female and eight years old, Newcomer2 is male and nine years old. According to the teacher, Newcomer1 had problems in the beginning because of a girl in her class who was strongly mobbing her, telling her:

“You don’t belong here, and your parents throw out the school money to the window”.

Newcomer1 was affected very intensely. She “became hesitant to interact with the others”.

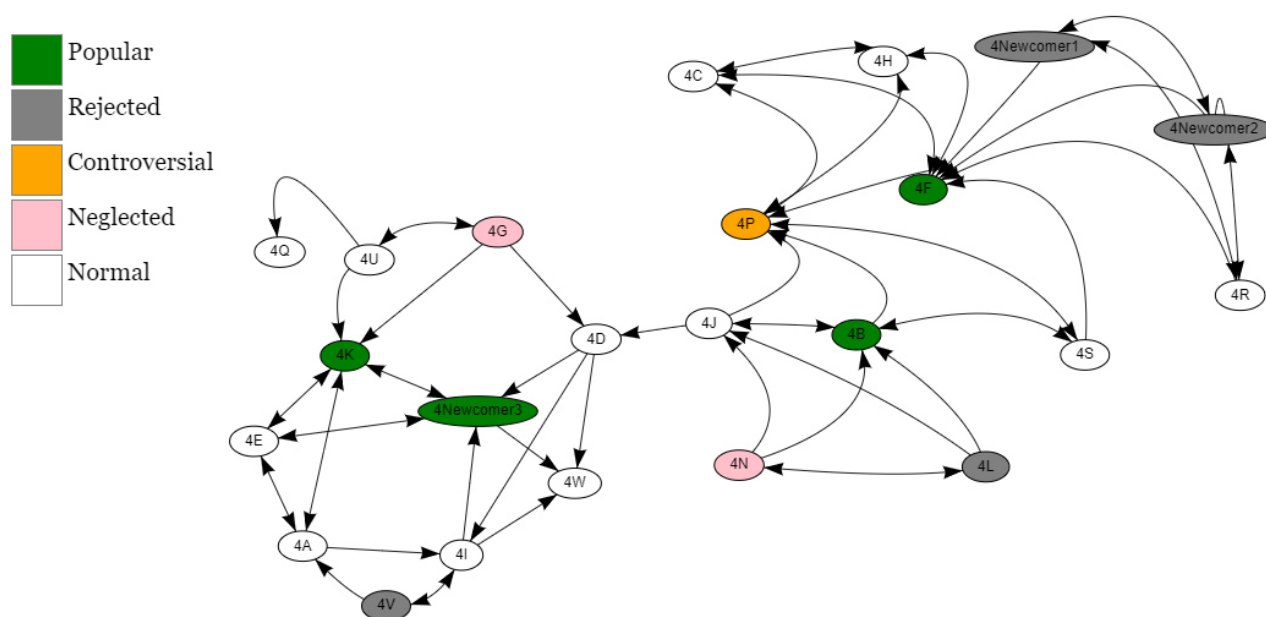
Moreover, the whole class atmosphere became very bad. However, the class-teacher could talk to both children's parents and manage to change the atmosphere by letting all be aware of their own feelings. The girl who said it could also repent and reconcile with Newcomer1.

After those initial difficulties, Newcomer1 is well included, also due to the two girls in the class she knew before she started at the German school. Teacher3 is very thankful for the principal’s decision at the beginning to put her in the class so she could be with the two girls she knew before. This decision “saved” Newcomer1 because her friends stayed with her during the problematic beginning and did not leave her.

Newcomer 2 had no problems at all. From the first day on, “you didn’t recognize at all he came new”, found many friends and is very well included.

3.3.4. Class 4

Figure 17



Note. Sociometric situation of class 4. Own work.

Newcomer1, male, nine years old, and Newcomer2, male, eight years old, are both rejected from the class. However, they are play buddies. Newcomer2 has an additional play buddy (4R) who also likes to play with Newcomer1. They both resulted in high scores for least liked and normal for most liked.

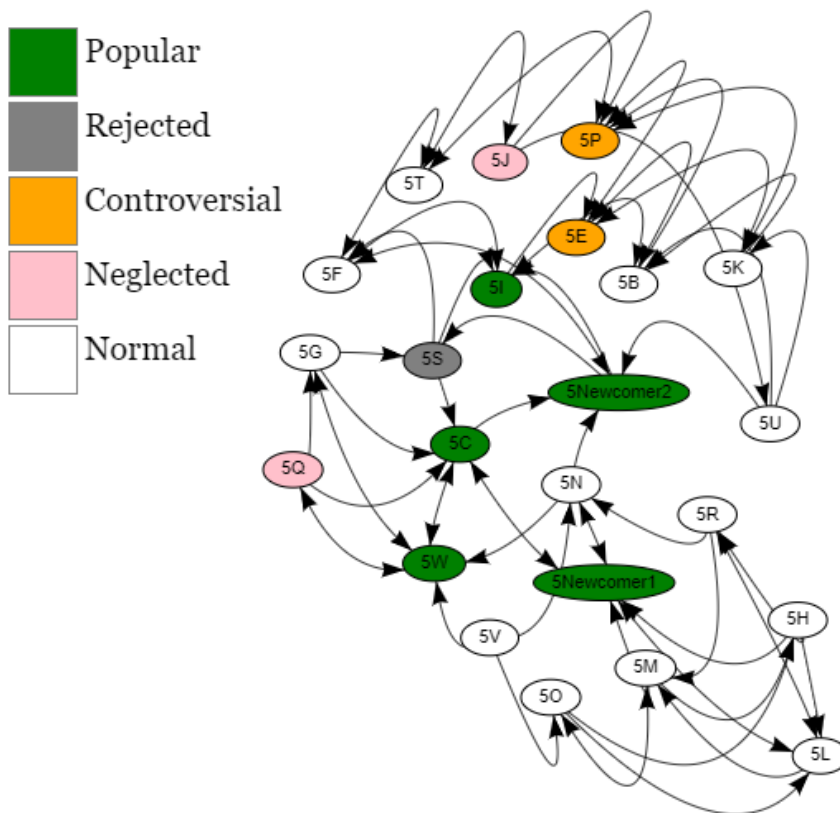
Newcomer3, female, eight years is popular, has two corresponding play buddies (4K and 4E), and is low on least liked and high on most liked.

The teacher agrees with the sociogram, showing “the reality”. Newcomer1 made many problems, especially at the beginning of the school year, coming from Berlin, but his father is Italian. Newcomer1 “always wanted to have all the attention of the others” and is “very emotional”. The teacher feels sorry for him because he was already at school B at the German school during kindergarten, but his parents took him to Berlin, stripped him of all his friends, and now he is back again many years later. He is best friends with Newcomer2, even though the mother tongue of Newcomer2 is Spanish. The teacher allowed Newcomers1 and 2 to sit next to each other because of the “social importance for both of them”, although they often distract each other and do not do the exercises well together.

Newcomer2 had a period during the school year when he became very enclosed and cried often. After many talks with his parents and him, the teacher found out that he was so sad that his friend Newcomer1 was not in his Italian-for-beginners' group, having a higher level of Italian. He was "always sad that his friend was not there and could not work with the other children". After realizing that allowing them this unique bond is counterproductive and stops them from being included with the rest of the class, the teacher did not allow them to sit beside each other anymore. After her decision, they found new friends, especially 4F and 4R, visible in the sociogram. They are both "well included and can play and work with the other children".

3.3.5. Class 5

Figure 18

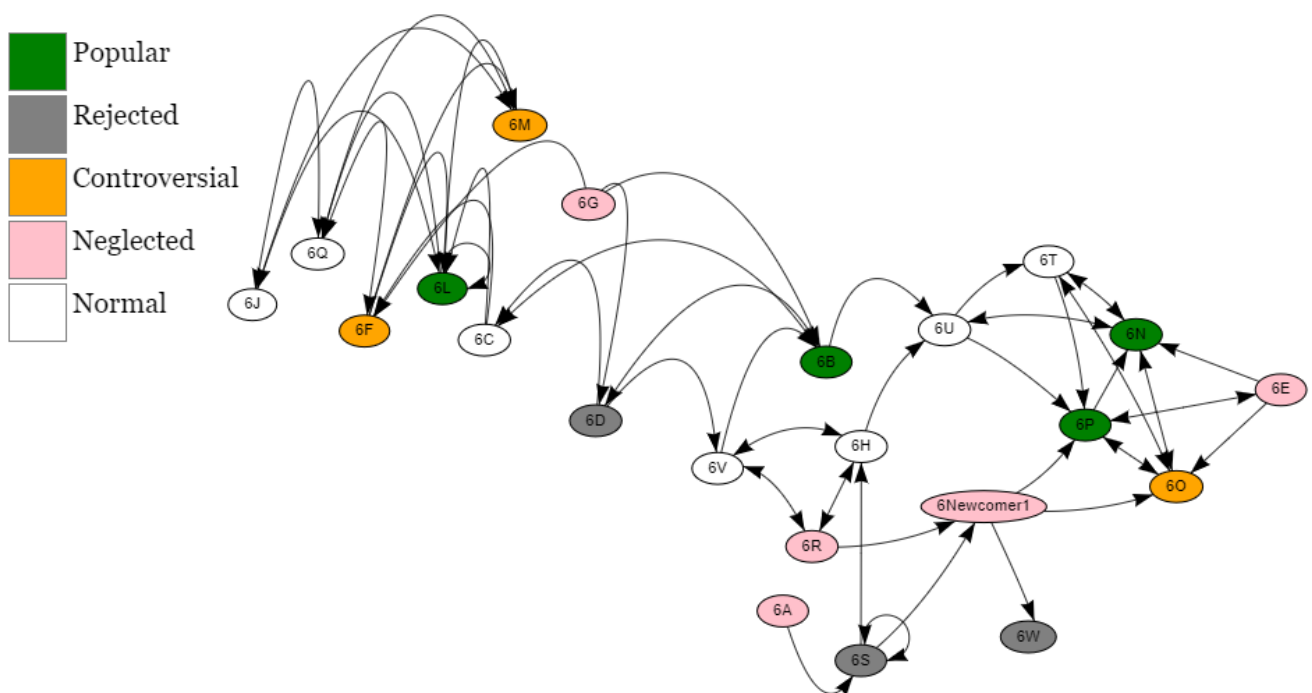


Note. Sociometric situation of class 5. Own work.

Newcomer 1, male, nine years, and Newcomer 2, female, eight years, are popular in the class, and many children like to play with them. Newcomer 1 has three corresponding play buddies (5L, 5N and 5C). Newcomer2 has one play buddy (5F). They are both low on least liked and high on most liked. The interview showed the same results, showing that both children are very well included. Newcomer1 “spoke already very good German and Italian” when he came, allowing him to socialize with both German and Italian-speaking children during breaks. The same is true for Newcomer2, which “had a “very positive impact on the whole class due to her calm and friendly character”.

3.3.6. Class 6

Figure 19



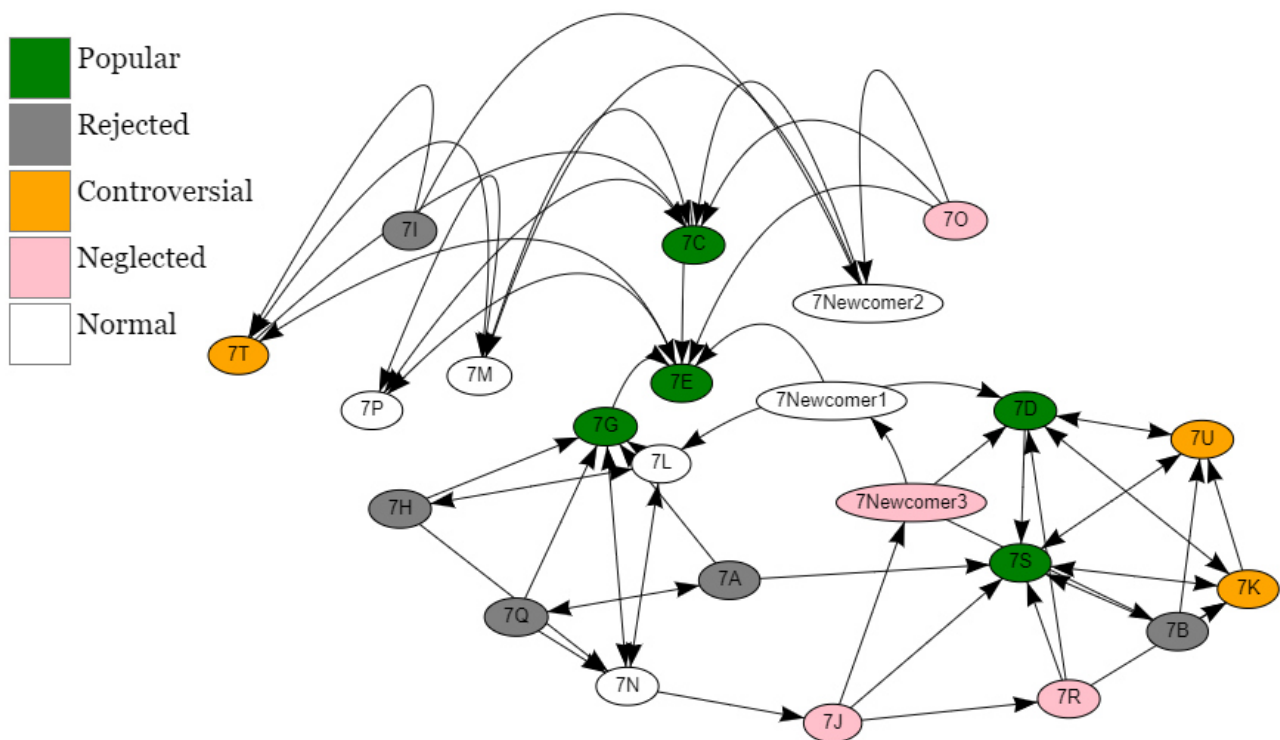
Note. Sociometric situation of class 6. Own work.

Newcomer1, female, nine years is neglected, having as play buddies one popular child (6P), one controversial child (6O), and one rejected child (6W). However, none of them mentioned Newcomer1 as their play buddy. Newcomer1 does not mention those who like to play with her (6R and 6S) as play buddies. She is low on the least liked and in the middle

of the most liked scale. When the author was conducting the interviews, Teacher6 was on a school trip with her class, and upon further request to do the interview online, there was no response. Therefore, the interview could not occur, and only the sociogram data was used to determine the success of the inclusion.

3.3.7. Class 7

Figure 20



Note. Sociometric situation of class 7. Own work.

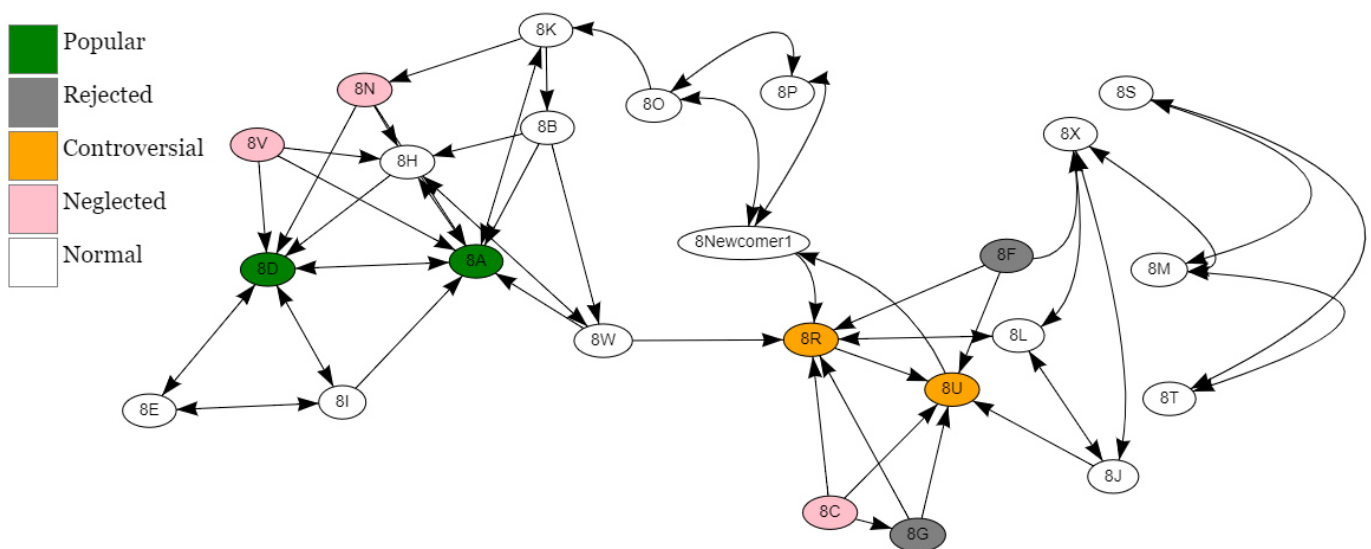
Newcomer1, male, nine years, and Newcomer2, female, ten years, have a normal social status in the class. However, Newcomer3, a nine-year-old male, appeared neglected, and only one child mentioned him as his favorite play buddy. All three of them are low on least liked. Newcomer 2 is ranked average on most liked, Newcomer1 and Newcomer3 are both low on most liked, with children already in the class preferring to play more with their old classmates. All three of them are also low on least liked. All of them have no corresponding

mention with other children; the children the newcomers mentioned as favorite children to play with did not mention them on their sheet.

The teacher agrees with the results about Newcomer1 and Newcomer2; they are “normal in the class, found friends, and are well included”. The teacher, however, was surprised about Newcomer3. Even though he came at the beginning of the second semester and was not long in the class, he “was very well included from the beginning; there were no problems”. The teacher mentioned that the “wrong sociometric data” resulted probably because the children maybe had issues during the break where they played soccer but did not represent his position in the class. He also speaks excellent German.

3.3.8. Class 8

Figure 21



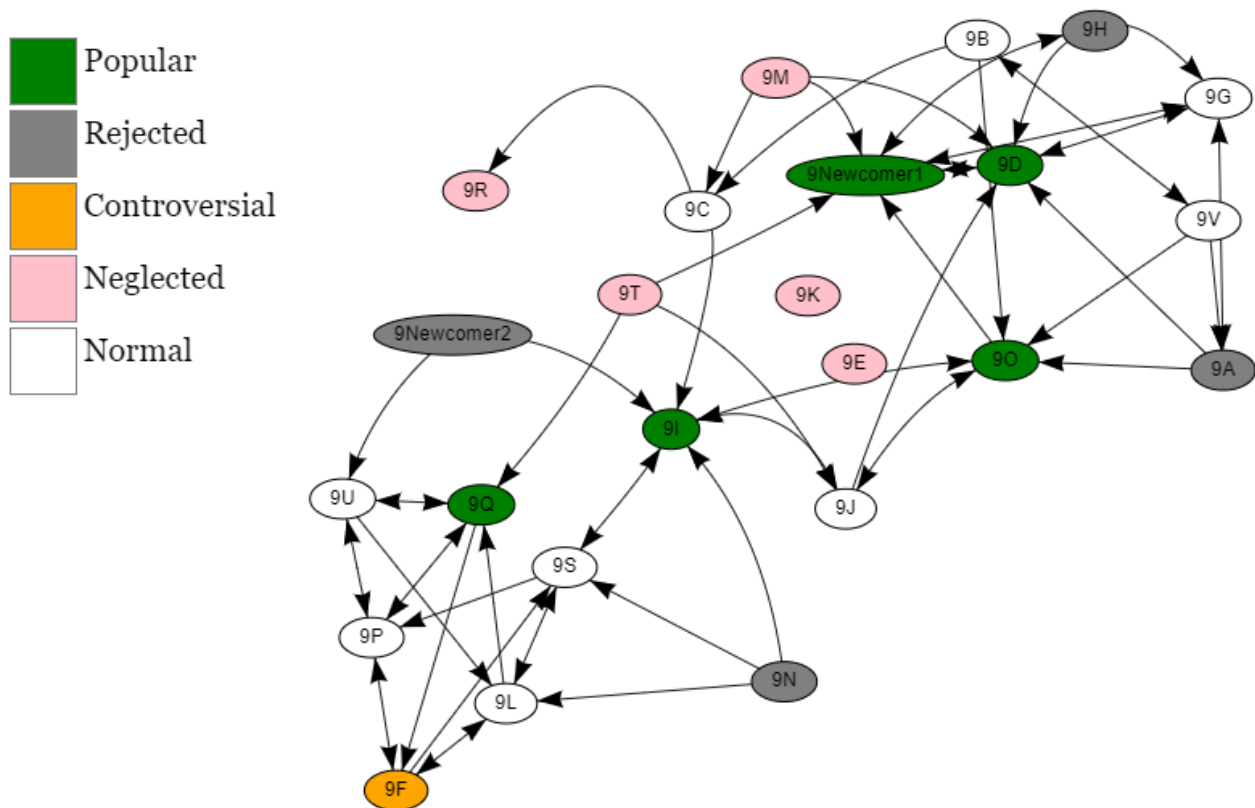
Note. Sociometric situation of class 8. Own work.

Newcomer1, female, nine years has a normal social status and two corresponding play buddies (8O and 8P). She is low on least liked and normal on most liked. The class teacher agreed with the sociogram and mentioned that Newcomer1 included herself well from the beginning because of her outgoing character. She is an open child who goes to other children

and starts conversations. According to her, the class itself is not easy since there are those “buddy groups” as visible in the sociogram. She “always tries to separate them saying look, please work with this other kid”, because when they are not together with their friends, “they bite each other”. Newcomer1 evades these fights, tries to play with those groups, and profits from her father being German and having lived in Switzerland, where she learned German and Italian.

3.3.9. Class 9

Figure 22



Note. Sociometric situation of class 9. Own work.

Newcomer1, male, ten years is popular in the class, while Newcomer2, female ten years is rejected. Newcomer1 has two corresponding play buddies (9D and 9G), while nobody mentioned Newcomer2 as a favorite child to play with. Newcomer1 resulted low on least

liked and high on most liked, while Newcomer2 is normal on least liked and low on most liked.

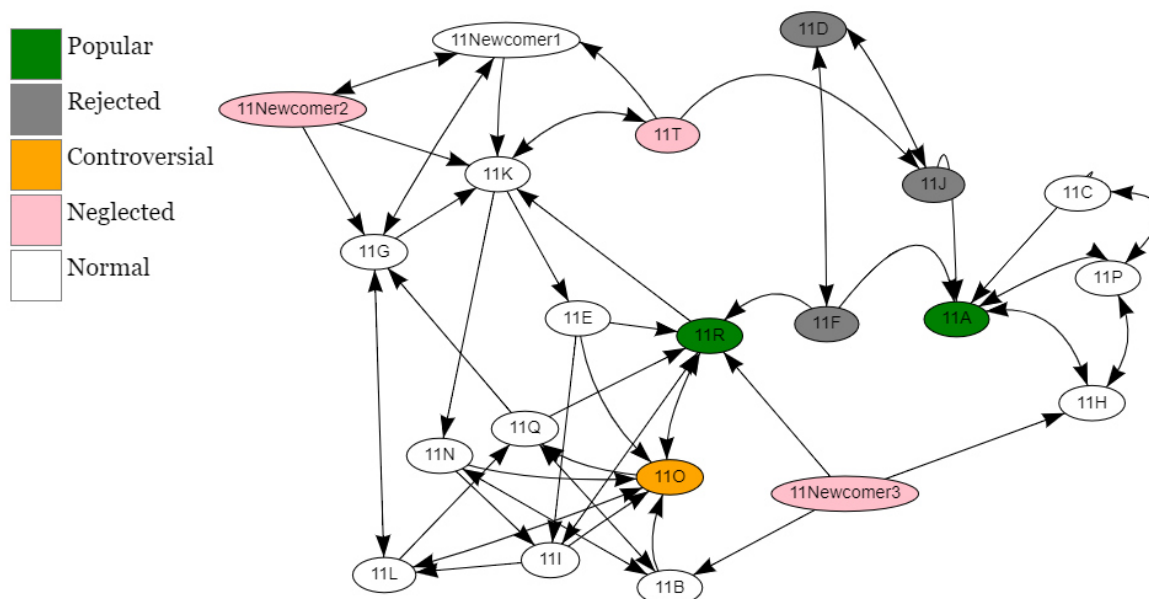
The teacher interview shows the same. Newcomer1 has a silent character; “he does not appear so much when there are fights” which helped him to include well. His “social and academic skills allowed him to fit well in class”. Newcomer2 has a deficient level of German. She suggested to the parents that she would repeat the class, but they decided against it, and the teacher felt sorry for the child because she “won’t understand anything” in high school next year. She is also very rebellious and tends to become angry quickly, which does not allow her to be included well.

3.3.10. Class 10

In Class10 there are 3 Newcomers. Newcomer 1 is male and 10 years old, Newcomer2 is female and ten years old, Newcomer3 is male and nine years old. According to the class teacher Newcomer1 comes from a Montessori school and is used to a very different educational system, “with small groups and huge classrooms”. However, he adapted exceptionally quickly to the new environment, “participates well in the class, and gets along with his peers”. Newcomer2 is also well included, even though she is “an alpha animal” and “very bossy”. Despite this character, somehow, she was included well and found friends quickly, and she is never alone during the break. Newcomer3 is problematic because “he is special”. The others are uncomfortable playing with him because he is very introverted. Besides various ways to bring them together, until now, he always separates himself, even though the whole class is “in perfect harmony with each other” and during the whole school year, there were only “two occasions where her children fought”.

3.3.11. Class 11

Figure 23



Note. Sociometric situation of class 11. Own work.

Newcomer1, Newcomer2, and Newcomer 3 are all male and nine years old. Newcomer1 and Newcomer 2 are friends with each other. However, Newcomer2 has no other close friends besides Newcomer1. Newcomer1 has one child (11G) as the corresponding play buddy and a normal social status within the class, while Newcomer2 and Newcomer3 are neglected, with nobody mentioning them as their favorite play buddies. All three resulted in low on least liked, Newcomer1 was in the middle, and Newcomer2 and Newcomer3 were low on most liked. The class teacher agrees with the displayed results; they show “exactly how it is in my classroom”. Newcomer1 played at the beginning only by himself but found Newcomer2 as a play buddy, quickly becoming his best friend; “They are always together”. He does not play so much with the other children, but when they ask him, he gladly joins in. Newcomer2 is different; he does not play with other children at all. The teacher tried many things but could not let him be included, and because of this, the parents decided at the end of the school year to bring him to another school. Newcomer3 had various issues from the beginning, even throwing things at teachers. He has intense anger issues and is seeing a psychologist. Despite the teacher's various efforts to “try everything,” he could not be included.

3.4. Teacher observation and interviews: Experience, didactics, and inclusion strategies

In this section, the results of the teacher observations at School A are displayed, followed by a summary of what the teacher mentioned in the interview regarding their experience and strategies to foster successful school inclusion. As described in 2.3.1., no class observations occurred at school B. Instead, a more in-depth summary of the interview is presented. Teacher 6 is missing because she was not available for the interview.

3.4.1. School A

3.4.1.1. Teacher 2

Table 24

Teacher		Communication	Interaction	Inclusive practices	Leadership
2	Mean	4.19	4.50	4.94	4.29
	Number of observations	4	4	4	4

Note. Observation results of teacher2. Own work.

Teacher2 came directly after her mandatory teacher internship. She is now at the school in her second year but will return to Germany once this year ends. It is her first class, and she has only taught as a teaching assistant for two years. Her primary inclusion strategy is letting the children sit next to those children who she thinks would work out well. “The positive influence of other students on the new child is significant also when I let them work in groups; I determine the partners of the newcomer”. Another method she uses is “break buddies,” where she assigns children to always be together during the brake. In this way, nobody is alone, “it helps new children just as much as those who are already in the class to strengthen their social bond” because when a child ends up alone, his or her break buddy comes, and they play together. She also introduced a method called a “secret friend”. Everybody had to pull out of a box a piece of paper with the name of another child on it, and a particular task was written on it. For example, to be especially nice to this child or to

help this child. And at the end of the week, they had to think who their secret friend during the week was, and “most of the children recognized their secret friend and the classroom climate changed a lot. She often did “warm showers” with them, where she randomly chooses a name, and then all children raised their hands and said something nice about this child, “letting their self-confidence be boosted”.

3.4.1.2. Teacher 5

Table 25

	Teacher	Communication	Interaction	Inclusive practices	Leadership
5	Mean	4.75	4.17	4.56	4.39
	N	4	4	4	4

Note. Observation results of teacher5. Own work.

Teacher5 has been teaching for more than 20 years and always had her classes from first grade until they went on to high school. She is an expert in German as a foreign language teacher. She did not mention any specific inclusion strategies besides practicing violent-free communication and talking regularly with the children and their parents. She only uses a buddy system, where she assigns a newcomer one of his classmates as a guide, “helping the new student navigate school, understand classroom routines and feel more at home”.

3.4.1.3. Teacher 7

Table 26

	Teacher	Communication	Interaction	Inclusive practices	Leadership
7	Mean	3.56	4.19	4.86	4.24
	N	7	7	7	7

Note. Observation results of teacher7. Own work.

Teacher7 is very experienced, teaching at School A for the last 20 years and starting together with Teacher5. She does the same as Teacher5 but focuses on “open communication and

dialogue among all students”. She regularly leads classroom discussions about the importance of kindness, empathy, and understanding. “This not only builds connections among classmates but also helps them appreciate each other's unique backgrounds and experiences.”

3.4.1.4. Teacher 9

Table 27

Teacher	Communication	Interaction	Inclusive practices	Leadership
9 Mean	4.40	4.33	4.39	4.73
N	7	7	7	7

Note. Observation results of teacher9. Own work.

Teacher9 started with Teacher2 and came right after her teacher training finished. She wanted to quit her job at the beginning of the school year because of various problems with the class and her parents, but she decided to stay. Now, she is happy she made this decision and is also happy with her class, which has changed a lot. Nevertheless, she cannot imagine staying longer at the school and plans to return to Germany at the end of the academic year. When inclusion problems arise, she gives “space to them to speak together about it and try to resolve it by themselves”. She lets them go in small groups and talk about it. She stressed the importance of the class trip they made together, which made the whole class more edified socially.

3.4.1.5. Teacher 11

Table 28

Teacher	Communication	Interaction	Inclusive practices	Leadership
11 Mean	3.40	4.07	4.20	4.40
N	5	5	5	5

Note. Observation results of teacher11. Own work.

Teacher11 has been teaching for ten years. Her education training involved teaching older children in high school aged 11 to 16. However, she traveled with her boyfriend for private reasons and taught primary school children at various German schools abroad, e.g., in Vietnam. She came to the school two years ago and will leave at the end of the year. Her primary approach for fostering successful school inclusion is regular class discussions and the “giraffe language,” which teaches violet-free communication. The giraffe has a long neck, showing the clear-sighted speaker's awareness of his fellow speakers' reactions. Because the Giraffe has a large heart, it connects to the compassionate side of communication. She finds that children can easily relate to it, which is “especially useful when every time they want to say a swear word, they step back and say another word instead of the bad word”. According to her, all children become more aware of what they say, bringing respect for new students and helping inclusion.

3.4.2. School B

3.4.2.1. Teacher 1

Teacher 1 arrived after the teacher training. She has been at school B since 2018 and has taught various classes for five years. Her primary strategy for including new children is working with picture books, especially one called “The Little We” which is all about friendship, being together, and getting along well. She regularly lets the children sit in a seating circle and asks questions like “How does he feel?” or “What would you do?”. Another strategy she uses is diaries, starting from first grade, letting the children write in

them what they did, what happened, and how difficulties were overcome. It was beneficial for school inclusion when they wrote in each other's diaries, "I like you because...". This strategy relates to the so-called "warm showers", which help the children to feel good because when we do them, everybody says something good about another child in class. Letterboxes are also part of her routine; she lets children write each other letters, where sometimes the child can choose the child he or she wants to write to, and sometimes the teacher determines the child, especially when a new student is in the class.

Furthermore, "memory walls" are favorable for the child's school inclusion because the children can see each other and what they experience in the pictures together. However, the most helpful for inclusion, according to Teacher1 is a musical they planned together with the other 3rd grade classes. They designed it all together, and the children understood "that it is not just the role of the actors which is important but so much is going on behind the actual musical performance. There is a need to think about the light, background picture, music, or curtains; everybody is important to let it work out". The students worked as technicians, sound makers, actors, dancers, and singers. "We are all together in the roles" helped the newcomers make friends quickly and be included.

3.4.2.2. Teacher 3

Teacher3 came together with Teacher1; they plan their lessons together and often organize events and trips with the children of their classes. According to her, the principal has one of the most critical roles to be included because she chooses "in which of the third-grade classes the new arrivals this year come". She actively tries to find out where the newcomer would fit best, "e.g., A girl came new and right away included herself, because of two girls of the class she knew before already, and the principal decided accordingly". Teacher3 mentioned one situation where her wisdom gained from other difficult situations and previous experience helped her. A student told the new girl she did not belong there and that her parents' money was wasted. She resolved it by asking publicly the class, "How do you feel when I tell you that a student from this class told our new student that she does

not belong here and the money of her parents is wasted?”. The teacher knew what the other children think about her is very important for the girl who said this, but she did not want to expose her wrongdoing in front of the class. The girl saw that her classmates were all shocked that somebody had said this, and after the teacher gave a “warm shower” to the new girl, she saw that she was alone with her point of view and did not say anything rude anymore. When there are problems, Teacher3 speaks directly about them, but only as a moderator, and she lets the children speak and gives suggestions on what to do better next time.

3.4.2.3. Teacher 4

Teacher4 has taught at the school for eight years and mainly uses “open style lessons”. She is not a fan of teacher-centered lessons and tries to give the children as much freedom as possible. The tables in her class are organized as group tables. At the beginning of each week, she gives the children a plan, and they can choose when to do which task if they finish them all. She only mentioned that, as a strategy, she lets those students who like each other sit next to each other. She does not do class-conference, “even though there are some bitchy girls”. Her primary method to resolve problems of exclusion is to talk to the involved children in private.

3.4.2.4. Teacher 8

Teacher8 is the principal of primary school B. She has taught at the school for 23 years after her teacher training. She uses the same week-schedule method as Teacher4 and tries to let the whole 3rd and 4th grades use it; they “move away from the traditional teacher-centered lesson”. Much work is done by organizing everything as teams based on scientific topics at each grade level. This free way of structuring the children's daily routine allows her “to take care of those children who really need help” regarding successful school inclusion. She

can take those involved children when there are fights while the others are busy working on their schedules.

Their availability of open space and big classrooms allow an “efficient way of working”, even though they are a big primary school with many students in each class.

3.4.2.5. Teacher 10

Teacher10 has been at the school since 2008; she loves her job and “teaches now 16 years”. She is not a friend of the open-style lessons of her colleagues but thinks that the children need structure and more teacher guidance to learn better. Her inclusion strategies are mainly class assemblies, but not every week. She prefers to talk to children immediately “when something is boiling up. Otherwise, teaching is impossible”. According to her experience, Italians are very emotional, and when they boil up, it is over, so she lets them speak one after another about the problem. Most realize it is not much of a problem and “no reason to freak out”. She often experiences and needs to say, “Look, you should have listened to him first before starting to fight right away. You would have realized that he does not want to tease you!” She only uses conversation as a method for resolving inclusion issues and lets them look into the eyes of each other.

Chapter four: Interpretation and discussion of the results

4.1. Study limitations

First, the procedure based on pupils aged 8-10 self-assessment has limitations because students can be biased about themselves and report according to what others tell them rather than responding to their actual skills (West et al., 2020). Also, the sample size and data are limited to only two schools and 249 students, of which only 23 are Newcomers. Secondly, the available questionnaires come from countries different from Italy, which could also explain why the Cronbach values resulted lower than in the original research. In conclusion, the sample from the specific German primary school in Italy context can hardly be generalized to students who live elsewhere in the world, where the culture and education system are entirely different.

Additionally, the data could have been affected by the social desirability response bias (Robson, 2005), and children could have responded incorrectly to appear in a better light. Other limitations include the time when the children filled out the questionnaire. When handing them to the children just before the break, some were observed to quickly want to finish filling it out so they could go to play and were, therefore, not actively thinking about the content. However, after removing many items through the analysis with SPSS, the questionnaires are relatively short as they have only 18 items (9 items for the students and 9 for the teacher), measuring four factors: Social management, Persistence, Mastery orientation, and Emotional competence. They can be used and validated quickly and are therefore helpful for teachers to periodically check the soft skill level of their children in class, as not much time is required to collect the data.

In addition, the factors have shown relatively good internal consistency. However, one reason for the slightly lower internal consistency of the Emotional competence items could be that younger students overestimate their capabilities (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002) or that the children might have understood something differently when reading the questions in German. The author did the translation himself, being bilingual. However, the translation

might have affected the results, and it would have been better to verify the translation before handing out the questionnaires. Further limitations include the limited teacher observation sample size, as only the teachers at School A could be observed, which covers only 27 observations and five teachers.

Finally, the children's parents could not be included in the author's research, meaning that this, based on the literature (1.3.1) important dimension for school inclusion, is missing. From the lack thereof, critical information like the economic background could not be included, even though evidence from other research shows that children "from economically advantaged backgrounds may display higher levels of skills related to self-management, such as emotional regulation, adaptability or impulsive behavior" (Davis, A.J. 2012; Papini, D.R. et al., 1990; Takeuchi, D.T. et al., 1991, cited in West et al., 2020, p.283).

As illustrated by the word-cloud in 3.4.3., the words "parents", "father", and "mother" were all among the most mentioned by the teachers in both locations. Therefore, the absence of data about the parents and background limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the author's research.

4.2. The impact of soft skills on successful school inclusion

After evaluating the teacher interviews and sociometric situation in each class in the results section, it could be determined which newcomer was successfully included at the end of the year and who was not. An overview of successful and unsuccessful inclusion cases for each class is visible in Table 29 below.

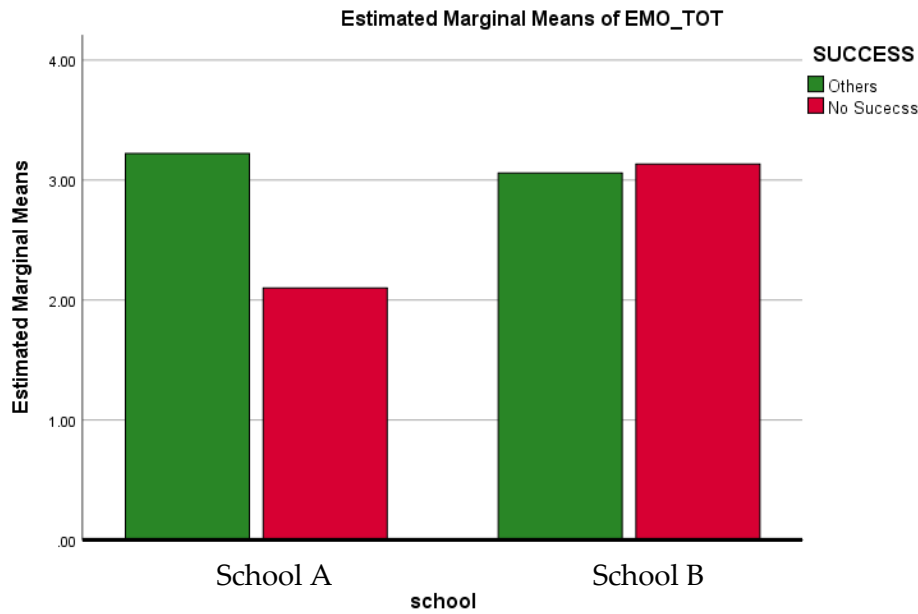
Table 29

Class	Success	No Success
1	2	0
2	1	0
3	1	1
4	1	2
5	2	0
6	0	1
7	3	0
8	1	0
9	1	1
10	2	1
11	1	2
Total	15	8

Note. Newcomer inclusion success. Own work.

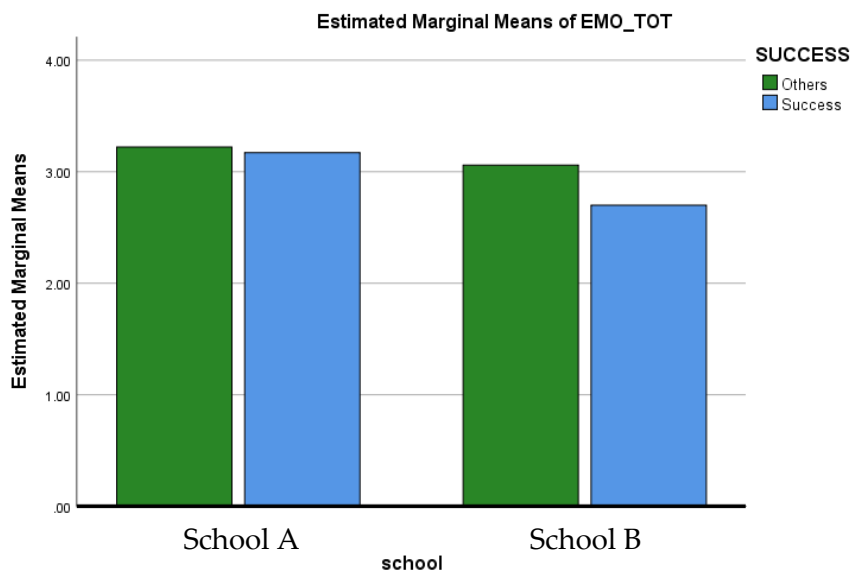
After adding the Success Variable in SPSS, various results emerged, answering the author's research questions. There was a significant difference in Emotional competence when the variables of Success and School were considered jointly with Wilk's $\Lambda = .830$, $F(2,235) = 4.23$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .017$, illustrated in Figure 25 and Figure 26 on the next page. This finding builds on the significant difference in Emotional Competence at the different schools, described in the results section.

Figure 25



Note. Emotional Skill impact on unsuccessful inclusion at school A and B. Own work.

Figure 26



Note. Emotional Skill impact on successful inclusion at school A and B. Own work.

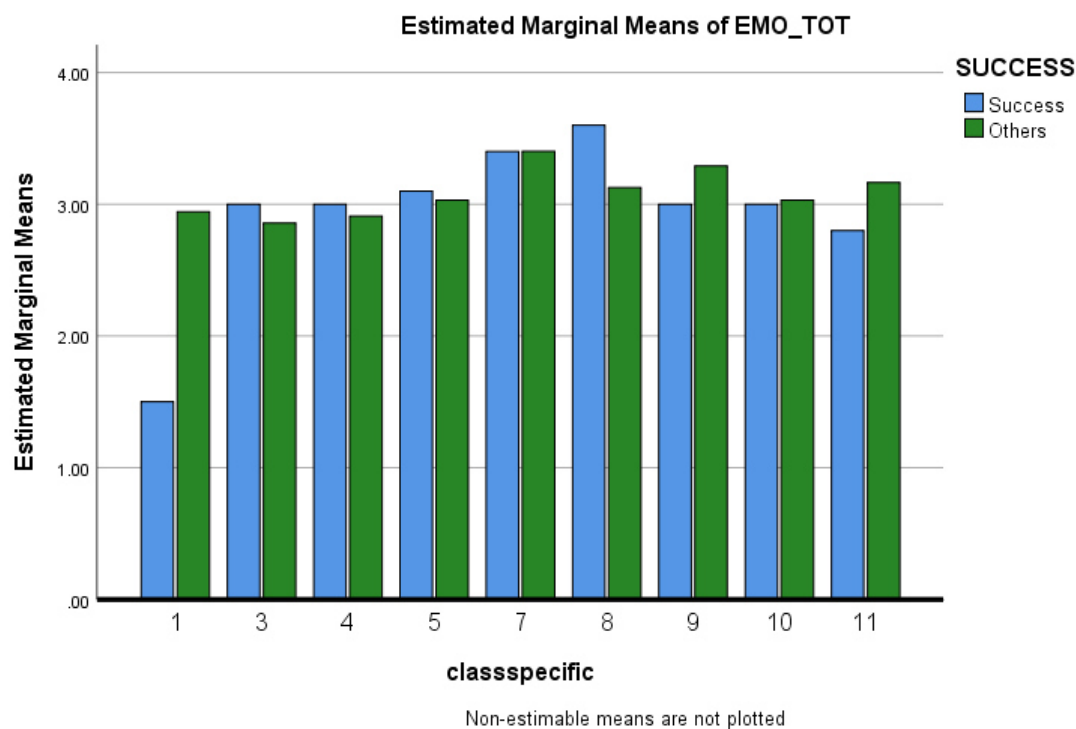
Inclusion at school A did not happen when the Emotional competence of the Newcomer was significantly lower than that of the others. The success happened when the Emotional skill was at the same level. Even though the data regarding the number of newcomers is limited in both schools, this finding hints at a correlation between the Emotional skills of

the newcomers and their inclusion success at school A. Inclusion is less likely to happen at this location if it is not at the same level as the other schoolmates.

It could be that in school B, this did not impact the inclusion process because, based on the interview data, many teachers specifically let their children be aware of their emotions and learn to handle them. It seems that this is crucial for successful inclusion. However, to verify this finding, more sophisticated research is needed.

When looking at the Emotional competence and inclusion success not at a school-wide but at a class-specific level, similar relevance is seen at both schools with Wilk's $\Lambda = .501$, $F(2,235) = 1.51$, $p < .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$. Together with the significance of the Emotional skill when considered jointly on Newcomers and Classes, described in the results section, it became evident that when the Emotional level of the newcomer and the classmates' average is equal or similar, successful inclusion took place more often, as illustrated in Figure 27 below.

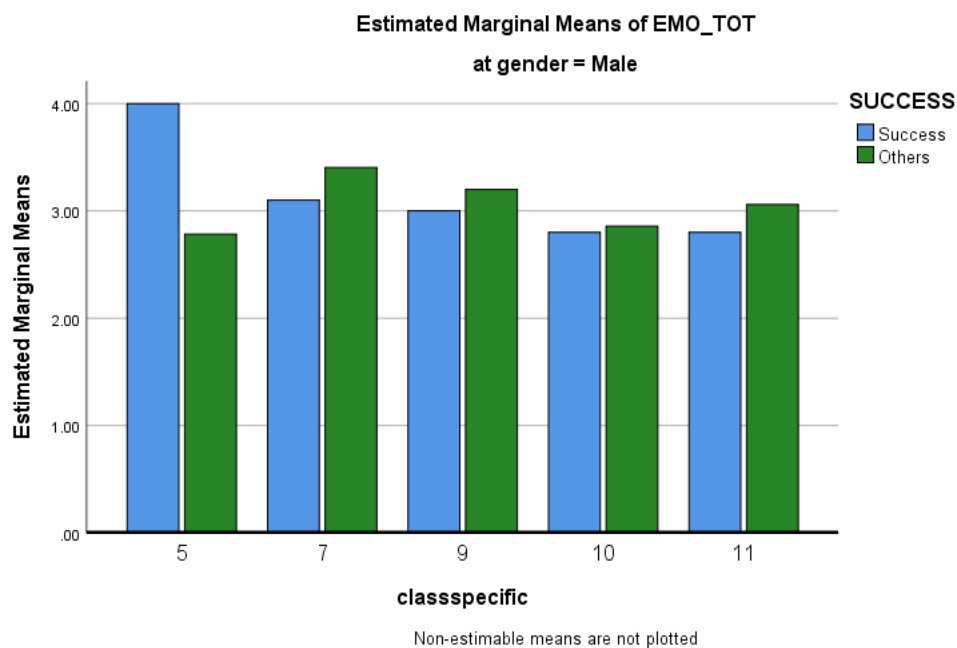
Figure 27



Note. Emotional skill impact on successful inclusion at class level. Own work.

It is also significant when the different genders are looked upon, resulting in Wilk's $\Lambda = .892$, $F(2,235) = 13.06$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .083$. As visible in Figure 28 below, the male newcomers were included when the Emotional skills of their classmates were at an equal or higher level, with class 5 seeming to be the exception.

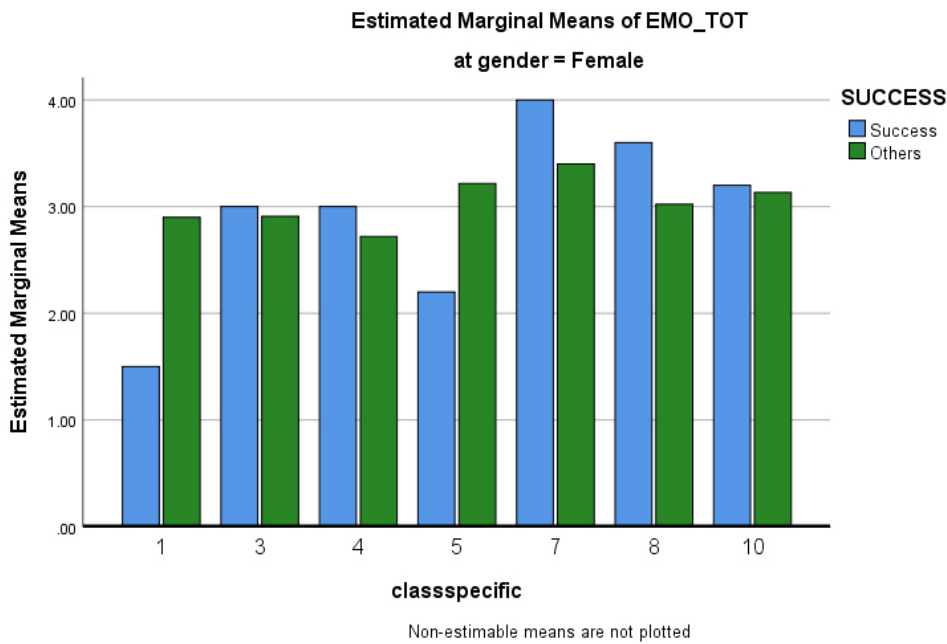
Figure 28



Note. Male emotional skill impact on successful inclusion at class level. Own work.

Most female newcomers, on the other hand, were successfully included when their Emotional skills were higher than their classmates' average, as visible in Figure 29 on the next page. In the case of female newcomers with low emotional skills, they were nevertheless successfully included when the emotional skill average of their classmates was much higher, as visible in classes 1 and 5. In conclusion, the newcomers' Emotional competence and Emotional competence at a school-wide and class-specific level affect successful school inclusion.

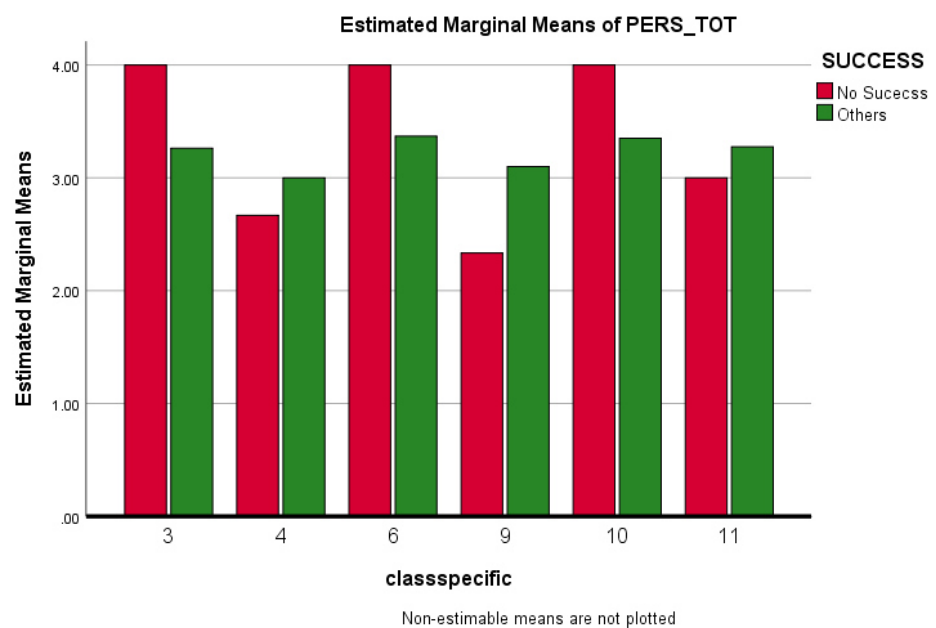
Figure 29



Note. Female emotional skill impact on successful inclusion at class level. Own work.

Another skill found to impact successful school inclusion at the class-specific level was Persistence with Wilk's $\Lambda = .528$, $F(2,235) = 2.31$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .114$. When the Persistence skills of the children were vastly different, inclusion was unsuccessful, as illustrated in Figure 30 below.

Figure 30



Note. Persistence skill difference and its impact on successful inclusion. Own work.

The cause for this could be that the classmates might not like the new child because he or she is much more persistent, or if the newcomer's Persistence is lower than the class average, the child is “falling behind” and therefore not included.

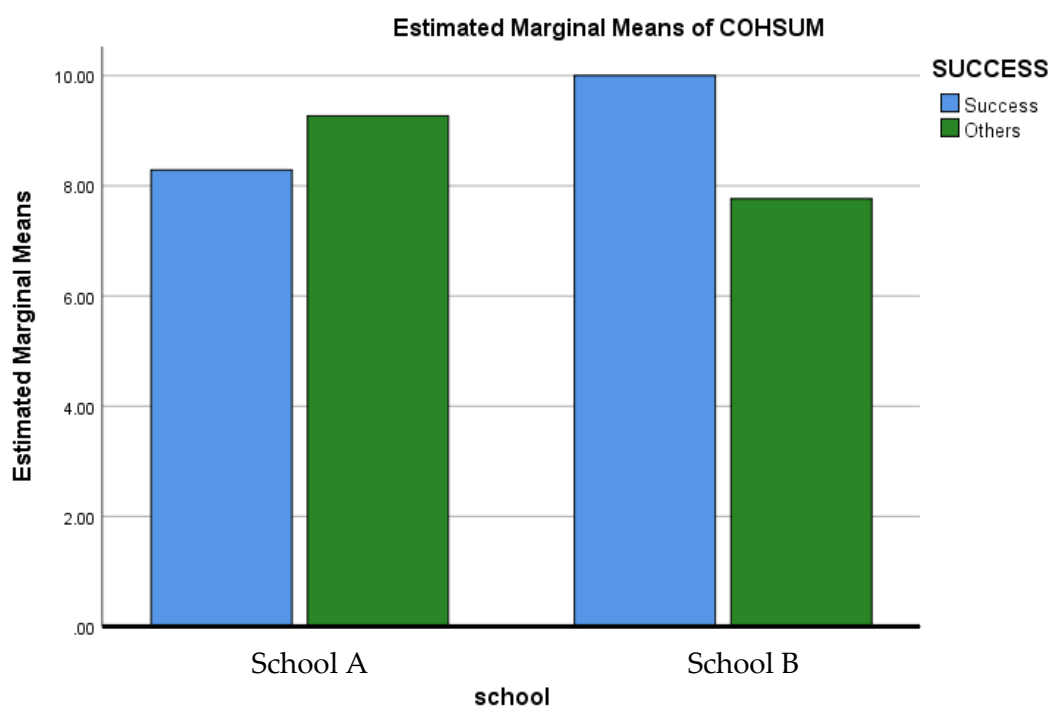
All other soft skills had no significant impact on the inclusion of newcomers.

4.3. Other impacting factors

4.3.1. Classroom climate

When looking at the climate in the different schools, the Cohesion significantly impacted inclusion success with Wilk's $\Lambda = .830$, $F(2,173) = 17.19$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .040$.

Figure 31



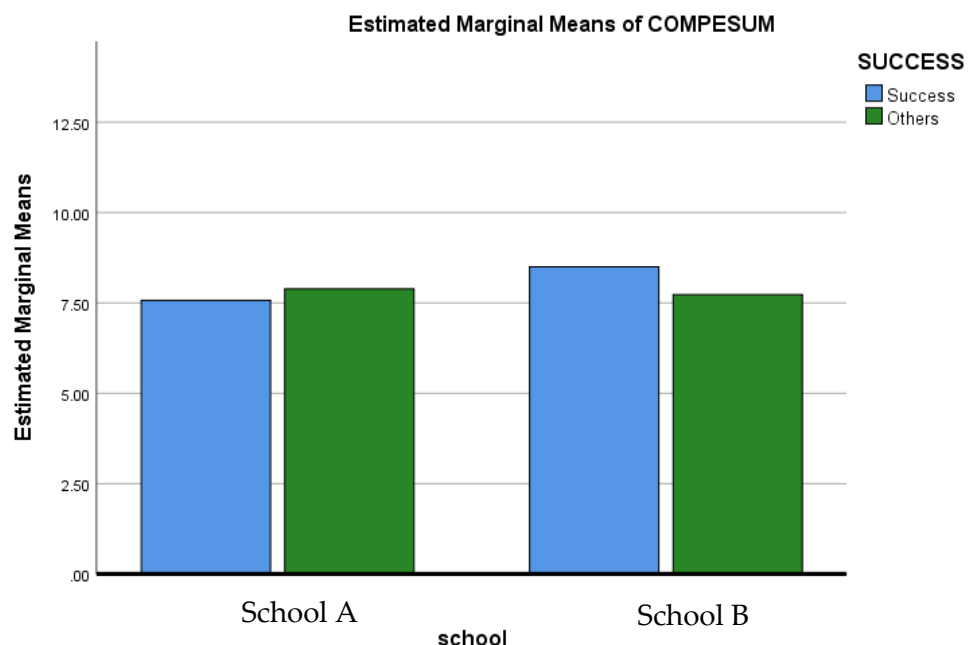
Note. Cohesion and its impact on successful inclusion at the different schools. Own work.

As mentioned in the methodology section, the results of Sink & Spencer (2005) classroom climate questionnaire mean that the lower the value, the higher the underlying dimension. As reported in Figure 31 above, at school A, it seems to work when the newcomers have a higher sense of Cohesion than the schoolmates. The newcomer gets included well when he thinks Cohesion is at a higher level, which is to be expected since the underlying questions were “everybody is my friend”, “some students are not my friends”, “all students are close friends”, “all students like one another” and “students like each other as friends”.

The question is, why do the Newcomers at School B get successfully included despite thinking that Cohesion is at a low level? What exactly is it that, despite having a much lower opinion about the Cohesion, lets the children in School B be included well? It might be that the School B Newcomers have fewer expectations, while in reality, visible of the average Cohesion of all the other schoolmates, the Cohesion is much higher than they thought, leading to many positive experiences during their leisure time. However, further research is needed to verify this.

Furthermore, the Competition climate at the different schools showed significance for school inclusion with Wilk’s $\Lambda = .901$, $F(2,173) = 15.47$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .036$. At both schools, inclusion was successful when the Competition between the newcomers and the classmates was equal, as illustrated in Figure 32.

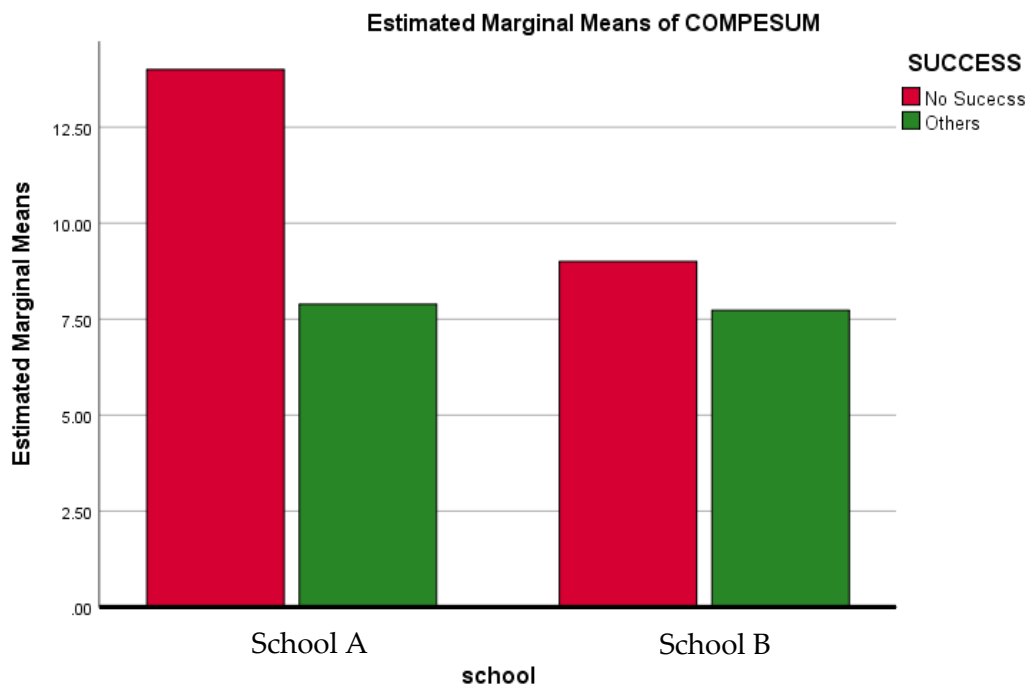
Figure 32



Note. Competition and its impact on successful inclusion at the different schools. Own work.

However, according to the schoolmates at school A, the competition climate was significantly higher than what the non-included newcomers thought, visible in Figure 33 below.

Figure 33



Note. Competition and its impact on unsuccessful inclusion at the different schools. Own work.

Even though the actual competition level at school B, based on the other students' opinions, is nearly the same as at school A, the non-included newcomers think differently about it. At school A, they think that Competition is deficient, while in reality, it is much higher. Did having a wrong sense about the actual competition level in class contribute to not being included well at school A? The non-included newcomers seem to be "blind" to the actual competition level of their mates. There is evidence from Chance & Norton (2015) showing it is widespread that people deceive themselves, telling themselves things are not as bad. It goes up to believing one's own lies and not seeing reality anymore. This might

also be the case with the children at school A. At school B, on the other hand, do they teach the children to be more self-reflective when class-problems appear, leading to a better understanding of the actual “reality” of the climate in the classroom? More research is needed to investigate this further.

4.3.2. Teacher competence

As outlined in the literature (1.3.3.), it could be seen in the author’s research that teacher competence does indeed seem to have an impact on successful school inclusion, found for the Inclusive practices with ($F(2,108) = 2.38$; $p < .05$). All the eight successfully included newcomers at school A had teachers who were observed to have a higher Inclusive practices score ($M = 4.65$). For all three cases of non-successful inclusion, the Inclusive practices score of their teachers was much lower ($M = 4.26$). However, the data was derived from only 27 observations of five teachers in school A. Therefore, more data would be needed for a more reliable conclusion. However, it suggests that teachers should use inclusive practices for successful inclusion, as illustrated in Table 30.

Table 30

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
InclusivePractices	Success	8	4.65	.26795	.09474
	No Success	3	4.26	.10970	.06333

Note. Teacher Inclusive practices score on inclusion success. Own work

The author further analyzed whether teacher competency affected the different soft skills. Only Mastery orientation was significantly impacted. Specifically the teachers Communication ($F(10,108) = 1.95$; $p < .05$) and Leadership skills ($F(10,108) = 2.20$; $p < .05$) affected the Mastery orientation skill. The children with higher Mastery orientation skills had teachers with high Communication and Leadership scores. However, since this skill is

not significant for successful inclusion, as described in 4.2, it is irrelevant to answering the author's research questions. It is useful for teachers to know that their own communication and leadership skills seem to affect their children's orientation toward their goals.

4.4. Summary and strategies for teachers

Based on the author's findings, various conclusions which aid successful school inclusion can be drawn. Since Emotional competence was found to impact school inclusion significantly, teachers should spend time developing it and teaching the children to be aware of their own and others' emotions. At school A, the Emotional skills should be at the same level as the Emotional skills of the classmates for successful inclusion to happen more likely because all successful inclusion cases had the same or equal Emotional competence as the classmates' average. In the author's opinion, it would be a good idea for teachers at school A to get in contact with the teachers at school B and talk specifically about how they let their children be aware of their own emotions or if there are specific methods which let their children have all nearly the same Emotional competence level, leading to successful school inclusion and according to Gini (2008) also less bullying.

Furthermore, teachers should be aware of how the gender of the newcomer and his or her emotional skills, compared to the classroom average, also impact school inclusion. The, in the results section described significant differences in the Emotional skill based on the student's gender as well as the student's age, showing a higher Emotional competence level the older the children are with age 8 ($M=2.93$), age 9 ($M=3.05$), and age 10 ($M=3.28$), shows how important it is for teachers to focus on the Emotional competence when newcomers arrive, especially when they are younger.

Strategies already found to help increase Emotional skills in students are, e.g., "self-talks". The child is reminded of how he likes to be treated by others and also how to react or not to react when his plan or need is not satisfied right away. Delale-O'Connor et al. from Child Trends gives an example, letting the child remind himself: "stop, look, and listen!". This

allows time to reflect on one's emotions and be aware of other children's emotions "rather than being guided by an instant emotional response" (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012, p.4). Furthermore, regular "seating circles" can be implemented, where the teacher lets the children be aware of different emotions and how others feel utilizing pictures or role-play with questions like: "how do you think the child felt?" "How do you feel?", and so on (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012).

Additionally, because a significant difference in the Newcomers' and Classmates' Persistence leads to less successful inclusion at both schools, it is advised that the teachers should spend time to balance out the Persistence to an equal level for all, e.g., when the teachers see some children much less persistent than their classmates, the challenge level of different task can be increased because it has been researched by Delale-O'Connor et al. (2012) that the persistence skill is developed when students succeed with challenging tasks. Research has already identified different strategies. The teacher should balance the difficulty level so that the exercises are challenging but not impossible for the children, as they can get disappointed, and the opposite effect appears, leading to discouragement and less persistence. The teacher should also allow the children enough time to practice new methods and encourage them to do so at home. In so doing, the confidence of the students is increased. Another strategy is using so-called "motivational words" like "I will continue to try!" "I can do it!". This allows the child not to see the big problem as a mountain that is impossible to conquer but lets it learn to cope with challenging exercises and overcome them (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012).

Regarding the Cohesion and Competition climate and its impact on the school's inclusion, the teacher should pay additional attention to letting the children know the actual climate in the classroom. Since, especially in school A, inclusion was not successful where the newcomer could not see the "real" climate in class, honest talks with all children might greatly aid successful school inclusion. Different strategies that help cope with competition

issues already exist. For example, the attention should be on mastering a new skill, not finishing it as quickly as possible (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012).

Finally, as found by other research before and verified through the author's research, the teacher should use inclusive practices, which have contributed to successful inclusion. He should focus on using inclusive strategies like building trust among each other, making the newcomers feel safe, and setting clear boundaries. Because all of the interviewed teachers at school A and school B had successful inclusion cases and mentioned different strategies they use, it might be helpful for teachers to gain inspiration from the summarized interviews in section 3.4.

4.5. Conclusion

The significant differences from school to school and from class to class show how important it is to look in depth at the situation from various points of view, considering the many factors that impact school inclusion. Not only do parental background, language proficiency, teacher attitude, and competency play a crucial role in successful school inclusion, but specific soft skills, the climate, and the sociometric situation in each class also affect how the newcomers get included. Considering all of the dimensions mentioned above, the research findings show no absolute truth about how inclusion works; instead, they hint at what affects inclusion in the particular German private school in Italy context. The findings guide us toward where to look deeper and continue with further research investigating school inclusion, e.g., parents should be included and more teacher observations done at different locations.

Furthermore, as a follow-up to the author's research, all questionnaires could be translated into Italian and distributed to children of the same age group at Italian schools at the same social level, with parents with approximately the same economic background. This would allow for more data and, therefore, results with higher reliability. However, a deeper look

needs to be taken at the emotional skill dimension before further research. Even though the results show that this dimension had the most impact on the successful school inclusion of newcomers, the only medium Chronbach should be improved for more reliable results and conclusions. For example, every teacher could explain all the questionnaire's emotional competence items to all children, even though the teacher might think that all understand the questions correctly and no explanations are needed. A fixed time should also be established for all children to complete the questionnaire. The time should especially not be right before the break when all children want to play with their friends as quickly as possible. When all of the above is considered, the follow-up results will provide a more transparent view, as it could be analyzed if the cause for a medium Chronbach score was just an understanding issue or if the items need to be reframed for more reliable output.

As more research is being done in the field and many more aspects to consider come to the surface when it comes to school inclusion, the author came to the same realization about inclusion as Soresi, et al.: "Inclusion stimulates in us also the idea of innovation and change, the need of continuing to work for it [...], inclusion constitutes a process without endings" (Soresi, et al., 2013, p.206).

Appendix

Appendix A

Figure 34

DIMENSION C Evolving inclusive <i>practices</i>	
C.1.1	Activities are planned with all children in mind.
C.1.2	Activities encourage all children to communicate.
C.1.3	Activities encourage the participation of all children.
C.1.4	Activities develop an understanding of differences between people.
C.1.5	Activities discourage stereotyping.
C.1.6	Children are actively involved in their play and learning.
C.1.7	Children cooperate in playing and learning.
C.1.8	Assessments encourage the achievements of all children.
C.1.9	Practitioners encourage a calm atmosphere based on respectful relationships.
C.1.10	Practitioners plan, review and engage in activities in partnership.
C.1.11	Learning support/teaching assistants support the play, learning and participation of all children.
C.1.12	All children take part when there are special activities.
C.2.1	The setting is well arranged to encourage play, learning and participation.
C.2.2	Resources are distributed fairly.
C.2.3	Differences between children are used as resources to support play, learning and participation.
C.2.4	The expertise of practitioners is fully utilised.
C.2.5	Practitioners develop shared resources to support play, learning and participation.
C.2.6	Resources in the surroundings of the setting are known and used.

Note. Index Dimension C Evolving inclusive practices. From *Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in school* (p. 99), by T., Booth and M., Ainscow, 2002, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education. Copyright 2002 by Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.

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